

| Spotlight |

## ALBERT MAYSLES



## The HOLLYWOOD ISSUE

It has been 50 years since Albert Maysles got his start behind the camera, with his brother, David, on sound. Together they redefined the documentary with their intensely personal films, among them the Rolling Stones tour chronicle, *Gimme Shelter* (1970), and the camp classic *Grey Gardens* (1976). "We never asked questions," Maysles says. "We let the person or event tell the story."

David died in 1987, but the brothers have one last collaboration in the can. *The Gates*, which premieres on HBO on February 26, documents the 26-year struggle of artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude to install a "golden river" of fabric-paneled "gates"—7,503 of them, to be exact—on two dozen miles of paths in New York City's Central Park. Al and David started shooting in 1979, but it wasn't until Mayor Mike Bloomberg approved the project, in 2003, that the film could be finished, with the gifted Antonio Ferrera as co-director.

The movie is packed with lively images, from the noisy first

meetings with park officials to the interviews with joggers, lovers, and vagabonds—all of whom have sharp opinions about the temporary transformation of their park. Maysles stays in the background, but it's clear he sides with the artists. "It's because something good is happening in New York," he tells me. "How often does something good happen anywhere these days?"

Maysles works from an office in Harlem, where he has founded a film school for neighborhood kids. "We give 'em cameras and they film their families," he says. Having used his camera "to find out what's going on behind the scenes" with everyone from J.F.K. to the Rolling Stones (he helped shoot Martin Scorsese's upcoming *Shine a Light*), Maysles is now filming his autobiography, *Handheld and from the Heart*. Alas, he says, documenting his own life presents a familiar dilemma: "what to put in and what to leave out!"

—PATRICIA BOSWORTH