

TAGLINE:

Everything popular is wrong.

3-LINE SYNOPSIS:

Born on Halloween, 1957, Chicago poet Thaxter Elliot Douglas III was destined to become an indie-rock superhero. THAX unearths the man who became the mask.

125-WORD SYNOPSIS:

When Thaxter was fourteen, a mystical vision told him that he would become a famous poet. By the time his beard went white, he had performed thousands of poems to introduce bands as diverse as Wilco, The Flaming Lips, Zwan, Tortoise, Modest Mouse, Built to Spill, The Microphones, and The Brian Jonestown Massacre. His presence at a Chicago rock show has become the unofficial stamp of underground legitimacy for many bands, and a potential omen of their impending indie glory. Performing at a dive-bar one night, and in an arena the next, Thax is a self-made rock-n-roll ambassador, navigating the treacherous divide between the signed and the unsigned.

250-WORD SYNOPSIS:

After years of introducing bands in Chicago, Thax is often referred to as "the poet laureate of indie-rock". Right before the band goes on, he recites a spontaneous poetry portrait to bless the stage. His paternal white beard, round belly, and gentle cadence make him appear to be something of a rock-n-roll holy man; the shaman from a pre-MTV era, when the cause of independent music seemed to reach far beyond the individual. In Chicago, he is singular and unmistakable.

Thax is growing tired of this image. The truth is nobody knows him. He wants to be appreciated for more than just what he appears to represent. He wants to be seen as a person, not a character. He wants to be recognized for what he writes, not how he looks. Like a baseball mascot removing his head to yell at the crowd, Thax tells us the real story, whether or not we want to hear it. The result is stranger than fact.

In act III, as the film breaks from its direct-cinema roots, to examine Thax's tumultuous past through home video and family testimony, we approach a new understanding of the darker, subtler, divergent meanings of poetry and rock-n-roll in the 21st century. This film examines the mysterious line that separates the underground from the mainstream, poetry from advertising, fantasy from prophecy, and success from celebrity. Taking cues from CRUMB, AMERICAN MOVIE, and GREY GARDENS before it, THAX is a film in search of the source of defiant individuality.

PRODUCTION STORY:

“Albert Maysles, Yoko Ono, and The Dakota”

At the end of 2004, Thax followed Wilco to the last stop on their tour: NYC's Madison Square Garden. When we arrived with our cameras, we were amazed to discover that Thax had been invited to stay at The Dakota, as a guest of The Maysles family. Thax caught a ride with someone who was driving to New York to catch the Wilco show, and this guy turned out to be good friends with Albert's daughter. With gratitude, we passed through the heavy gates, soon to encounter a plaque indicating that the apartment across the hall belonged to none other than Yoko Ono. Gleefully, Thax took the liberty of slipping a copy of his CD under her door. (In 2007, Yoko Ono headlined the Pitchfork Music Festival in Chicago, but Thax did not attend.)