

Film Review: Author Remains Elusive in Documentary ‘Salinger’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 20, 2013 - 10:18am

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CHICAGO – Jerome David Salinger, J.D. to his readers, remains one of the most influential and controversial authors of the 20th Century. Known intuitively for the classic novel “Catcher in the Rye,” he also was known as a reclusive soul. His life and times make up the new documentary, “Salinger.”



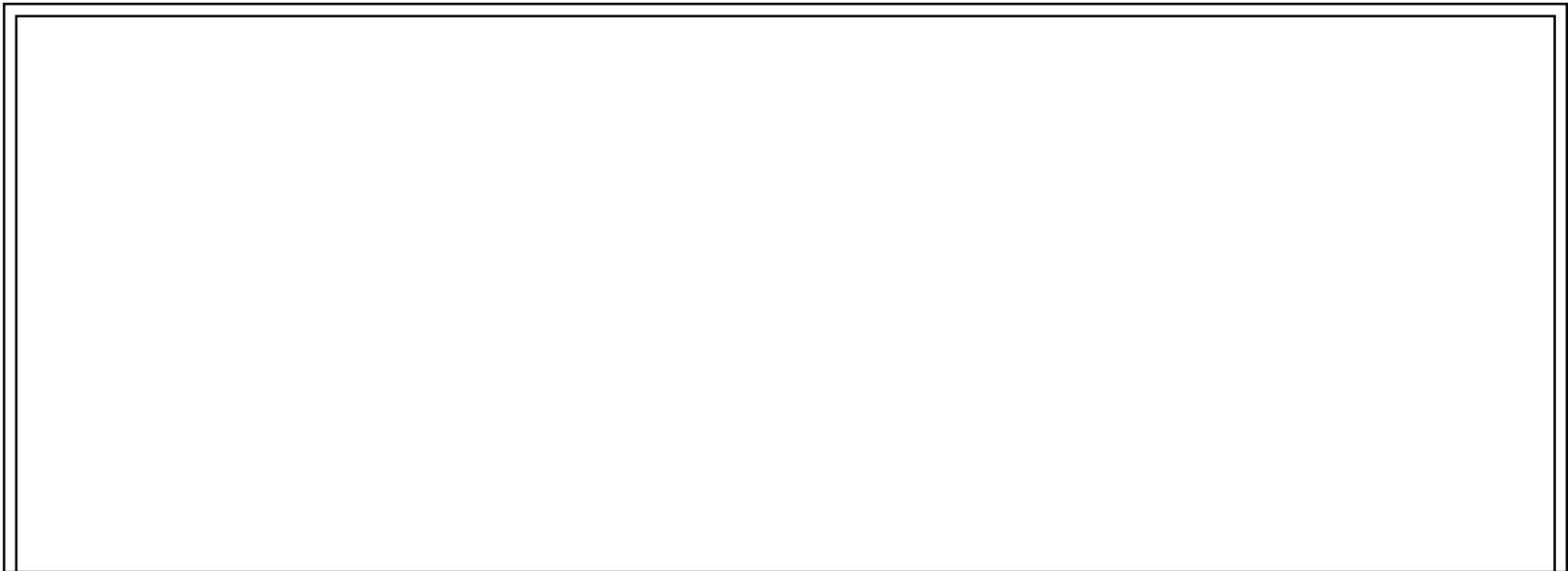
If you know nothing about J.D. Salinger, this document will fill in the gaps. However, there is a sense of redundancy in the piece – readers love his writing! he’s reclusive! – without a feeling of the inner humanity. Virtually all of the “documentary techniques” are thrown against the wall in this film – talking heads, archive footage, reader appreciations, celebrities and actor recreations, and all of this creates a bit of a jumble. Points that are made early in the film are reiterated later, with no perception of purpose. In the end, it feels that J.D. Salinger will remain a mystery, and cannot be captured in summary – there are too many gaps in his 91 years on earth. For the writer that rejected his celebrity, he elusively gets the last laugh.

J.D. Salinger was born in New York City in 1919. He was a child of upper middle class parents, and was an educated product of private and military schools. His love for writing came during his teenage years. Although he was in and out of colleges during the late 1930s, he met a teacher who encouraged him to submit his short stories to magazines.

World War 2 temporarily derailed his writing career, as he participated in ground troop maneuvers associated with D-Day. Back in New York City after the war, he began to write in earnest, and eventually release the novel “Catcher in the Rye” in 1951. The book exploded as a cultural touchstone – still selling 250,000 copies a year – and forced the reluctant Salinger into a world of literary superstardom. He denied that world, and only published two novellas and a collection of short stories thereafter. He became just as famous for escaping his fame, as he had been as an author.

“Salinger” continues its limited release in Chicago on September 20th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Directed by Shane Salerno. Rated “PG-13”

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The Agony, Ecstasy and Nicotine: The Author in an Early Publicity Portrait in ‘Salinger’
Photo credit: The Weinstein Company



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