



Robert Drew and the Development of Cinema Verite in America

P.J. O'Connell

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Author P. J. O'Connell traces Robert Drew's influence on cinema verite through extensive interviews with Drew and with some of the founding fathers of American cinema verite filmmaking—Donn Alan Pennebaker, Gregory Shuker, and Richard Leacock.

Robert Drew's contributions to documentary film have been both technical and conceptual. Realizing that his equipment was too heavy and intrusive, Drew persuaded Time-Life Broadcasting to sponsor the development of new, lightweight, portable synchronous sound equipment that freed documentary filmmakers from the bulky, tripod-mounted, AC-powered equipment of the past. His new technology allowed him to capture intense moments as they happened, and to make viewers feel personally involved in the events he presented. While making more than twenty documentaries in the early 1960s, Drew continued to initiate innovations that were not thought possible a generation before him.

P. J. O'Connell is the executive producer of public affairs at Penn State Television and an affiliate assistant professor in the School of Communication at Penn State University.

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