

Tigerlily Pictures Presents
A Film By Jennifer M. Kroot
In Association With Dodgeville Films
TRT: 1 hr 31 minutes
Country of Production: USA, 2017
HD/16:9/ Dolby 5.1

LOGLINE

THE UNTOLD TALES OF ARMISTEAD MAUPIN celebrates one of the world's most beloved storytellers, following his evolution from a conservative son of the Old South into a gay rights pioneer whose novels inspired millions to re-claim their lives.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

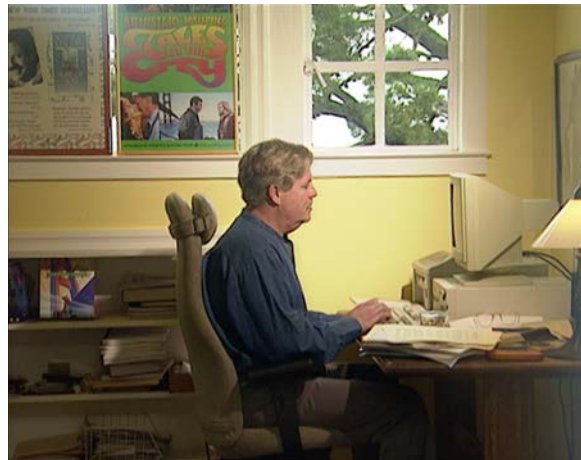
THE UNTOLD TALES OF ARMISTEAD MAUPIN examines the life and work of one of the world's most beloved storytellers, following his evolution from a conservative son of the Old South into a gay rights pioneer whose novels have inspired millions to claim their own truth. Jennifer Kroot's feature documentary about the creator of "Tales of the City" moves nimbly between the playful and poignant and laugh-out-loud funny.

LONG SYNOPSIS

THE UNTOLD TALES OF ARMISTEAD MAUPIN examines the life and work of one of the world's most beloved storytellers, following his evolution from a conservative son of the Old South into a gay rights pioneer whose novels have inspired millions to claim their own truth. Jennifer Kroot's documentary about the creator of TALES OF THE CITY moves nimbly between playful and poignant and laugh-out-loud funny. With help from his friends (including Neil Gaiman, Laura Linney, Olympia Dukakis, Sir Ian McKellen and Amy Tan) Maupin offers a disarmingly frank look at the journey that took him from the jungles of Vietnam to the bathhouses of 70's San Francisco to the front line of the American culture war.

STORY SUMMARY

The Untold Tale of Armistead Maupin celebrates the prolific writing career of a beloved literary figure. Author Armistead Maupin is best known for his *Tales of the City* novels that began as a newspaper column for The San Francisco Chronicle in 1976. However Armistead's own "tales" are stranger than fiction, following the evolution of a conservative son of the Old South into a beloved activist for LGBTQ rights. From the Vietnam War, to the Nixon White House, to the bathhouses of San Francisco, Armistead recounts his extraordinary journey from a close-minded individual to an essential, open-hearted progressive, whose voice has inspired millions of readers.



Tales of the City became wildly popular for its' portrayal of gay and straight characters living together in a mythic apartment house run by a pot smoking, transgender landlady. The novels set a precedent for the inclusion of queer people in mainstream American literature. Today, when same-sex relationships are a common part of pop culture, it is difficult to remember the ways that *Tales* shattered barriers, presenting queer characters as folks who experience the same foibles, follies and desire for love that lie at the heart of the human condition everywhere.

Armistead was born in Washington D.C. in 1944, but grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina. His father was a prominent attorney of aristocratic Southern stock. Armistead remembers, “I was spoon-fed the family tradition of ancestor worship. I fell in love with a highly romanticized view of history. I completely bought the whole Civil War mythology and the kind of phoney antebellum romance that was being peddled in *Gone with the Wind*.”

In his youth, Armistead deeply admired a family friend, future U.S. Senator Jesse Helms, and regarded him as a “political mentor and hero.” In 1967, Helms was a conservative journalist at WRAL-TV, and hired Armistead to work for him. Armistead wrote critiques of civil rights actions. Ironically, years later, when the miniseries of *Tale of the City* was produced for PBS, it was Jesse Helms’s campaign against homosexuality on public television that led to the show’s cancellation.

During the Vietnam War, Armistead enlisted as a US Naval Officer. After his final tour, he returned to Vietnam to participate in a program created by President Nixon for ex-GIs to build homes for disabled Vietnamese veterans. He says, “I jumped at the chance to participate when I found out the program was a right wing propaganda offensive to prove that some American GIs supported Nixon’s efforts. I regarded the venture as a patriotic duty as a counter offense against John Kerry and Vietnam veterans against the war.” Armistead met President Nixon in the Oval Office. Even after Armistead came out, he kept a photograph of himself shaking Nixon’s hand on his wall. He remembers, “the men that I brought home reacted as if they’d walked into Jeffrey Dahmer’s lair when they saw the picture.”

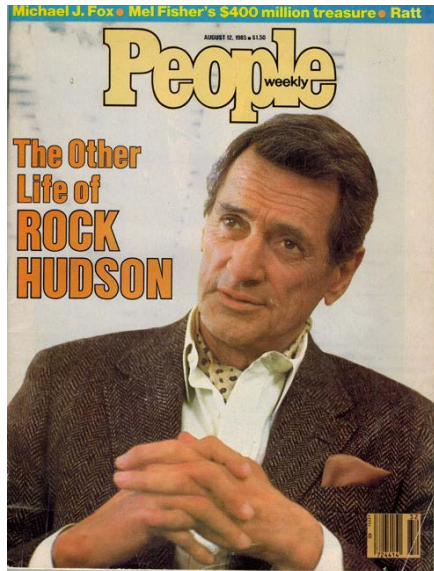


When Armistead came out, he was just under thirty years old and living in San Francisco. He says that “being in this supportive environment made my own tolerance expand. Ultimately, my heart opened.” After decades lying to himself and others, it became key to Maupin to live with honesty and integrity. He believes, “the world changes in direct proportion to the number of people willing to be honest about their lives.”



Once *Tales of the City* took off as a newspaper column, Armistead gained instant notoriety as a celebrity in the Bay Area. When he decided to tell his parents that he was gay, he did it through his series. Armistead knew that his parents were subscribing to *The Chronicle*, and so he wrote an episode in which one of his main characters (Michael Tolliver) wrote a letter coming out to his mother. The legendary episode is titled *Letter to Mama*. Armistead feels that *Letter to Mama* is the most important thing he’s ever written. He says, “Hundreds of gay readers of the *Chronicle* must

have felt equally comfortable with such indirect communication because they chose to cut out the episode and mail it to the unsuspecting folks back home with a “me too” as a postscript.”



In the late 1970's, Armistead met the iconic leading man, Rock Hudson. They became friends and casual lovers. Armistead remembers how intimidated he was by Rock, “the first time we were together, I couldn't ‘perform’. Rock said, ‘I'm just like any other guy.’ And I said, ‘yeah right, and I'm Doris Day.’” Ultimately, Armistead ended the friendship, disapproving of the lengths that Hudson went to maintain his closeted life. When it became public that Rock Hudson had AIDS, a journalist asked Maupin if Rock was gay. Maupin responded, “of course he's gay, and what a terrible tragedy it is that this nice man who played this horrible game all his life was finally revealed through a deadly illness.” This was one of the first acts of “outing” (before the action was even a verb). Armistead was widely vilified in the gay press for what was seen as “a betrayal of the home team.”

Armistead has been accused of “outing” other homosexual celebrities, including Lily Tomlin. Armistead defends his position, stating, “It's not your responsibility to be discreet for the sake of people who are still ashamed of their own nature. What earthly good is your discretion when teenagers are still being murdered for the crime of effeminacy?”

Armistead explains that even for him, “I have never really stopped coming out of the closet. I've done it on airplanes with total strangers, because even the kindest people still make the presumption of heterosexuality. I can handle that, but I want to scream when some jokey talk show host asks a little boy if he has found a girlfriend yet. Children are constantly made aware of what is expected them, and that's agony for kids who are trans or queer.”

At 72, Armistead's avuncular, southern charm and warm personality appear to be almost in opposition to his headstrong tactics. He warns people not to be complacent because of the recent breakthroughs in marriage equality. “I'm not done with this fight just because I have a ring on my finger. When it comes to bigotry, hearts have always taken longer to change than laws. There are still children everywhere being tormented and driven to suicide, still people being beaten by police or thrown off a roof in the name of one lousy god or another. Here in America there are preachers and politicians who pander *more than they ever* have to the notion that LGBT people are somehow less than human. They do it in name of “religious liberty,” completing the big lie that the persecutors are the ones being persecuted. That scares the shit of me.”

CREW BIOS

Director Jennifer M. Kroot, is a seasoned documentary filmmaker. Her most recent feature length documentary, *To Be Takei*, a portrait of actor/activist George Takei (Star Trek), premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival and was released theatrically by Starz Digital in August 2014 to critical acclaim. Her feature documentary *It Came From Kuchar*, following cult filmmaking duo George and Mike Kuchar, premiered at the 2009 South by Southwest Film Festival.

Kroot brings a background in underground filmmaking to her documentaries, and uses that sensibility to create surprises within her stories. Her tales incorporate shifts in pace and tone that

allow a fluid and engaging structure. Kroot focuses on the humanity of her subjects, keeping their stories accessible and unpretentious.

She has received grants from the Andy Warhol Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Frameline, the Pacific Pioneer Fund, California Civil Liberties Public Education Program and the Fleishhacker Foundation. Kroot is a Bay Area native and studied film at The San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), where she taught film. She has been a guest lecturer at Stanford and Denver University.

Editor Bill Weber is a San Francisco based documentary editor. He directed and edited the documentary feature THE COCKETTES which premiered at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival and 2002 Berlinale. Bill co-directed and edited the documentary feature WE WERE HERE, which played at the 2011 Sundance and Berlinale festivals, and TO BE TAKEI, which premiered at Sundance in 2014. As an editor, Bill's work includes A REVOLUTION IN FOUR SEASONS, 2016 HotDocs, FEELINGS ARE FACTS: THE LIFE OF YVONNE RAINER, 2015 Berlinale, THE GALAPAGOS AFFAIR, 2013 Telluride Film Festival and 2014 Berlinale, and the Oscar nominated documentary short film, THE FINAL INCH. He also edited the award winning documentaries LAST LETTERS HOME and THE ALZHEIMER'S PROJECT.

Producers Gerry Kim and Mayuran Tiruchelvam formed Dodgeville Films to produce humanistic narrative and documentary films. They are Sundance Institute Creative Producing fellows and Film Independent Fellows. Their most recent feature film, MY FIRST KISS AND THE PEOPLE INVOLVED premiered at the 2016 LA Film Festival. They also produced the romantic drama ACROSS THE SEA, winner of the audience award at the 2015 Slamdance Film Festival, and documentaries TO BE TAKEI, which premiered at Sundance in 2014, and FAREWELL FERRIS WHEEL, 2016 AFI Docs.

Gerry produced the documentary THE HOUSE OF SUH, which premiered at the 2010 Hot Docs, and aired on MSNBC in 2011. Mayuran's screenwriting and producing debut, THE GIRL IS IN TROUBLE was Executive Produced by Spike Lee and released by eOne in 2015. He co-produced THE MEND, 2014 SXSW.

Gerry and Mayuran received MFA's from Columbia University's Graduate Film Program, where Mayuran is an adjunct faculty member. Their work has been supported by the Princess Grace Foundation, the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Producers Guild of America, and the Sundance Institute.

CREDITS

Tigerlily Pictures Presents
A Film By Jennifer M. Kroot
In Association With Dodgeville Films

Written and Directed by

Jennifer M. Kroot

Edited and Co-Directed by

Bill Weber

Produced by

Gerry Kim

Jennifer M. Kroot
Mayuran Tiruchelvam

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Shane King

Composer

Michael Hearst

Sound Edit & Mix

Lora Hirschberg

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Lewis Gillian

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Jeffrey Schwarz

Associate Producers

Mission Pictures

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Frazer Bradshaw

Chris Million

New York Cinematographers

Matt Bockelman

Gregg Conde

Saro Varjabedian

Los Angeles Cinematographer

Matt May

Provincetown Cinematographer

Christopher Turner

Production Sound Recordists

Lauretta Molitor

Gerry Berkowitz

Pablo Diez

Jack Flachsbart

Alberto Leon

Chris White

Mark Whelan

Additional Animation

Akemi Abe

Illustrations

Bill Georgiou

Post Production Supervisor

Bill Weber

Color Correction

Chris Martin

Still Photography

Will Zang

Hair and Makeup

Joel King

Stacy Beneke

Catalina Cacho

Josephine Perrone

Emma Strachmann

Production Assistants

Will Zang

Val Castro

Arianna Fujimoto Harris

Taylor Whitehouse

Los Angeles Data Manager

Wes Gathright

Los Angeles Coordinators

Jon Glover

Michelle Silva

Editorial Assistance

Val Castro

Jessica Sison

Taylor Whitehouse

Will Zang

Archival Producer

Gerry Kim

Archival Research

Rosalia Valenica -Tow

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ZAP Zoetrope Aubry Productions

Mission Film & Design

Audio Post Facility

Skywalker Sound

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Movette

Transcription

Heather Larsen

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Donaldson + Callif LLP
Lisa Callif
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Distribution Advisor

Orly Ravid

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Additional Materials

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Letters Live
Miramax
National Enquirer
Newsweek
Pacific Sun
PBS
HBO
People Magazine
Portland's Gay Men Chorus
Time Magazine
Universal Pictures
Universal Television
Warner Brothers
Working Title Films
WRAL
Village Voice

MUSIC

Bell Note Lullaby
Written by Harold Geller

Atmosphere Music Ltd PRS
Courtesy of Killer Tracks

Dream Sequence
Written by Piero Piccioni
Universal Music Publishing Ricordi srl [SIAE]
Courtesy of Killer Tracks

Planet 54
Written by Dave Ruffy [PRS], Gary Tibbs [ASCAP], Peter Glenister [PRS]
Soundcast Music SESAC
Courtesy of Killer Tracks

“Tres Pasajeros”
Written by Chica Libre
Performed by Chica Libre
Courtesy of Marc Hollander, Pierre Mossiat

"San Francisco (You've Got Me)"
Performed by Village People
Courtesy of The Island Def Jam Music Group under license from Universal Music Enterprises and Scorpio
Music, S.A.

Additional Musicians

Ben Holmes - trumpet
Beth Meyers - viola
Sam Sadigursky - clarinet and flute

Daddy Hunt Models

Michael Daly
Gus D'Angelo
Jim Foster
Mark Garrett
Lewis Gillian
Dino Haightdean
Jeff Kroot
Mike Kuchar
Mayuran Tiruchelvam
Eric Smith
Bill Weber
Will Zang

Interviews (in alphabetical order)

Kate Bornstein
Charles Busch
Margaret Cho
Olympia Dukakis
Neil Gaiman
Jewelle Gomez
Jonathan Groff
Peggy Knickerbocker
Laura Linney

Selene Luna
Armistead Maupin
Jane Maupin Yates
Sir Ian McKellen
Barbara Newhall
Bob Olynger
Amanda Palmer with Ash Gaiman
Alan Poul
Amy Tan
Richard Thieriot
Christopher Turner

Thanks

Don Bachardy
Salvatore Botti
Marcus Chan
Alex Cherian
Christine DiCrocco
The Crown and Anchor
Alan Cumming
Dog Eared Books
Joseph Ferrucci
Rachel Gordon
Dena Hammerstein
Todd Hargis
Gladys Helzberg
Yvonne Israel-O'Hare
Rachel Klyce
James Lecesne
Markgarrett.com
Michael Michaud
Pat Montandon
Ellen Moore
Raymond L. Mulliner
Scott Norman
Kevin O'Connell
Dave O'Hare
Alvin Orloff
Abigail Reider
David Sarno
Adrian Smith
Tom Spitz
Angie Thieriot
Trent Thornley
Trip Weil

Very Special Thanks

Gus D'Angelo
Tina S. Kroot
Jeff Kroot
Lewis Gillian
Aaron Starr
Florence Pak

Eric G. Smith
Junia Tiruchelvam
Vasudevan Tiruchelvam
Philo
Gus
Koko
Pele

In Loving Memory of Gail "Anni Abbi" D'Angelo

Dedicated to the spirits of San Francisco including...

Elender Wall
Randy David
Michael Cooper
Art Holman
Steve Beery
Richard Ideamon

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