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## THIRTEEN's American Masters Presents World Premiere of The Highwaymen: Friends Till the End, featuring Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Johnny Cash, and Kris Kristofferson, May 27 on PBS

New documentary about country music's first supergroup features rare concert and behind-the-scenes footage as well as new interviews with Nelson, Kristofferson, Toby Keith, John Mellencamp, Jessi Colter and others. Willie's the outlaw coyote. Waylon's the riverboat gambler. I'm the revolutionary communist radical and John is the father of our country. – Kris Kristofferson

**NEW YORK** – Frequently referred to as “the Mount Rushmore of country music,” The Highwaymen – Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Johnny Cash, and Kris Kristofferson – were American country music's first bona fide supergroup, an epic quartet comprised of the outlaw country genre's pioneering stars. An essential musical and cultural influence, the Grammy-winning group was active from 1985 – 1995: recording three albums, touring the world and acting in the movie Stagecoach (1986). **American Masters – The Highwaymen: Friends Till the End**, premiering nationwide Friday, May 27 at 9:00 p.m. ET on PBS (check local listings) as part of the 30th anniversary season of THIRTEEN's [American Masters](#) series, explores how these men came together and the fruits of their historic collaboration.

Produced and directed by four-time Emmy Award-winner Jim Brown (*American Masters – Pete Seeger: The Power of Song*; *Billy Joel: A Matter of Trust – The Bridge to Russia*, *The Weavers: Wasn't That A Time!*), the documentary features vintage performances, rare, behind-the-scenes footage of life on the road and in the studio with producer Don Was, and new interviews with Nelson; Kristofferson; family members Jessi Colter (country singer and Jennings's wife), Annie Nelson, Lisa Kristofferson, and John Carter Cash; band members Reggie Young (guitarist) of The Memphis Boys, Mickey Raphael (harmonica player) and Robby Turner (pedal steel guitarist); and managers Mark Rothbaum and Lou Robin. Artists influenced by The Highwaymen, including John Mellencamp, Toby Keith, Marty Stuart, and Ray Benson of Asleep at the Wheel, are also interviewed. Jennings and Cash add their perspective via archival interviews.

Performances from a previously unreleased concert film with the group recorded live at Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, N.Y., in 1990, demonstrate the group's chemistry and the power of their combined music catalog including “Highwayman,” “Sunday Morning Coming Down,” “Folsom Prison Blues,” “Mammas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys,” “Always On My Mind,” “Me and Bobby McGee,” “Desperados Waiting For A Train,” “Luckenbach, Texas,” “Silver Stallion” and more.

Nelson, Jennings, Cash and Kristofferson liberated American pop and country music from record label-and-producer control to create a new musical landscape where the artists controlled their songwriting, recording and performing. Each had achieved considerable success prior to 1985, at which time they began to strategize about working together to revitalize the country music scene and satisfy their own restless creativity. **American Masters – The Highwaymen: Friends Till the End** examines how their towering individual personas and mutual friendships meshed to form the group's collective artistry, their success buttressed by the love and support they gave to each other.

“Country music is America's most popular music and I'm happy to add The Highwaymen to our growing list of master singer/songwriters, from Carole King and Loretta Lynn to Marvin Gaye and Ray Charles,” said Michael Kantor, executive producer of **American Masters**. “Like many, I only wish I could have seen these giants live in concert, but this film gives you a front row seat and takes you backstage too.”

Launched in 1986, **American Masters** has earned 28 Emmy Awards — including 10 for Outstanding Non-Fiction Series and five for Outstanding Non-Fiction Special — 12 Peabodys, an Oscar, three Grammys, two Producers Guild Awards and many other honors. The series' 30th anniversary season on PBS also features a never-before-seen extended cut of Oscar-nominated director Amy Berg's Janis: Little Girl Blue Tuesday, May 3 at 8:00 p.m. ET (check local listings). To further explore the lives and works of masters past and present, the American Masters website (<http://pbs.org/americanmasters>) offers streaming video of select films, outtakes, filmmaker interviews, photos, educational resources and more. The series is a production of [THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS](#) LLC for [WNET](#) and also seen on the WORLD channel.

*The Highwaymen Live - American Outlaws*, a new 3 CD/1 DVD or Blu-ray box set of concert performances — including the complete Nassau Coliseum concert film seen in the **American Masters** documentary — will be available May 20 from Columbia/Legacy, along with a new single-disc compilation CD, *The Very Best of The Highwaymen. The Highwaymen: Live At Nassau Coliseum* (a special broadcast edit of the concert film featured on *The Highwaymen Live - American Outlaws*) is part of special programming premiering on PBS stations as part of June Pledge 2016 (check local listings).

**American Masters – The Highwaymen: Friends Till the End** is a production of Jim Brown Productions and Sony Music Entertainment in association with THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC's *American Masters* for WNET. Jim Brown is director and producer. Richard Alcock is executive producer. Michael Kantor is executive producer for **American Masters**.

Major funding for **The Highwaymen: Friends till The End** is provided by AARP. Additional funding for this program is provided by Mike and Ginny Lester. Funding for **American Masters** is provided by The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Rosalind P. Walter, The Philip and Janice Levin Foundation, Judith and Burton Resnick, The Blanche & Irving Laurie Foundation, Vital Projects Fund, Ellen and James S. Marcus, Lenore Hecht Foundation, Michael & Helen Schaffer Foundation, The André and Elizabeth Kertész Foundation, and public television viewers.

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### About WNET

WNET is America's flagship PBS station and parent company of [THIRTEEN](#) and [WLIW21](#). WNET also operates [NJTV](#), the statewide public media network in New Jersey. Through its broadcast channels, three cable services (KidsThirteen, Create and World) and online streaming sites, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each week. WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as [Nature](#), [Great Performances](#), [American Masters](#), [PBS NewsHour Weekend](#), [Charlie Rose](#) and a range of documentaries, children's programs, and local news and cultural offerings. WNET's groundbreaking series for children and young adults include [Get the Math](#), [Oh Noah!](#) and [Cyberchase](#) as well as [Mission US](#), the award-winning interactive history game. WNET highlights the tri-state's unique culture and diverse communities through [NYC-ARTS](#), [Reel 13](#), [NJTV News with Mary Alice Williams](#) and [MetroFocus](#), the daily multi-platform news magazine focusing on the New York region. In addition, WNET produces online-only programming including the award-winning series about gender identity, [First Person](#), and an intergenerational look at tech and pop culture, [The Chatterbox with Kevin and Grandma Lili](#). In 2015, THIRTEEN launched Passport, an online streaming service which allows members to see new and archival THIRTEEN and PBS programming anytime, anywhere: [www.thirteen.org/passport](http://www.thirteen.org/passport).

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Press Materials: <http://pbs.org/pressroom> or <http://thirteen.org/pressroom>

Websites: <http://pbs.org/americanmasters>, [@PBSAmerMasters](http://facebook.com/americanmasters), <http://pbsamericanmasters.tumblr.com>, <http://youtube.com/AmericanMastersPBS> [#AmericanMasters](#)

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