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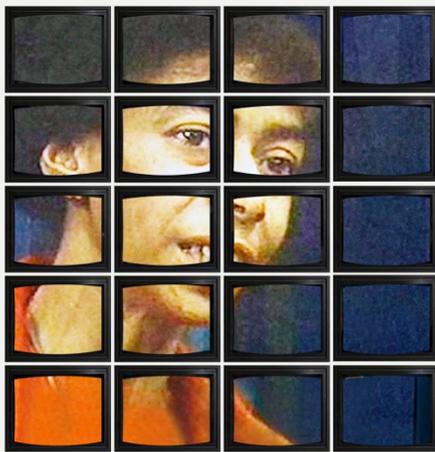
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**RECORDER: THE MARION STOKES PROJECT PREMIERES ON
INDEPENDENT LENS MONDAY, JUNE 15, 2020 ON PBS AND
PBS.ORG**

Acclaimed documentary explores the strange life of a radical activist-turned-recluse who videotaped everything on TV for thirty years in the name of truth



30 years of television. 24 hours a day. 70,000 tapes.

RECORDER
The Marion Stokes Project

(San Francisco, CA) Wednesday, May 6, 2020
— A fiercely intelligent, radical activist who became a fabulously wealthy recluse in her later years, Marion Stokes was dedicated to furthering and protecting the truth — so much so that she recorded American television 24 hours a day for over 30 years. Now, the critically acclaimed documentary **Recorder: The Marion Stokes Project** peels back the curtain on her life, through a mix of Stokes’ own archive of recordings and interviews with those who knew her best.

Heralded by the *New York Times* as “Weirdly exhilarating... Enlightening and the stuff of madness,” and named a *Times* Critic’s Pick, **Recorder: The Marion Stokes Project** premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, June 15, 2020, 10:00-11:30 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS, PBS.org and the PBS Video App.

Long before the term “fake news” entered the national conversation, Philadelphia-based activist Marion Stokes recognized the shifting nature of the media and the importance of protecting the truth. Stokes worked in television in the late 1960s and believed in the power of the medium to inform or misinform the public. She determined that a comprehensive archive of national media would one day be invaluable, and began recording television broadcasts in 1979, starting with news broadcasts of the Iranian hostage crisis at the dawn of the twenty-four-hour news cycle, and continuing until her death in 2012.

Spanning 70,000 video tapes that captured revolutions, lies, wars, triumphs, catastrophes, bloopers, talk shows, and commercials, Stokes’ visionary and maddening project nearly tore her family apart. Recalling her as “extraordinarily, indescribably loyal to her own preferences and tendencies and beliefs,” family members and others close to Stokes reflect on their relationships with this complicated and dogmatic woman. Through these interviews, Marion Stokes emerges in



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vivid detail as a highly intelligent, challenging figure who nevertheless recognized transformative shifts in media and technology as they were happening, and who had the prescience to foresee the importance of creating an archive of American television for posterity.

Stokes' instincts were right. Even as she was making her recordings, American television networks were disposing of their archives; decades of footage disappeared into the trashcan of history. Thanks to Stokes' project, this footage has been saved and her 70,000 tapes are now being digitized for future generations by the Internet Archive. Her work as an archivist will make its impact felt for generations to come, giving us all an eye-opening glimpse into how television shaped, and continues to shape, our world.

Visit the [Recorder: The Marion Stokes Project](#) page on *Independent Lens* for more information about the film.

About the Filmmaker

Matt Wolf (Director)

Matt Wolf is an award-winning filmmaker in New York whose feature documentaries include *Wild Combination*, about the cult cellist and disco producer Arthur Russell, and *Teenage*, about early youth culture and the birth of teenagers. His new film *Spaceship Earth* about the controversial Biosphere 2 experiment premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and is now streaming on Hulu and other digital platforms. Matt's short films include *I Remember*, about the artist and poet Joe Brainard, Time Magazine's *The Face of AIDS* about a controversial Benetton advertisement, and *Bayard & Me*, about the civil rights activist Bayard Rustin. He is also the director of HBO's *It's Me, Hilary* and was the co-curator of film for the 2019 Whitney Biennial. He is a Guggenheim Fellow.

CREDITS

Directed by	Matt Wolf
Produced by	Kyle Martin Lisa Ciuffetti Andrew Kortschak Walter Kortschak Munika Lay
Executive Producers	Brendan Doyle Sally Jo Fifer Pete Sillen Lois Vossen
Edited by	Keiko Deguchi
Music by	Owen Pallett
Cinematographers	Chris Dapkins Matt Mitchell



About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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