Frank and the Wondercat by Tony Massil and Pablo Alvarez-Mesa (Canada, 2015, 67:00)  
review by Ryan Ermacora

Frank and the Wondercat by Tony Massil and Pablo Alvarez-Mesa tracks the life of Frank Furko, a Pittsburgh resident who famously owned and trained a performing cat named Pudgie Wudgie. The cat passed away in 2001, and Frank now lives out his old age in part through a memorialization of Pudgie Wudgie.

The film is largely constructed through a fascinating curation of archival material, shot by both Frank and the many television programs that featured the pair. This curation manages to unearth moments that grasp the bizarre yet earnest world of local TV documentaries—programs that were meant to disappear after a single broadcast. The film lets us glimpse these ephemeral media, as well as a style of videography that has largely disappeared through technological changes and shifting forms of video distribution. Massil and Alvarez-Mesa embrace this aging aesthetic through their formal and technological choices.

The film expressively edits between the archival materials and contemporary interviews, demonstrating the malleability of the line between past and present. Key to the film is Frank’s own relationship to the past. In part, the film shows a man who is has been continuously searching for a childhood that he never fully experienced. Frank and the Wondercat is both an ode to the textures and eccentricities of cable access video and a genuine investigation into concepts of fame in a pre-Internet context.