

Beat documentary goes directly to 'The Source'

■ "The Source" examines the Beat Generation using a simplistic yet passionate approach and focus

MOVIES

The Source

Documentary about the Beat Generation; interview footage with Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs, among others. Directed by Chuck Workman. WinStar Cinema.

★★★★☆

By Jack Clifford
Oregon Daily Emerald

"The Source," a new documentary by Chuck Workman, is close to being a perfect example of the genre.

The film elicits thoughtful insights from its subjects with amusing anecdotal tales or off-the-cuff comments, while balancing its factual, mostly linear nature with broad strokes of unrestrained passion.

The entire time, Workman dabbles in just enough poignancy to remind viewers that human beings are at the heart of his project, but we never feel manipulated by the technique.

The fact that this documentary's focus is the Beat Generation — with spotlights on Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs and Neal Cassady, the movement's widely recognized originators — makes "The Source" all the more worth some serious finger snapping.

The Beats were a group of po-

ets who were well-known for rebelling against conservatism and conformity, society's overwhelming traits in the late '40s and early '50s. Yet, the core group never really wanted to change society. They just wanted to do their own thing and they wanted to talk about it using cool lingo.

On most levels, Workman's film is simplistic in its approach. He approaches the subject matter through combined recent and archival interviews with the main figures and then complements those comments with interviews from the somewhat more peripheral contributors to the Beat culture — for example, Jerry Garcia, Phillip Glass, Bob Dylan, Norman Mailer and Timothy Leary all toss in their colorful perceptions and recollections.

Locals will appreciate the heavy screen time accorded Pleasant Hill resident and noted Merry Prankster Ken Kesey, whose novel "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" bridged the gap between the Beat and hippie generations.

Yet, Workman also digs beneath the surface of his muses' motives and thought processes, sometimes in almost indiscernible manner.

During one scene with Burroughs for instance, the self-proclaimed drug addict is asked why he has tortured his body and mind so much throughout the years. The camera catches the author's bemused look that he substitutes for an answer, one that conveys a sense of sympathy toward the querist for not appreciating or understanding what that lifestyle produced.



Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs anchor Chuck Workman's documentary "The Source," which examines the societal and artistic impact of the Beat Generation. The movie opens Friday at the Bijou Art Cinemas. Courtesy WinStar Cinema

There is no surprise here that the beat poets and authors are intriguing. Anyone who has ever read Kerouac's seminal beat offering "On The Road" or Ginsberg's poem "Howl" will be drawn to this film due to a thirst for a more complete picture.

Workman weaves key facts and dates throughout the film, as well, without the information coming across as static. Viewers can almost envision Kerouac and Ginsberg meeting for the first time in 1944 at Columbia University, while Burroughs — already hooked on heroin — circles the pair in a destined convergence.

Workman recruited a trio of Hollywood stars to read excerpts from the Beat authors' literary collections, which adds a more con-

temporary feel to "The Source."

In perhaps the most brilliant and inspired reading, actor John Turturro brings alive Ginsberg's "Howl." Turturro is shown pacing on a Brooklyn rooftop in the middle of a freezing night, while his impassioned recitation explodes on the screen.

Dennis Hopper, as might be expected, is given the task of verbalizing several of Burroughs' selections to the audience. Hopper embodies Burroughs' frenzied, hallucinogenic literary style.

Unfortunately Johnny Depp's attempts at conveying the same liveliness to Kerouac's work fall short. In a way, Depp comes across as too cool, which in turn caricaturizes his endeavors.

The Beat Generation receives

deserved credit for influencing other counter-culture movements and figures. Without Ginsberg and Burroughs laying down a foundation, would Andy Warhol's impact on pop culture have been so compelling?

In addition, Workman intersperses amusing outtakes from television's golden era relating to the Beats. Yet the scope of Workman's subject matter becomes clear when an old TV clip shows an animated character from "The Flintstones," wearing the essential Beat look — black clothes, black beret and a little goatee.

Hey, if the scene is groovy enough for Bedrock, the rest of us will get a kick out of it, as well.

"The Source" opens Friday at the Bijou Art Cinemas.

Controversy over museum censorship has positive effect

■ The Grants Pass Museum of Art closed but reopened in a more community-accessible location

By Sara Jarrett
Oregon Daily Emerald

Late last year, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani revoked

funding and closed an exhibit in the Brooklyn Museum of Art because it sponsored an exhibit using cow dung to depict the Virgin Mary.

The Christians and other critics who vocalized their outrage said they were disgusted by the blasphemy, yet opposition to Giuliani's decision was high and the

word "censorship" was used to describe his act.

Closer to home, in Southern Oregon, the division between conservative and liberal thought is most profound when the subject is art. A battle over what Grants Pass Museum of Art Director Don Brown calls that city's attempt at censorship resulted in the relocation of the museum in February 1999.

Grants Pass Mayor Gordon Anderson maintains, however, that the relocation wasn't an issue of him or the city council censoring the museum.

He says the museum moved because of eminent domain, which means the government has the power to take private property when it is needed for some public use. Anderson said the city's attorney read the clause as stating if a private entity is housed in a public building, it is subject to the decisions of the people.

Anderson therefore draws a distinction between banning exhibits because of citizens' complaints and that of censorship.

"People complain about rapists all the time," he said. "Is that cen-

sorship?"

What is clear, no matter whom the mayor wants to blame, is that the museum was forced to move because of the threat of somebody deciding what was to be displayed on its walls. Even though this debate began more than a year ago, Brown says that the decision still evokes loathsome feelings in people who believe and value the sanctity of art.

Brown and Anderson do agree on one aspect of this controversy: The move has been the best thing to happen to the museum and the art community in Grants Pass.

Though it forfeited a spot in a new \$300,000 building, the museum's disengagement from the city resulted in a move to a better, more accessible location.

"We threw everything out the window, found a space on the second floor above a thrift store and decided to forget the city completely," Brown said.

In one year, there has been an increase from 10 to 12 visitors per day to an average of 40 to 50, Brown estimates. There are also now on average 450 to 500 people participating in the museum's

First Friday Art Walk.

That number is up from 40 to 50 people who participated last November. Brown says that, in addition, more local artists than ever before have decided to become museum members.

"[They] can now belong with us and be separate at the same time, something they didn't feel before," he said.

This involvement means more than just an influx of monetary support. The increase in patronage allows for a bigger membership show twice a year and a cohesion of the citizens who speak up against censorship.

"Giving the finger to the city brought the art community together and solidified art in this town," Brown said.

That solidarity has subsequently created a greater polarization between the non-censorship people and their opponents who are cast in a familiar role.

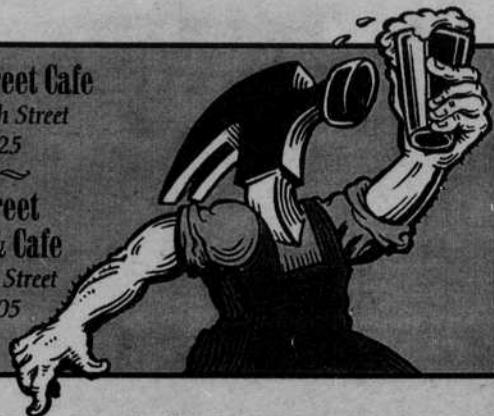
"The mayor is strong Christian right," Brown said.

Incidentally, Anderson says he also supported Giuliani's decision in New York.

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Entertainment brief

Faculty authors give joint reading Jan. 18

Ehud Havazelet, the most recent recipient of the Oregon Book Award for fiction, and novelist Grace Talusan will give a joint reading on Jan. 18 at the University as part of the Creative Writing Program Writing Series.

The readings, free and open to the public, will begin at 8 p.m. in the Browsing room of the Knight Library. A book signing will follow.

"Like Never Before," Havazelet's second collection of short stories, earned him the 1999 H.L. Davis Award for fiction in the Oregon Book Awards. Both the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times had called his collection of connected stories one of the

best books of 1998, and The Oregonian called it the best regional book of the year.

Havazelet, the director of fiction for the Creative Writing Program, is a graduate of Columbia University and the famed Iowa Writer's Workshop. He has published fiction in such notable literary journals as DoubleTake, The Southern Review and the New England Review.

Talusan, a recent graduate of the fiction writing program at the University of California at Irvine, received an Oregon Humanities Center research grant to spend time in the Philippines researching her novel-in-progress, "Like Any American Girl." This reading will be the first public appearance in Eugene for Talusan, this year's visiting writer in fiction at the Creative Writing Program.

For more information, call 346-0544.