



NEW RELEASES

Kurt Vonnegut: Unstuck in Time

When he was younger, enthralled by his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Robert Weide wrote a letter to Kurt Vonnegut, proposing to make a documentary on the author. Surprisingly, Vonnegut agreed, and the two struck up a decades-long collaboration that grew into an enduring friendship. Filled with rare archival footage and interviews with family, colleagues and Vonnegut himself, Weide's portrait offers a deep, intimate look into the life and work of one of the giants of American literature.

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Listen: Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time. Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1963. He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all the events in between.

Those opening sentences of *Slaughterhouse-Five* crackle with the plainspoken cosmic irony that made Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007) one of most beloved authors of the 20th century. Vonnegut's sixth novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a lightning-bolt of anti-war satire that was Vonnegut's grand attempt to wrestle with his own trauma as a soldier in World War II. The title is a reference to an underground meat locker where he was held prisoner during the firebombing of Dresden, Germany in 1945, when tens of thousands of civilians were killed. Vonnegut turned his experience into a wry, profound, wildly imaginative sci-fi escapade and provided an invaluable tool, especially for younger readers, for coping with the world.

One of those readers was Robert Weide, who in 1982 as a 23-year-old fledgling filmmaker, wrote a letter to his literary idol, Kurt Vonnegut, asking if he would authorise a documentary about his life and work. Vonnegut wrote back saying, 'Anything that is any good of mine is on a printed page, not film.' Nevertheless, Vonnegut gave his blessing, provided his phone number, and invited his young fan to call him. In his letter, Weide stated he could secure financing within a year. Thirty-nine years later the film is finally finished.

Kurt Vonnegut: Unstuck in Time is a dazzling, worthy tribute to Vonnegut and a compelling introduction for the uninitiated. While a deep, intimate look into his life – the first of its kind in feature length documentary form – the film is also seen through the prism of Vonnegut's long-evolving friendship with director Weide. An Emmy winner (*Curb Your Enthusiasm*) and Academy Award nominee (*Lenny Bruce: Swear to Tell the Truth*), Weide began shooting footage of Vonnegut as far back as 1988, having no idea that the filmmaker and subject would become such close, important friends to each other over the next two decades.

Their on-camera excursions took them to a public speaking engagement by Vonnegut at a Unitarian Church in Buffalo, New York, and to Iowa City where Vonnegut taught at the esteemed Writer's Workshop in the mid-1960s. They would travel to Vonnegut's home state of Indiana, where Vonnegut would visit

his childhood home in Indianapolis and sit for an interview in his old bedroom. They'd also visit his grade school, his high school, the family lakeside cottage in Culver, Indiana, where the extended Vonnegut family spent their summers before the second World War, and the house in William's Creek where Vonnegut's mother would take her own life on Mother's Day in 1943. Weide would also film Vonnegut at numerous public appearances, including a 1997 promotional appearance for *Timequake*, the author's final novel, in New York City, and at his 60th high-school reunion in 2000.

Filming Vonnegut over the span of almost 20 years, the author was opening up to Weide in ways that surprised even his own family and friends – many of whom appear on camera – making for a rich and probing portrait. What Weide couldn't anticipate, however, was that over the years, he and his subject would become very close friends ('family' to use Vonnegut's word), as their lives became personally and professionally entwined. Vonnegut's encouragement led to Weide's decision to marry his then-girlfriend (now his wife of 23 years), and Vonnegut would credit Weide in print, for providing needed support during his sunset years. As nurturing as the friendship was, it would present an unexpected dilemma about the journalistic integrity of the documentary. Weide would have to decide whether it was the film or the friendship that would ultimately take priority.

In order to sort it out, Weide reluctantly entered the film himself, in much the way that Vonnegut would write himself into his books and interact directly with his characters. In doing so, Weide would find himself unstuck in time, like Billy Pilgrim, the unwitting protagonist of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Past, present and future cease to become linear as Weide strives to get an overview of his subject's life and his own role in it.

Weide also invited co-director Don Argott (*The Art of the Steal, Framing John DeLorean*) into the process, who proved invaluable in shaping the narrative of Weide's four-decade journey to complete the film.

Weide explains, 'Vonnegut took huge social, philosophical, existential, and religious issues and filtered them through this great sense of humor, this sort of grounded, simple, Midwestern sensibility. He was a humorist in the same vein as Mark Twain.'

Kurt Vonnegut: Unstuck in Time is first and foremost a biography of a beloved American author. But it also documents a filmmaker's odyssey as he examines the impact of a writer's legacy on his own life, extending far beyond the printed page.

Production notes

KURT VONNEGUT: UNSTUCK IN TIME

Directed by: Robert B. Weide, Don Argott

©: LLC B Plus Productions

Presented by: Whyaduck Productions, 9.14 Pictures

Co-executive Producers: Hugh Thompson, Nicolas Sampson, Kathryn F. Thorne, Omri Lavie

Produced by: Robert B. Weide

Associate Producer: Han Sung-yup

Coordinating Producer: Nancy Kapitanoff

Written by: Robert B. Weide

Camera: Don Argott, David Yosha, Joel Sucher, Buddy Squires

Animation: Vince Gorman

Edited by: William Neal, Bo Price, Demian Fenton

Additional Editing by: Claire Scanlon, Karolina Tuovinen,

Emily Freund, Elyse Holloway

Colourist: Leandro Marini

Original Music: Alex Mansour, Paul Cantelon

Location Audio: Steve Fischler, Don Scales, Demian Fenton, Geoff Maxwell, George Shafnacker, Ann Thompson Brock, Mario Cardenas, Art Pisanski

Post Audio Mix: Ugo Derouard

Dialogue Editor: Mehrnaz Mohabati

Sound Effects Editor: Justin M. Green

Cast

Sam Waterston (*voice over*)

USA 2022

128 mins

An Altitude Films release

NEW RELEASES**Nitram**

From Fri 1 Jul

Wayfinder

From Fri 1 Jul

Brian and Charles

From Fri 8 Jul

Elvis

From Fri 22 Jul

Kurt Vonnegut: Unstuck in Time

From Fri 22 Jul

Hit the Road (Jaddeh Khaki)

From Fri 29 Jul

The Feast

From Fri 19 Aug

Where Is Anne Frank

From Fri 19 Aug

Queen of Glory

From Fri 28 Aug

RE-RELEASES**The Big City (Mahanagar)**

From Fri 22 Jul

Alice in the Cities (Alice in den Städten)

From Fri 15 Jul

The Harder They Come

From Fri 5 Aug (+ intro by season curator and author Lloyd Bradley on Fri 5 Aug 18:15)

Burning an Illusion

From Fri 19 Aug

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