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**CONTACT**

Voleine Amilcar, ITVS	415-356-8383 x 244	voleine_amilcar@itvs.org
Mary Lugo	770-623-8190	lugo@negia.net
Cara White	843-881-1480	cara.white@mac.com

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**“DOC,” ACCLAIMED FILM ABOUT NOVELIST AND ’60S ICON DOC HUMES TO HAVE  
TELEVISION PREMIERE ON THE EMMY® AWARD-WINNING PBS SERIES  
INDEPENDENT LENS, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2008, AT 10 PM**

*“He was brilliant. He was one of the few people I have ever met who was essentially, at bottom, more vain, more intellectually arrogant, than I was.” –Norman Mailer*

*“I didn’t know whether to kiss him or kill him!” –William Styron*

**(San Francisco CA)**—**DOC** is an unorthodox portrait of the life and times of the almost forgotten, yet fascinating literary and counter-culture figure Doc Humes. Featuring a whole generation of cultural luminaries, from Timothy Leary to Norman Mailer, the film tells a moving story about a sort of cultural Zelig—the man who founded *The Paris Review*, wrote two great novels and then, after becoming mentally ill in the 1960s, reappeared as the original Hippie Philosopher King. A stylistically original take on a literary “beautiful mind,” **DOC** is a political and personal tale filmed over many years by Immy Humes, an Academy Award–nominated filmmaker and Doc’s daughter. The documentary won rave reviews in its theatrical release; *The New York Sun* described it as “nothing short of inspiring ... deliciously ironic ... a fine film.” **DOC** will have its broadcast premiere on the Emmy® Award–winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard, on Tuesday, December 9, 2008, at 10 PM (check local listings).

Harold L. Humes, known by the nickname “Doc,” was brilliant and precocious (he went to MIT at age 16). In Paris after the war, he founded *The Paris Review*—a magazine he envisioned as “by writers, for writers, with an emphasis on the act of writing itself.” He then wrote two acclaimed and ambitious political novels about war and what it does to people, one in 1958 and the other the very next year, in 1959. The books were extremely well received—*The New York Times* described him as “alarmingly talented”—but he never wrote again. (Thanks to the film, Random House has recently republished both titles, *The Underground City* and *Men Die*, after decades out of print.)

A stellar cast of Doc’s family and friends—including writers George Plimpton, Norman Mailer, Peter Matthiessen, William Styron and Paul Auster; avant-garde filmmaker Jonas Mekas; and the pied piper of LSD, Timothy Leary—recall an extraordinary man who defied all categories and expectations.

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After winning fame as a novelist, Doc quickly moved from one fascination to another—as Gay Talese writes, he “hit on a theory of cosmology that would jolt Descartes; played piano in a Harlem jazz club; shot a movie called *Don Peyote*, a Greenwich Village version of Don Quixote; and invented a paper house that was waterproof, fireproof and large enough for people to live in.”

With Jonas Mekas and others, he created the New American Cinema Group, which sought ways to free moviemaking from the control of money. He led crusades for free expression and against police brutality and helped abolish the “cabaret card” laws, notorious rules long used by the NYPD to bar artists—from Billie Holliday to Thelonious Monk to Lenny Bruce—from performing. He lived a wild, creative life that included leading a beatnik riot in Washington Square Park, championing the use of medical marijuana and managing Mailer’s infamous 1961 run for mayor of New York.

By the mid-1960s, Doc was unable to write. And after taking a lot of LSD in London with old pal Tim Leary, he began showing signs of mental illness. He thought that he could intercept thoughts, that he could see dangers others could not and that he was being followed—he believed the CIA, among others, was spying on him. (One of the film’s most startling revelations is that the CIA *had* infiltrated the *Paris Review* crowd; Peter Matthiessen was, in fact, a CIA agent when he helped found the magazine.)

*“The man talked a blue streak, chewing our ears off with a monologue that resembled nothing I had ever heard before. It was the rant of a hipster visionary neo-prophet.”*

—Paul Auster

Doc reinvented himself yet again, turning up on the Columbia University campus in 1969 giving away cash in a notorious piece of proto-performance art. For 25 years, Doc lived on or near college campuses, especially his alma mater Harvard, as a kind of resident crazy genius, surrounded by student acolytes who took care of him. He preached that we live in a society run by fear and shadowy powers—and that protest, the arts and healing, especially relaxation techniques using massage and marijuana, are necessary practices to preserve human freedom. Immy, in Doc’s own words, “puts a frame around the wreckage” in this affectionate, yet disquieting portrait.

After Doc died of cancer in 1992, Immy filed a Freedom of Information Act request that eventually turned up a thick file—including notes from fellow-paranoid J. Edgar Hoover himself. It turns out that the U.S. government *was* keeping tabs on Doc, from 1948 to 1977. As it is said: Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean people aren’t following you.

To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the companion website for **DOC at [pbs.org/independentlens/doc](http://pbs.org/independentlens/doc)**. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions.

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### **About the Filmmaker**

Immy Humes's films and videos deal with a variety of subjects and formats, and all have a distinctive, recognizable voice. They treat social and political themes relating to justice and equality, but often take an indirect approach or partly humorous tone. *A Little Vicious*, about a dog "with ties to the pit bull family," was nominated for an Oscar in 1992. The *New York Post* called it a "superb ... splendid little comedy." *Lizzie Borden Hash & Rehash* (1997) is about America's favorite "self-made orphan"—*Newsday* found it "swift, sharp, incisive and curiously, unexpectedly funny." Immy's other films include portraits of Wade Davis, ethnobotanist and indigenous culture activist; Dorothy Lewis, a psychiatrist and expert on violence; Joseph Paul Franklin, a racist serial killer on death row; and segments for Michael Moore's *TV Nation* and for *DatelineNBC*. Immy's work has received many honors, including screenings at New York City's Museum of Modern Art and Film Forum and at festivals ranging from the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam to the Hot Springs (Arkansas) Documentary Film Festival. She has won grants and fellowships from the MacDowell Colony; the National Endowment for the Arts; the New York State Council on the Arts; the Jerome, Robeson, Soros Fund (now the Sundance Fund); Independent Television Service; the National Endowment for the Humanities; and other funders. A major educational website about design that she created for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting with her company, The Doc Tank, won the 2003 Webby Award for Best Youth Site. Immy graduated from Harvard with honors in social studies and has taught documentary filmmaking at Brooklyn Polytechnic and City College.

### **About *Independent Lens***

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities and moments in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen. Further information about the series is available at [pbs.org/independentlens](http://pbs.org/independentlens)

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