

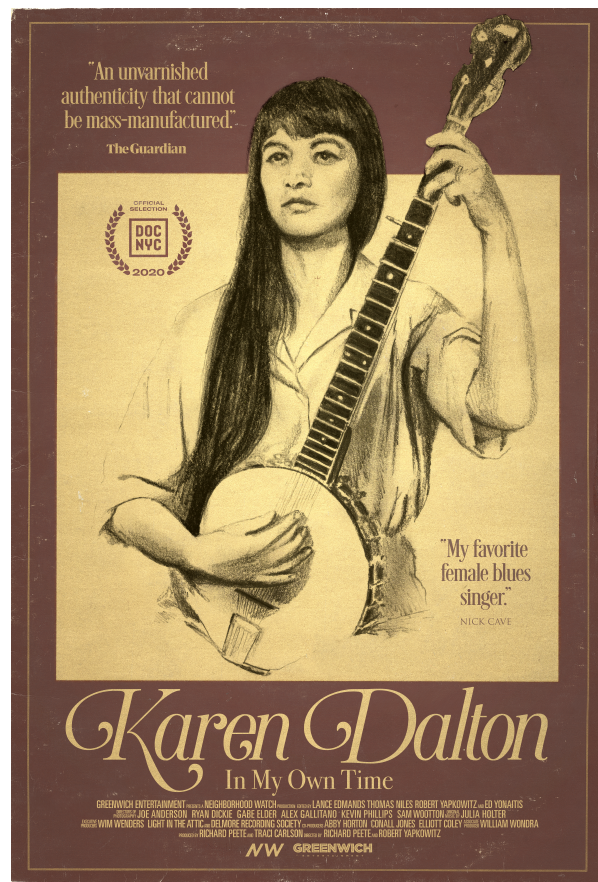
GREENWICH

E N T E R T A I N M E N T

Presents

A Neighborhood Watch Production

Karen Dalton: In My Own Time



Runtime: 86 min

In theaters 10/1
On digital 11/16

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ABOUT THE FILM

Karen Dalton: In My Own Time is a brand new documentary that not only honors the long-overlooked legacy and musical impact of the late folk legend, but saves her largely misunderstood story from near devastation.

Following a tragic fire in 2018, which destroyed all the remains of Karen Dalton's personal archive, directors Robert Yapkowitz and Richard Peete worked closely with her family and estate to capture the vanishing fragments of her life. From troves of newly unearthed material and raw footage, to candid conversations with Dalton's daughter Abralyn Baird and commentary by loved ones, ex-lovers, collaborators and close friends, *Karen Dalton: In My Own Time* serves as an essential portrait of her singular voice and indelible influence.

Karen Dalton: In My Own Time also features Karen Dalton's handwritten poetry and journals read by Angel Olsen, music composed by Julia Holter, plus interviews with fans like Nick Cave and Vanessa Carlton, Woodstock creator and Dalton's one-time label head Michael Lang, country singer-songwriter Lacy J. Dalton, Peter Walker, Peter Stampfel and more. The film was produced by Traci Carlson and Richard Peete at Neighborhood Watch (*Blue Ruin*, *Low Tide*, *Super Dark Times*), and The Hollywood Reporter says, "As [*Karen Dalton: In My Own Time*] introduces a one-of-a-kind artist to the uninitiated and celebrates her for aficionados, above all it listens - and invites us to do the same."

ABOUT KAREN DALTON

When Karen Dalton arrived in New York City's Greenwich Village in the 1960s - an early twenty-something from Oklahoma with two children, two marriages and a whole life behind her - she stunned contemporaries such as Bob Dylan, who once said, "My favorite singer in the place was Karen Dalton...Karen had a voice like Billie Holiday and played the guitar like Jimmy Reed, and went all the way with it." On her only two albums, 1969's *It's So Hard to Tell Who's Going to Love You the Best* and 1971's *In My Own Time*, her plaintive, affecting and nuanced performances showed how she could inhabit songs and convey meanings that were never apparent to anyone else. But between an apprehension for the music industry and a personal dichotomy of darkness and self-confidence, Karen Dalton discarded the traditional trappings of success and led an unconventional, reclusive lifestyle until her untimely death from AIDS in the early 1990s. While Karen Dalton's music has been rediscovered, reissued, and celebrated by the likes of Courtney Barnett, Lucinda Williams, Patty Griffin, Sharon Van Etten, Vagabon and increasingly newer generations in recent years, to many she remains "the most tragically beautiful folk singer you've probably never heard of" (VICE).



ABOUT THE DIRECTORS

Robert Yapkowicz is a New York-based filmmaker. He began his career working in the prop department on many major motion pictures and TV shows such as *Winter's Bone*, *Robot and Frank*, *Billions* and the Golden Globe-winning mini-series, *The Loudest Voice*. Since then he has shifted his focus to directing and creating original projects. His first feature-length documentary, *In My Own Time*, about the blues and folk singer Karen Dalton, premiered at Doc NYC in 2020 and he is currently executive producing a yet to be announced documentary series which is currently in production.

Richard Peete is the founder of Neighborhood Watch, a New York-based production company which produces feature films, commercials, music videos and short films. Before producing, he was the Prop Master of many award-winning films, including *Blue Valentine*, *The Place Beyond the Pines* and *Winter's Bone*. He produced Jeremy Saulnier's critically acclaimed *Blue Ruin*, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2013 and received the International Critics' Award. Since then, he has produced Kevin Phillips' *Super Dark Times* and *The Lumineers - III*, Charlie Curran's *See Know Evil* and Kevin McMullin's *Low Tide*. He is currently in pre-production on Isaiah Saxons' *The Legend of Ochi* and Andy Bruntel's *Wolf in White Van*.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTORS

When did you first hear about Karen Dalton and what made you decide to make a film about her?

Richard Peete: A friend of mine introduced me to Karen in college down in Savannah, GA. Growing up in a small town in western NY I didn't really have access to a lot of great music but when I got to Savannah my mind was blown with all of the new music I was introduced to and Karen was at the top of the list. Back in 2013, Rob and I were in a bar in Brooklyn talking about how it was such a bummer that all of Karen's male peers were on the jukebox but she wasn't - this lead into us chatting about how the Townes Van Zandt documentary 'Be Here to Love Me' really helped explode his popularity. By drink 2 or 3 we had schemed up a plan to make a documentary about Karen in 6 months, release it to the world and she'd be on the jukebox the following year. That was 6 years ago, the bar has now closed but we've made a movie!

Robert Yapkowicz: I first heard Karen back in 2001, I had a good friend in high school who was a self proclaimed musicologist. She was the type of person who was always one step ahead of the curve when it came to music and if she recommended something, you listened. She put Karen's song "Something On Your Mind" on a mixed CD for me and I was blown away. My obsession just grew from there.

How much footage and material did you have to work with, and how long did it take to collect and go through all of it?

Richard: Well, we thought that we would be uncovering treasure chests of old Karen tapes, records, and home videos, but that was certainly not the case. Karen was an avid recorder and collector but in the early 90's, after her death, her shed burned down and destroyed all of her tapes. For the first couple years we went on some wild goose chases looking for old landlords (who turned out to be drug dealers) trying to find proof that the tapes were actually burned up and not in a storage unit somewhere, nothing came of it. Through Karen's friends, family, old bandmates, and collectors we were able to find some great undiscovered photos, songs, and footage of Karen. There is a group of Karen collectors out there that we've worked closely with that are constantly on the hunt (and finding) old unreleased tapes and photos - it's fun - we've been honored to be a part of the team the past several years. With our archivist, Elizabeth Hansen, we were able to find footage of Karen performing on THE BEAT - footage that will be seen for the first time here.

Robert: We were told when we started the project that there weren't that many photos of Karen, there was very little footage and she never gave a recorded interview. This felt like a challenge and we became pretty determined to prove everyone wrong. While it was true to some extent, archival materials were limited, we were able to find so much more than we were told existed. Some of the hidden gems we are especially proud of are the radio interviews from Bob Fass's show *Radio Unnameable*, two live TV performances which we were told did not exist and a recording of Karen performing an original song, even though her closest friends were positive she never wrote or recorded an original song. This is probably our most coveted discovery. The song is called "Blue Notion" and it's as beautiful as it is haunting. All of these took about two years of searching before we finally got a hold of them. These, along with all the photos we unearthed and Karen's huge personal archive which contained all of her poetry and journals, which easily took three years to collect and review. Karen lived a somewhat nomadic life, so it wasn't like all of these materials were left with one person, they were scattered across the country.

How did you find the contemporary artists (Vanessa Carlton, Deer Tick, Nick Cave) featured in the doc who cite Karen as an influence?

Robert: While Karen isn't widely known by the general public, she really is a musician's musician. So, it wasn't that difficult to get some great musicians involved in the project. The first person we reached out to was Nick Cave, who we knew had been a fan of Karen's for many years. We sent him a few very early clips of the movie and he was generous enough to sit down for an interview. From there things just escalated, it felt like everyone we reached out to was excited about the project and happy to get involved. Aside from the musicians we interviewed (Vanessa Carlton, Nick Cave, Deer Tick) we were also fortunate to get some incredibly talented musicians involved behind the scenes. Angel Olsen did a lovely job reading all of Karen's poems and Journals and Julia Holter composed a score that compliments Karen's music and world wonderfully.

The interviews in the film feel very personal and candid, even matter-of-fact at times when discussing some of the more difficult aspects of Karen's personality and life. How did you build that trust with her friends and family to result in such intimate storytelling?

Richard: It was tough at first. There have been several filmmakers who have tried to make a film about Karen and I think some of her friends and family were exhausted with the idea, but eventually we won the heart of Abbe (Karen's daughter) and Peter Walker (Friend) and through them they were able to introduce us to everyone else. This was a low budget film and we were traveling a lot so we didn't have the luxury of spending lots of time with our subjects beforehand to get to know them - we would spend time chatting about ourselves and Karen while getting set up and then jump right into it. We couldn't be afraid to ask the tough questions because we knew there wouldn't be any second chances for another interview.

Robert: We were very honest about our intentions, we made it clear that we wanted the film to celebrate Karen's bravery and not criticize or victimize her in any way. We also made a conscious effort to build solid relationships with our core group of interview subjects through phone calls and emails long before we started the interview process, and still actually speak with most of them pretty frequently. Rich and I spent over an hour on the phone with Richard Tucker (Karen's third husband) the other day, just talking about Gregory Peck movies and music.

Do you feel Karen would have been treated differently at the time or remembered differently now if she had been a male artist?

Robert: Absolutely, Historically when people look at some of Karen's male contemporaries (Tim Hardin, Bob Dylan) who lived a similar lifestyle. They are seen as tortured geniuses and their behaviors are mythologized and glamorized, but female

artists like Karen are often portrayed as tragic figures, failures and neglectful mothers. This is an idea we really wanted to dispel, Karen was a warrior, it took a lot of courage to be a woman and live life on your own terms at that time, honestly (unfortunately) that still holds true today.

What was Wim Wenders role as an Executive Producer?

Richard: Wim was made aware of the film through our friend and sales rep Nick Schumaker. He and Wim were chatting one day, Nick brought up the project, Wim said he loved Karen's music and would be happy to watch a cut. At that point we felt we were pretty close to finishing the film and were thrilled to share with Wim. He watched immediately and came back with some serious notes and holes in the film and offered genius solutions, after one watch, to elements we had been struggling with for years. Rob and I had been debating about the poem VO, graphics/text for months and Wim had the solution - it's funny how you can feel so strongly about Times New Roman until Wim Wenders says "handwritten" then all of sudden it's as if you've never heard of TNR.

As a result of the 2018 fire that destroyed the hard copies of Karen's notes, journals, etc., this film is essentially the last artifact of Karen outside of her music. How did that play into the making of the film? Did you feel like an added responsibility as the de facto archivists of Karen Dalton?

Well, even though we started the movie long before the fire we knew we were going to end up with the largest collection of Karen related archival materials that had likely ever existed. So there was always this idea of preserving something that had spent its life on the edge of obscurity. Part of the purpose of the film was always to collect these materials and preserve them but after the fire it definitely started to feel like something bigger than us and the movie. I should also mention that we were lucky enough to connect with Mark Linn (Delmore Recording Society) and Stephane Bismuth (French Megaphone Records) pretty early on in the process. He has been quietly collecting Karen photos and unreleased music for about 20 years and was gracious enough to invite us into their world and help us connect with the right people.

CREDITS

Directed by: Robert Yapkowitz and Richard Peete

Produced by: Traci Carlson and Richard Peete

Executive producer: Wim Wenders & Light In The Attic

Edited by: Lance Edmands, Thomas Niles, Robert Yapkowitz, Ed Yonaitis

Karen's poems and journals ready by: Angel Olsen

Composer: Julia Holter

Key Interviews: Nick Cave, Danny Goldberg, Michael Lang, Vanessa Carlton, Peter Walker, Peter Stampfel, Lacy J Dalton, Abralyn Baird.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT KAREN DALTON

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen_Dalton

<https://lightintheattic.net/artists/5-karen-dalton>

<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=92456345>