

In Good Conscience

Sister Jeannine Gramick's Journey of Faith

A film by Barbara Rick

Synopsis

In Barbara Rick's acclaimed documentary, **IN GOOD CONSCIENCE**, a most unlikely and very funny rebel — an American nun — finds herself at the center of a human rights storm with leaders of one of the world's most revered institutions, the Roman Catholic Church.

The film chronicles the true story of Sister Jeannine Gramick, who is defying a Vatican edict that she shut down her compassionate ministry to gay and lesbian Catholics, and silence herself permanently on the subject of homosexuality. Her battle takes her all the way to Rome where she attempts an audience with her key adversary over the years — none other than Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger — the Inquisitor who would become Pope Benedict XVI.

Sister Jeannine has worked within the church for more than thirty years on behalf of the LGBT community and its fight for acceptance, recognition, and equality. When issued this ultimatum from Cardinal Ratzinger and Pope John Paul II — denounce homosexuality or lose everything — quietly and with respect, she refused.

"I choose not to collaborate in my own oppression by restricting a basic human right," she says. "To me this is a matter of conscience."

Legendary filmmaker Albert Maysles was so moved by Sister Jeannine's story he offered to shoot it. Executive produced by Humanitas Prize winner Tom Fontana, the film has won support from patrons Ellen DeGeneres, Susan Sarandon, Trudie Styler, Agnes Gund, Deborah Santana, among many others.

Called '*a masterpiece*' by Oscar-winning filmmaker Barbara Kopple, '*a wonderful film about a sensational human being*' by playwright Terrence McNally, and '*excellent... enormous charm*' by Variety, audiences are embracing **IN GOOD CONSCIENCE** with standing ovations at sold-out festival

screenings around the world. *TimeOut NY* magazine calls Sister Jeannine Gramick '*a freedom fighter on the frontlines of the cultural wars,*' adding, "*This gripping documentary by Barbara Rick is a must-see.*"

The film debuted at IFP/Lincoln Center's Independents Night series in New York City in 2004. It won the Audience Favorite Award for Best Feature Documentary at the Philadelphia Int'l Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, Best Documentary at the ReelPride Michigan Festival and Honorable Mention at NewFest for its 'inspirational and stirring portrait of a woman who has defied censorship to speak out against homophobia and discrimination.' It was selected as the Closing Night Film at the Queer Screen Documentary Festival in Sydney, Australia and FilmOut San Diego and is featured in the Yale Divinity School journal, Reflections, and the acclaimed PBS program *In The Life*.

As global debate continues to explode over gay civil rights, this laugh-out-loud film follows Sister Jeannine throughout the U.S. all the way to Rome where she faces grave consequences for her life-defining decision to defy the Vatican.

Barbara Rick is president and founder of the independent documentary company Out of The Blue Films, Inc., dedicated to the production of films that explore, articulate, and celebrate humanity. A Peabody and Emmy award-winning filmmaker/journalist for more than twenty years, Rick has helmed a number of acclaimed films, including the Emmy Award winning PBS documentary, **SHE SAYS/Women In News**. Ms. Rick is a freelance writer and producer at ABC News — part of the weekend World News Tonight team nominated for a 2005 Emmy award for coverage of Indonesia's tsunami disaster.

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Director's Statement

What strikes me most about Sister Jeannine is that she can take on her enemies without rancor. She's a gentle revolutionary with the grace, patience and fortitude to try to change an abysmally stubborn institution rather than just walk away, which is what I and so many others have done. After sixteen years of Catholic school, I had hoped to never see or hear another nun. This one is irresistible. Albert Maysles volunteered to shoot this project after falling in love with her and her story. Her humble refusal to be silenced got us both in the gut. It was a New York Times article in 2000 that inspired me into action. Her words, "I refuse to collaborate in my own oppression," heartened me so much as a woman, an artist, a journalist, a recovering Catholic and an American I had to make the movie. The world should know about this nun, I thought.

What drives people who are not appreciated or wanted to stay with an exclusionary institution and fight to change it? What is so compelling about the church for these people? How does her ministry bring estranged families together and help people find personal peace, and if it is so profoundly healing and positive, why did the hierarchy shut her down?

The delicate question of Sister's own sexuality emerges as an intriguing sub theme here. She sees herself as a bridge builder between the gay community and church hierarchy and decided long ago not to come out as gay or straight. As we get to know her better within the film, she appears to be closer to revealing this intimate aspect of herself, enhancing the drama.

I wanted Tom Fontana to come on board as executive producer to help us raise some money for the project, and because, instinctively, I felt his sensibility would be an asset to the film. I later learned he has a sister who is a nun and a brother who is gay, making this ideal creative match even more potent.

In addition to its artistic and entertainment value, I think **IN GOOD CONSCIENCE** will do much to erase prejudice and fear. As an occasionally homophobic heterosexual, doing this film has challenged my own irrational fears and forged for me a new understanding, compassion, and alliance with gay people. In many ways, the church has stifled my sexuality too. Indeed, having a vagina and breasts relegates me to utter and permanent second-class status in the eyes of the church. Kinship in these injustices also inspired this film.

As a television journalist for more than twenty years, objectivity (alleged objectivity, anyway) is a longtime practice. But this subject – hypocrisy and injustice in the Catholic Church – is one that severely tests my objectivity. At the same time, it's my conviction that fairness and an honest examination of the issues and answers will make this film strongest, and prove most useful in a world fractured by hatreds. **IN GOOD CONSCIENCE** is shaped and informed by who I am, but not crippled by a poisoned agenda.

Director's Biography

Barbara Rick is president and founder of **Out of The Blue Films, Inc.**, an independent documentary company dedicated to the creation of critically and commercially successful films that explore, articulate, and celebrate humanity.

A Peabody and Emmy winning journalist/filmmaker for more than twenty years, Ms. Rick has produced, directed, and written a number of highly acclaimed films. Her latest project, **IN GOOD CONSCIENCE: Sister Jeannine Gramick's Journey of Faith**, is a collaboration with legendary filmmaker Albert Maysles who describes Ms. Rick as "one of the very best documentary filmmakers I know."

IN GOOD CONSCIENCE is a cinema verite portrait of one American nun and her determination to speak out in support of lesbian and gay Catholics despite strong opposition from the Vatican. Funded by contributions from Ellen DeGeneres, Susan Sarandon, Trudie Styler, Agnes Gund, Deborah Santana, the H. van Ameringen Foundation, the Andrew Goodman Foundation, and anonymous and grass roots donors, **IN GOOD CONSCIENCE** has been selected to screen at New York's Lincoln Center in IFP's *Independents Night* series as well at film festivals around the country and the world. The 82-minute feature documentary won awards for 'Audience Favorite' and 'Best Documentary' at film festivals in Philadelphia and Michigan and Honorable Mention at New York's NewFest. It has received standing ovations from festival audiences around the world. '

Barbara Rick directed, produced and co-wrote the PBS film, **SHE SAYS/ Women In News**. Rick won a National Emmy in the 'Outstanding Informational Programming - Long Form' category for that documentary and was cited as a finalist by the 2002-2003 Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia awards jury. **SHE SAYS** received major funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Whitehead Foundation, and The Ford Foundation. Special screenings were sponsored by Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, KCET in Los Angeles, and New York Women In Film & Television..

Another recent production, **SOUNDS SACRED**, explores how human beings connect with the spiritual through the tool of sound. **SOUNDS SACRED** was an official selection of the 2002 Maui Film Festival, 2001 Mill Valley Film Festival, and 2001 Lake Placid Film Forum. Featured in the San Francisco Chronicle, the film played before enthusiastic audiences in a brief theatrical run at the Red Vic Movie Theatre in San Francisco in January 2003.

Barbara Rick has served as a freelance writer/producer at ABC News since 1994. Currently, she writes for the anchors on the network's weekend broadcasts. She also served as a writer on *World News Tonight with Peter Jennings* and on the *Good Morning America* program. Other clients have included HBO, Disney Theatrical Productions, National Geographic Television, CNN, and Fox Television News.

A graduate of Fordham University, Ms. Rick served as political reporter Gabe Pressman's producer at WNBC-TV from 1980-1987. She won a Peabody Award and her second local area Emmy Award for **ASYLUM IN THE STREETS**, a documentary on the crisis of New York's mentally ill homeless. Ms. Rick was one of the youngest recipients of the Peabody in the history of the award. She served as a broadcast producer on the station's 5, 6, and 11pm newscasts.

Ms. Rick has taught journalism courses at New York University, The New School, and William Paterson University, and offers individual sessions as a writing coach. Her articles on the film industry appear in *The International Documentary Association* magazine.

An active member of the Writers Guild of America East, serving on its Committee On Censorship, Ms. Rick is also a member of the International Documentary Association, Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, New York Women In Film & Television, the Independent Feature Project and DocuClub.

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Cast and Crew

Barbara Rick – Director, Producer

Rick is a Peabody and Emmy winning filmmaker/journalist with over twenty years experience in documentary and television news. Awarded a 2001 national EMMY for her PBS film *She Says/Women In News*, Rick founded Out of The Blue Films, Inc. in 1998 to create films that explore, articulate and celebrate humanity. A freelance writer/producer for ABC News, Rick was part of the Weekend News team nominated for a 2005 News & Documentary Emmy for coverage of the Indonesian tsunami.

Tom Fontana – Executive Producer

Peabody & Humanitas-prize winning writer/producer, Fontana was the Executive Producer and creator of "Oz," which, during its six seasons on HBO, won three Cable Ace Awards from The Cinema Tout Ecran Festival in France, among others. During the seven-year run of "Homicide: Life on The Street" on NBC, Fontana earned an Emmy Award in the category of Outstanding Individual Writing For A Drama Series, and numerous other honors. Other award-winning work includes the television classic, "St. Elsewhere."

Albert Maysles – Director of Photography

America's foremost non-fiction filmmaker, Maysles is credited with the creation of "direct cinema," a riveting, non-intervention approach to filmmaking. His company, Maysles Films, Inc., has made more than three-dozen nationally acclaimed films, including cult classics *Gimme Shelter* and *Grey Gardens*. His new film on the artists Christo & Jeanne-Claude and their historic Central Park *Gates* project appears on HBO in 2006.

Spiro C. Lampros – Editor

Lampros is the Harvard-educated editor of a number of critically acclaimed films, including *Golden Threads* (POV, PBS, 1999), *West 47th Street* (POV, PBS, 2003), the Emmy Award-nominated *Compassion in Exile: The Story of the 14th Dalai Lama* (PBS, 1993) and *Halving the Bones* (Sundance Film Festival, 1996). He served as Assistant Editor on the feature documentary *Paris is Burning* and taught Avid editing at NYU'S Tisch School of the Arts from 1994 to 2002.

John Califra – Composer

Califra is an internationally renowned composer known for his remarkable orchestral scores for film and television. Recent clients include HBO and Directors Lee Grant (*Once Upon A Time in Hollywood*) and Jonathan Caouette (*Tarnation*).

Libby Myers – Associate Producer

Myers has worked on a diverse range of documentary projects from natural history to social issues, including the PBS premiere hi-def series *Sahara: Seasons in the Sand* filmed on location in Morocco, *Evolution – A Three Part Series* (Discovery) and *Sounds Sacred*.

Cynthia O'Murchu – Associate Producer

Cynthia O'Murchu is a photographer and documentary filmmaker based in New York City. Before serving as Associate Producer, publicity photographer and web design consultant for Out of The Blue Films, Inc., she worked at the Irish Film Board, a national film funding agency. Her previous documentary work includes *Lines in the Sand*, about art and artists in post-independence Namibia.

Jim Anderson – Second Camera & Sound Recordist

Jim Anderson is a seasoned veteran of documentaries, films, and the network magazine shows. His clients include ABC News, NBC News, and award-winning filmmakers.

What People Are Saying

"Excellent.. absorbing... enormous charm..."

—**Variety**

"A freedom fighter on the frontlines of the cultural wars..
...this gripping documentary by Barbara Rick is a must-see."

—**TimeOut NY**

"...Receiving standing ovations."

—**LA Times**

"Every bit as good as Fahrenheit 911... if not better!"

—**Larry Kramer**, Act Up founder

"A heartening story of courage and integrity.. Sister Jeannine is the kind of Catholic who makes lapsed ones reconsider."

—**Don Roos**, Writer/Director, 'Happy Endings' 2005 Sundance Opening Night Film

"A wonderful film about a sensational human being."

—**Terrence McNally**, American Dramatist

"A humble beacon for truth."

—**Between the Lines**, Michigan's Weekly Newspaper

"Extraordinary...compelling"

—**GayCityNews**

"Feisty and faithful... extraordinary... touching"

—**New York Blade**

"A voice of hope in the wilderness... My advice, Michael Moore, move over... there's a new girl in town!"

—**Joe McParland**, IMDB

"Courageous... fabulous storytelling... a masterpiece...The most insightful & motivational film so far on the Catholic Church."

—**Barbara Kopple**, two time Academy Award winner

"This cinema-verite journey of faith sprinkled with purpose and good humor will compel you to examine the lengths that you would go for what you believe in."

—**Silverdocs: AFI/Discovery Documentary Festival**

"...Superbly told and deeply inspiring. Brilliant & profoundly important work."

—**Michael Kelly**, Australia's leading gay Catholic activist

"A Godzilla silk glove punch."

—**Lesbian activist**

"The voice the Vatican could not silence..."

—**www.equalmarriage.ca**

"This is the story of a 61-year-old nun with inclinations toward Birkenstocks and Jane Fonda videos, and a knack for incurring the concentrated fury of the Catholic hierarchy in Rome."

—**Newsday**

"Fascinating... remarkable... an inspiration to everyone."

—**www.sceneandheard.ca**

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Press Clippings

To view complete articles, go to the web site [Reviews page](#).

"Absorbing... excellent... enormous charm... The unassuming Sister Jeannine Gramick may be the most engaging spokesperson for the Catholic faith in recent memory."

—**Ronnie Scheib**, Variety

"This gripping documentary by Barbara Rick is a must-see."

—**Beth Greenfield**, TimeOut NY

"**IN GOOD CONSCIENCE** is making the rounds of the film festival circuit and receiving standing ovations."

—**Nancy Ramsey**, LA Times

"With her shy nun's smile and gentle demeanor, Sister Jeannine Gramick seems the most unlikely of gadflies. But, as a new documentary about her ministry to gay and lesbian Catholics shows, she is fearless in fighting anyone who tries to silence her."

—**Daniel Burke**, Religion News Service

"Barbara Rick's documentary about Gramick, **IN GOOD CONSCIENCE**: Sister Jean Gramick's Journey of Faith offers a profile of a hero whose courage, humility, warmth and charm are living testament to the noblest definition of humanity."

—**Will O'Bryan**, Metro Weekly Washington DC

"Gramick is a rabblouser in practice, but not look or attitude. In fact, she's downright adorable... Gramick comes off as the anti-Michael Moore: reaching out through friendliness rather than bombast, through logic rather than blanket statements."

—**Philadelphia Weekly**

"Vivid, intimate portraits of unconventional and courageous characters proved quite popular at the 36th Nashville Film Festival... Perhaps the prime example of someone operating against the norm was Sister Jeannine Gramick, whose decades-long ministry in the gay and lesbian community was marvelously examined in Barbara Rick's moving **IN GOOD CONSCIENCE**: Sister Jeannine Gramick's Journey of Faith."

—**Ron Wynn**, Nashville City Paper

"This celebrated documentary offers a real hero: Sister Jeanine Gramick, a nun-turned-rebel who faced extreme censure from the Vatican over the Catholic Church's policy towards gay men and lesbians. In particular, she faces up to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and now, of course, known as Pope Benedict XVI, who stripped her of her pastoral ministry. A remarkable portrait of a remarkable individual."

—**Quest Guide to the Milwaukee LGBT Film & Video Festival**

"The church's institutional bigotry seems all the more irrational when discussed by Gramick, who handles her overwhelming opposition with humor, an even temper, and – something that's occasionally lacking among members of religious orders – logic."

—**Tricia Olszewski**, CP ART, Washington City Paper

"On the heels of the abuse scandal, **IN GOOD CONSCIENCE** raises important questions about morality and leadership within the Church. Gramick is a likable, enigmatic figure and her fearless drive to challenge the Vatican – what, except total faith, might give a person such courage? – makes for compelling subject matter."

—**Elisa Ludwig**, Philadelphia City Paper

"Where some people saw films such as Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of The Christ' and Michael Moore's 'Fahrenheit 911' as radical, Rick says, it's Gramick who's the radical – and one in the manner of Jesus Christ."

—**Andrew Hughes**, South Bend Tribune

"Documentary chronicles the extraordinary mission of one nun to reach out to gays and lesbians."

—**Winnie McCroy**, GayCityNews

"Fascinating... remarkable... The film shows how one person can truly make a difference."

—**Jessica Russell & Liz Stenbridge**, Scene and Heard

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"Feisty and faithful... a touching look at a 'rebel nun'"

—**Rhonda Smith**, NY Blade

Rick's greatest accomplishment is capturing her subject's spunky, endlessly patient character. The filmmaker doesn't shy away from the opposing side's point of view, either..."

—**Michael Hastings**, MetroTimes, Detroit's Weekly Alternative

"**IN GOOD CONSCIENCE**: Sister Jeannine Gramick's Journey of Faith offers rare insight and even rarer objectivity into exploring an issue that will only grow larger in coming years."

—**Jon Salimes**, Wisconsin, Milwaukee University Post

"A testament to Sister Gramick's enduring spirit."

—**Adam Aigner-Treworgy**, West End Word

"Sister Jeannine Gramick, 62, was to have been honored Sunday at St. Mary Parish in Royal Oak following a screening of a documentary film highlighting her work. But the reception had to be moved to because of objections by the archdiocese."

—**Associated Press**

"This remarkable film centers on Sister Jeannine Gramick, an American nun who founded a compassionate ministry for gay and lesbian Catholics, but was later ordered by the Vatican to stop her activities. **IN GOOD CONSCIENCE** is a fascinating story about one woman's quest to change the Catholic Church's views on homosexuality."

—**Abby Schwartz**, Gay & Lesbian Times, San Diego

"I was particularly struck by her willingness to try to dialogue with persons who see things VERY differently from her. At one point in the film, they showed her going out on the streets to talk with protesters at the Bishop's Conference when they were addressing the priest sexual abuse scandals that were (and are) rocking the church. Some of the protesters—persons who identified as Roman Catholics—were unbelievably hateful and homophobic in their signs and words. How she kept her cool I will never know."

—**Windchime Walker Blogspot**

"Barbara Rick's **IN GOOD CONSCIENCE: Sister Jeannine Gramick's Journey of Faith** won the audience award for best full-length documentary."

—**Brian Brooks**, IndieWire, On The Scene

"**IN GOOD CONSCIENCE** (shot by the legendary Albert Maysles) is literally a portrait of grace under pressure."

—**Milton Tabbot**, IFP

"Prize-winning documentary... the protagonist of the film is a proponent of mankind in the new millennium."

—**Kevin Lewis**, International Documentary Magazine

"After sixteen years in Catholic school, Barbara Rick says she hoped she'd never see, or hear, another nun."

—**Suzanne Travers**, Herald News

Selected Screenings

Winner – Best Documentary

2005 ReelPride Michigan GLBT Film Festival

Winner – Audience Favorite Award

2004 Philadelphia International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival – Pennsylvania

Winner – Honorable Mention for Best Feature Documentary

2004 Newfest: The 16th New York LGBT Film Festival – New York

Closing Night Film

2005 FilmOut San Diego

2004 Queer Screen Documentary Festival – Sydney, Australia

2005 London Gay & Lesbian Film Festival

2005 Nashville Film Festival

2005 Notre Dame Queer Film Festival

2005 Melbourne Queer Film Festival – Australia

*2004 Independents Night, Selected by IFP/NY & The Film Society of Lincoln Center
Walter Reade Theater, New York, New York*

2004 SILVERDOCS: AFI/Discovery Documentary Festival – Maryland

2004 Cork Film Festival – Ireland

2004 Reel Affirmations: Washington DC's International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival

2004 Seattle Lesbian & Gay Film Festival – Washington

2004 Berlin Lesbian Film Festival – Germany

2004 19th Annual Turin International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival – Italy

2004 Milan Lesbian & Gay Film Festival – Italy

2004 Inside/Out Toronto Gay & Lesbian Film Festival

2004 Out On Screen: 16th Annual Vancouver Queer Film & Video Festival

2004 Ciclo Rosa4: Visual Gay & Lesbian Film Festival – Colombia

2005 Copenhagen Gay & Lesbian Film Festival – Denmark

2005 Festival Mix Brasil

2005 New York Women in Film & Television Special Event Screening – New York City

2005 Profiled on the PBS program In The Life

2005 Milwaukee LGBT Film/Video Festival – Wisconsin

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Photos



*Sister Jeannine Gramick at
St. Peter's Basilica,
Rome, Italy 2003*



*Director Barbara Rick &
DP Albert Maysles with Sr.
Gramick being interviewed by
National Catholic Reporter
John Allen,
Rome, Italy 2003*

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Credits

Directed & Produced by

Barbara Rick

Director of Photography

Albert Maysles

Editor

Spiro C. Lampros

Second Camera & Sound Recordist

James W. Anderson

Additional Camera

Barbara Rick

Additional Sound

Antonio Ferrera

Associate Producers

Elizabeth Myers

Cynthia O'Murchu

Original Music By

John Califra

Performed By

Philharmonica Bulgarica

Assistant Editor & Production Support

Cindy Craig

Sound Editors

Matt Foglia

Benny Mouthon

Re-Recording Mixer

Matt Foglia

Online Post-Production Facilities

PostWorks New York

Title Design

Elephants Fly

Production Stills

Cynthia O'Murchu

Stefan Falke

Interns & Production Assistants

Betta Bucci

Christine Deegan

Joseph DeSerio

Anne Dunn

Miyuki Jokiranta

Stacey Kalish

Michelle Rabinowitz

Andrea Rich

Laura Rothstein

Suzanne Travers

Gretchen Weber

Music Rights Consultant

Brooke Wentz, The Rights Workshop

Transcriptions

Drew DeNicola

Production Accountant

Janice Hayman

Legal Services

Stephen Goldstein, Esq.

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The Moving Image, Inc. (Film Forum)

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Ellen DeGeneres

The Andrew Goodman Foundation

Agnes Gund & Daniel Shapiro

H. van Ameringen Foundation

Deborah Santana

Susan Sarandon

Trudie Styler

and the many additional contributions
we received from all around the country.

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Jane Fonda, Fonda, Inc.

Omnibus – La7, Rome, Italy

WHBF TV4, Rock Island, Illinois

The Rick Family Home Movies &
Photos

Families and friends of GLBT Catholics

"Now in This Banquet"

Written by Marty Haugen

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"We Are the Light of the World"

Written by Jean Greif

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Thank You

New Ways Ministry

Frank DeBernardo

John Gramick

Linda McCullough

Amy Stenson

Sister Alice Zachmann, SSND

Loretto Community

Sister Lupe Arciniega, SL

Sr. Mary Ann Coyle, SL

Sr. Antoinette Doyle, SL

Sr. Anna Koop, SL

Sr. Mary Catherine Rabbitt, SL

Sr. Mary Swain, SL

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton

Sister Marilyn Ring, OSB

Sr. Christine Schenk, CSJ

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International Documentary

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Josh Waletzky

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Lucy Winer

Women Make Movies

Debra Zimmerman

AND THE EXTRAORDINARY

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Executive Producer

Tom Fontana

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