

THE PEOPLE'S PRESIDENT MAN, MYTH AND THE MEDIA

A FILM PRODUCED BY CHUCK WORKMAN AND WETA
A WHITE HOUSE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION PRESENTATION

MEDIA KIT



PREMIERES ON PBS
PRESIDENTS' DAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2006



PRESS RELEASE

White House Historical Association
740 Jackson Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20503

For Immediate Release

Contact: Maria Downs
202.737.8292 x 240
mdowns@whha.org

**THE PEOPLE'S PRESIDENT
MAN, MYTH AND THE MEDIA
PREMIERES ON PBS
PRESIDENTS' DAY, FEBRUARY 20**

A Documentary by Academy-award Winning Filmmaker Chuck Workman

America's perception of the presidency is often driven by image. *The People's President: Man, Myth and the Media*, looks at the role of Hollywood film and network/cable television in both shaping and reflecting America's views of the presidency. The one-hour documentary will premiere on Presidents' Day, Monday, February 20 at 9:00 pm on PBS (check local listings). The film is a presentation of the White House Historical Association, and is produced by Chuck Workman in association with WETA Washington, D.C. *The People's President* is dedicated to the late Hugh Sidey, journalist, historian and former chairman and long-time member of the board of directors of the White House Historical Association.

For as long as film has captured the president, Hollywood has been there to provide its take on the nation's leader. In 1915, Abraham Lincoln was portrayed in *Birth of a Nation*. Henry Fonda played *Young Mr. Lincoln* in 1939. Fonda also played a fictional president in *Meteor*, trying to protect citizens from a runaway asteroid headed for Earth. With the help of the Soviets, and Sean Connery, the world is saved from annihilation.

In *The People's President*, Workman has weaved together 130 clips from film (*Kisses for my President*, *All the President's Men*, *Dave*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*); television (*The West Wing*, *Truman*); newsreels and press coverage plus presidential caricatures, cartoons, and souvenirs, to explain the traits we treasure in our leader and the danger of idealizing or demonizing the president at the expense of understanding the daily grind of governance.

When Hollywood and television productions meet the presidency, viewers are presented with a mix of bio-pics and complete fabrication – both of which tend to give us the president we all wish to call our own.

As film critic Richard Schickel comments: “When people set off to make a movie about a president, whether it’s a fictional one or a real one, I think they start out good heartedly and seriously. And it’s going to get into some of the ideas and some of the issues that plagued this president; ‘we’re going to deal with that’, but then the reality of movies take over. . . . And the reality of movies is always toward simplification.”

The People’s President features narrations by actors Michael Douglas, Kathy Bates, LeVar Burton, Charlton Heston, Martin Sheen and Robert Duvall and commentary by historians and film critics including Hugh Sidey, Richard Schickel, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Douglas Brinkley, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Peggy Noonan, and insights from former presidents Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, George H.W. Bush, and Bill Clinton.

Chuck Workman has been involved in filmmaking and theater for more than twenty-five years as an award-winning director, writer, and producer. Workman’s theatrical short, *Precious Images*, won an Academy Award for Best Live Action Short. His work frequently appears on the Oscar broadcast. Two of his recent documentaries, on Andy Warhol and on the Beat Generation, appeared on PBS after extensive theatrical runs.

The White House Historical Association, chartered in 1961, is a non-profit historical and educational organization whose goal is to enhance public understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the Executive Mansion. Proceeds from the association’s trusts, publications and other items are used to fund acquisitions of historic furnishings and artwork for the permanent White House collection, assist in the preservation of the public rooms, and further its educational mission.

WETA Washington, D.C. is the third-largest producing station in the public television system. WETA’s other productions and co-productions include *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, *Washington Week*, *In Performance at the White House*, *The Kennedy Center Presents*, and documentaries by filmmaker Ken Burns, including *The Civil War* and *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson*. Sharon Percy Rockefeller is president and CEO. More information on WETA and its programs and services is available on the Website www.weta.org.

The broadcast presentation, *The People’s President: Man, Myth and Media*, is made possible by the **Annenberg Foundation** in support of the WETA Program Trust.

For more information about *The People’s President: Man, Myth and Media* visit www.whha.org. Check local listings.

#



President Richard Nixon greeting Elvis in the Oval Office on December 21, 1970.
Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives



Ronald Reagan at the General Electric Theater, circa 1958.
Ronald Reagan Library