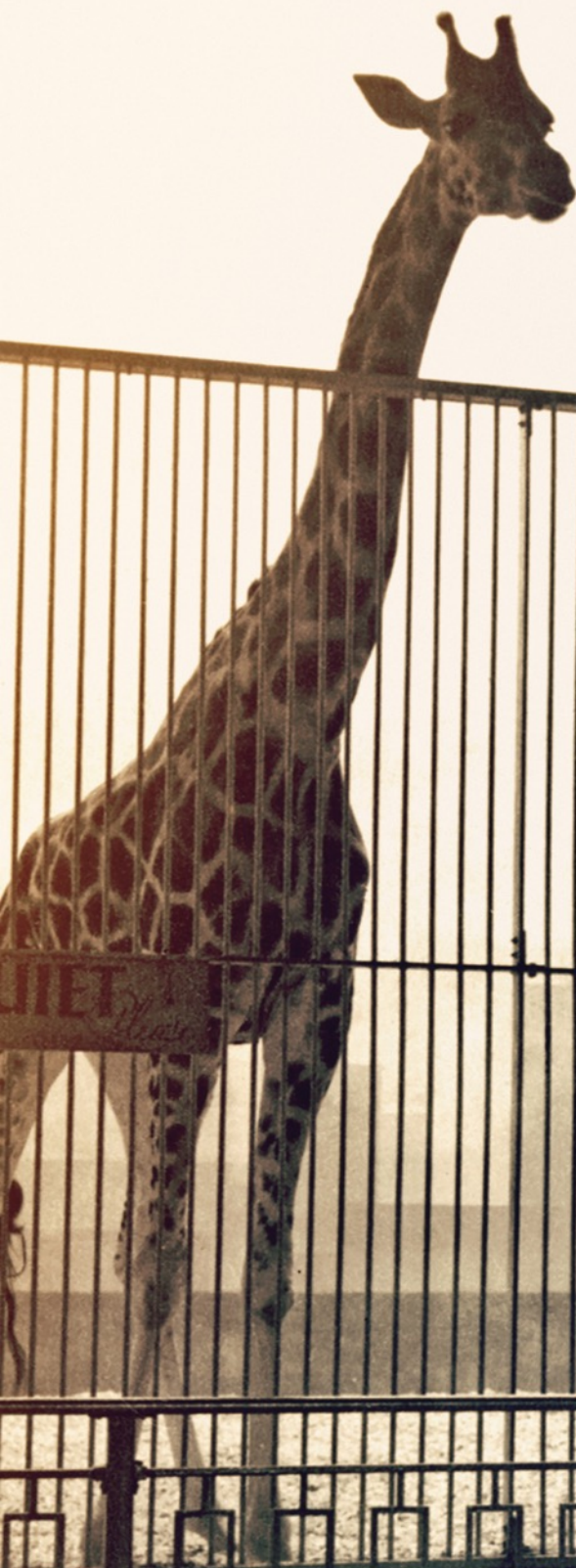


the Woman Who Loves Giraffes

The story of ANNE INNIS DAGG



Press Kit

The Woman Who Loves Giraffes is the story of Canadian biologist Dr. Anne Innis Dagg, written and directed by Alison Reid (*The Baby Formula*), produced by Joanne Jackson (*The Messenger*, *The Big Wait*, *Long Haul Big Hearts*) and Alison Reid, and executive produced by Paul Zimic (*Grass 2*, *Never Enough*). The documentary features the voices of Tatiana Maslany (*Orphan Black*), Victor Garber (*Argo*, *Milk*, *Titanic*), David Chinchilla (*The Expanse*) and Lindsay Leese (*Bomb Girls*) reading letters written by young Anne, Fleur de Lys manager, Alex Matthew, Anne's husband, Ian Dagg, and Anne's mother, Mary Quayle Innis. The film was shot between 2013 and 2018 on location in Brookfield Zoo, Chicago; Ontario, Canada; Samburu National Reserve, Kenya; Fleur de Lys, South Africa; and Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch, San Antonio, Texas. ***The Woman Who Loves Giraffes*** incorporates vintage 16mm archival footage from 1956-57 which was filmed by Anne Dagg herself, and, when she is in frame, Alex Matthew.

Cinematography by Dale Hildebrand (*Peace*, *TO in 24*) and Iris Ng (*Point of Departure*, *Stories We Tell*, *The Ghosts In Our Machine*), editing by Mike Munn (*Hip-Hop Evolution*, *Stories We Tell*) and Caroline Christie (*Birdland*, *Frankie Drake Mysteries*, *Project Grizzly*), costume design by Anne Dixon (*Anne with an E*, *Shoot the Messenger*) and music by Tom Third (*What Wala Wants*, *Yellow is Forbidden*, *Shoot the Messenger*, *The Listener*).

The Woman Who Loves Giraffes was made with the participation of The Ontario Media Development Corporation Film Fund, Telefilm Canada through the Theatrical Documentary Program, Rogers Documentary Fund, Bell Media (TMN), and KinoSmith Inc.

Distribution in Canada is being handled by levelFILM.

Run time: 83 minutes, English

LOGLINE

In 1956 at the age of 23, Anne Innis Dagg travelled to South Africa to become the world's first western scientist to study the behaviour of giraffes in the wild. Her pioneering efforts were ground-breaking, but her career was destroyed upon her return home.

SYNOPSIS

In 1956, four years before Jane Goodall ventured into the world of chimpanzees and seven years before Dian Fossey left to work with mountain gorillas, in fact, before anyone, man or woman had made such a trip, 23-year-old Canadian biologist, Anne Innis Dagg, made an unprecedented solo journey to South Africa to become the first western scientist to study giraffes in the wild on that continent. When she returned home a year later armed with ground-breaking research, the insurmountable barriers she faced as a female scientist proved much harder to overcome. In 1972, having published 20 research papers as an assistant professor of zoology at University of Guelph, the Dean of the university, denied her tenure. She couldn't apply to the University of Waterloo because the Dean there told Anne that he would never give tenure to a married woman. This was the catalyst that transformed Anne into a feminist activist. For three decades, Anne Innis Dagg was absent from the giraffe world until 2010 when she was sought out by giraffologists and not just brought back to into the fold, but finally celebrated for her work.

In *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes*, an older (now 85), wiser Anne takes us on her first expedition back to Africa to retrace where her trail-blazing journey began more than half a century ago. By retracing her original steps, and with letters and stunning, original 16mm film footage, Anne offers an intimate window into her life as a young woman, juxtaposed with a first-hand look at the devastating reality that giraffes are facing today. Both the world's first 'giraffologist', whose research findings ultimately became the foundation for many scientists following in her footsteps, and the species she loves have each experienced triumphs as well as nasty battle scars. *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* gives us a moving perspective on both.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Writer/director Alison Reid first heard about Anne Innis Dagg in 2012 while listening to "Wild Journey", a CBC radio documentary that detailed Anne's pioneering journey to study giraffes in South Africa in 1956. "I was riveted by every word," said Reid. "The story captivated me and never let me go. I immediately read Pursuing Giraffe: A 1950's Adventure [Anne's book about that experience] and knew I had to make a film about it." Moving at the speed of inspiration, Reid met with Anne and optioned the book and her life story.

Originally, Reid optioned the book to make a scripted drama, and midway through the development of this idea, she discovered Anne received an invitation to attend a Giraffe Indaba (or conference) in Nairobi, which meant she would be returning to Africa to see giraffes in the wild for the first time in 57 years. Reid put the scripted film on hold and embarked upon making this documentary. "To me, this was a historic event that cried out to be recorded. There was no time to raise financing. So, I took a leap of faith, found a small camera crew willing to go to Africa, and self-financed the trip," Reid recalled.

And with that first footage, the documentary, *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes*, was born.

YOUNG ANNE

Anne Innis Dagg fell in love with giraffes at the age of three. Twenty years later, having earned her Master's degree in biology, Anne's curiosity remained unquenched. She conceived the idea of traveling to Africa to study them firsthand, but was met with a slew of rejection letters in response to her requests. She even reached out to Dr. Louis Leakey of Kenya, but he was unable to find her a place to study (a few years later, he did provide assistance to Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey). Undeterred, Anne tried another approach. She began to sign her name 'A. Innis' instead of 'Anne Innis' to hide her gender. It worked. She was invited by Alexander Matthew, the manager of Fleur De Lys, a cattle and citrus ranch in South Africa where giraffe roamed freely.

In 1956, at the age of 23 and dismissing the warnings that "Africa is no place for a young woman," Anne set off alone to study her beloved giraffes, becoming the first western scientist to study giraffe in the wild. Crossing the ocean by ship, she landed in Port Elizabeth, South Africa amid heavy political unrest in the fight against apartheid. Traveling by car and then eventually on foot, she arrived at Fleur de Lys, near Hoedspruit by Kruger National Park in the north-eastern part of the country where she began her ground-breaking (both scientifically and socially) research.

But as much as Anne was a pioneer in Africa, when she returned home to Canada, she discovered that the academic world was not prepared to recognize her work. In spite of her groundbreaking scientific work which had been published in top referred scientific journals, and having earned a Ph.D., Anne was dismayed to find that universities in the 1960's and 1970's routinely refused to hire women on a full-time basis. She was denied a tenured position at three universities.

Recalling those years, Anne said, “Just about all the universities didn't want to have women professors, especially in science. That got me thinking that if they could do this to me, they could do it to any woman. So what I thought I'd do is push the envelope. It isn't that I'm saying I'm good - I've got the documentation that shows I am good. So [between 1972-1979] I went to the Ombudsman and I went to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, saying ‘Could you please look into this because I think it's unfair.’”

She fought for seven years — and lost. Without academic support, Anne had no funding to return to Africa, and her research stopped in its tracks. Anne Innis Dagg disappeared from the giraffe world.

The next three decades were a disheartening time during which Anne turned her attention to other pursuits. She was hired as a student resource person for the independent studies programme at the University of Waterloo. She was also a prolific author writing and publishing citizen science papers and authoring 23 books. Anne also threw herself into feminist writing. In 1993, when her husband, Ian Dagg died suddenly, she was crushed, but soon began work on an epic women writers' project, [The Feminine Gaze: A Canadian Compendium of Non-Fiction Women Authors and their Books, 1836-1945](#), which was eventually published in 2001.

In the intervening years, giraffe populations in Africa plummeted catastrophically. Although the species is far more endangered than elephants, its story, like Anne's, is not well known.

Conservation fact: *Three decades ago, in the 1980's, the total number of all giraffe in Africa was estimated at approximately 155,000 individuals. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Giraffe & Okapi Specialist Group and GCF estimate the current Africa-wide giraffe population to be less than 100,000 individuals. This is a drop of almost 40%. (It is also less than the number of wild elephants.) In some areas traditionally regarded as prime giraffe real estate, numbers have dropped by more than 95%. Source: GiraffeConservation.org*

“WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IF SHE WAS STILL ALIVE” — THE RE-BIRTH OF DR. ANNE INNIS DAGG

It often comes as a surprise to many people, including conservationists outside the giraffe community, that Anne's research work preceded that of the legendary Jane Goodall by several years. Her observational research of giraffes was a world first. The product of her labours, [The Giraffe: Its Biology, Behavior and Ecology](#) (co-written with Bristol Foster in 1976), became the most influential book on the species ever written and is referred to today as “the bible” by scientists, conservation biologists, and zookeepers worldwide.

The publication of this book notwithstanding, this intrepid adventurer had disappeared from public life and the research community was left asking, what happened to Dr. Anne Innis Dagg?

In 2010, at a time when they needed her most, the giraffe keeper and conservation community, specifically Amy Phelps, Curator at the San Francisco Zoo, sought Anne out. "It was really important to me that we be able to find her," said Phelps. "We were putting together our first Giraffe Care Conference and we thought it would be amazing if we could find this woman who wrote this text and bring her back into the fold, but we didn't even know if she was still alive."

Their efforts paid off. They found Anne, who had been living quietly in Waterloo, Ontario. Inviting her to attend the International Association for Giraffe Care Professionals in Phoenix, Arizona, Anne was told she was to receive an Excellence in Giraffe Sciences Award. The giraffe community needed her as much as she needed them.

"I had no idea that giraffe even had conferences because I had been cut off from them. I was stunned and incredibly excited and said, 'Yes, yes, yes!' It was magic to find you have a whole community of people who love animals as you did," Anne remarked. With renewed vigour, Anne began a new chapter in her life, inspiring those who love giraffes and being inspired by them.

DOCUMENTING A JOURNEY BACK IN TIME

The Woman Who Loves Giraffes travels with Anne as she returns to Africa for the first time since 1956. In 2013, she attended the Giraffe Indaba in Nairobi and Kenya, and then in 2015, she traveled to a Giraffe Indaba in South Africa. By a fluke, her second Indaba was held at the South African wildlife college in Kruger National Park, a stone's throw from Fleur De Lys, and she was able to retrace the steps of her youth.

"I had woken at 3 am in the morning, worried about seeing the Fleur de Lys giraffe again and how I could stop from crying. Crying is such a silly way to feel deep emotion," Anne wrote in a diary she kept during that 2015 trip. "The event I remember most is the bridge. It was on the dirt road I drove in 1956 to reach Fleur de Lys ranch. I had driven 500 miles that day and knew I was almost at my destination, when Camelo [her car] broke down. It was completely dark, 10 o'clock at night. I was terrified. I knew that lions and leopards prowled here. What should I do? I should have locked myself in the car and waited for morning, but I was much too scared for that. Instead, I climbed out of the car and edged my way forward. Soon I felt the road sloping downward. Then I felt a coolness in the air and the sound of water – I was going over a small bridge. The road continued. A while later, a car approached which I flagged down. I was safe at last."

"Fifty years later I am now at the same bridge," Anne continued in her documentary diary. "I desperately want to go back to where I abandoned Camelo so long ago. And we did go there – to that very bridge. Our two weeks fly by in an exhausting flash. We filmed giraffe eating, ourselves eating, the bed I slept in so long ago, and Mary [Anne's daughter] and I hugging each other and sobbing at the end of the trip because it is over. It was the experience of a lifetime that I shall never forget."

“I fell in love with Anne Dagg,” Reid noted after filming was complete. “We laughed and we cried. I shared hotel rooms with Anne, got to tread on the ground she trod on all those years ago. It was a privilege. While we were in Africa - with wild giraffes — I didn’t know which way to look — at the giraffes — or at the glee in Anne’s face seeing the giraffes.”

* * * *

The Woman Who Loves Giraffes is a documentary in three acts: Young, pioneering Anne in Africa, Anne back in Canada fighting the system, her giraffe hiatus and her rediscovery, and finally 60 years later. Each chapter is compelling in its own right. The story of her past depicts determination, passion, and risk. It involves pursuing a dream, romance, overcoming obstacles, achieving success and facing heartbreak.

The present-day story focuses on overcoming rejection, the joy of being re-discovered and finally receiving recognition, but also having to come to grips with the fact that the species she loves is in grave danger of extinction. By weaving these stories together and juxtaposing them, director Alison Reid gives each a resonance and emotional impact far greater than they would have on their own.

At its core, ***The Woman Who Loves Giraffes*** is a female empowerment story, one full of inspiration for ambitious young girls and women to push forward, overcome obstacles and become trailblazers themselves. It is also a compelling window into giraffe conservation, critical now that giraffes are facing perilous declines in the wild.

“Anne is a highly accomplished Canadian woman with an indomitable spirit who has been flying under the radar for far too long. An underdog. A ground-breaking scientist who managed to overcome every hurdle she faced — regardless the deep the wounds she suffered. Anne is good to the core — easy going, sharp as a tack, laughs easily, and is ridiculously modest. She cares deeply about animals, about the planet and about women’s rights. If you spend time with her there is no avoiding falling in love with her,” observed Reid.

The Woman Who Loves Giraffes is timely, urgent and relevant in the wake of the many historical gains women and scientists have made, which are now under threat with the current US administration. Hard scientific evidence about climate change, threats to wildlife species and the growing need for conserving and protecting the environment are a huge concern for global citizens, and Anne is among them.

ADDITIONAL PERSONALITIES IN THE FILM

Alexander Matthew (Deceased), Manager of Fleur De Lys. The sole person who said 'yes' to Anne's requests to come to study giraffes in Africa, Matthew was instrumental in helping Anne in her studies and in filming her and giraffes. (Voice actor: Victor Garber)

Mary Dagg, Anne's daughter. When Mary travels to South Africa with Anne, she gains a whole new understanding of her mother's stature in the giraffe community and what South Africa means to her.

Mary Quayle Innis (Deceased), Anne's mother. Instilled the confidence in Anne that she could do anything she wanted to do. (Voice actor: Lindsay Leese)

Ian Dagg (Deceased), Anne's fiancé and then husband. Their marriage was one of the reasons Anne was denied tenure as a professor because at the time, certain universities like Waterloo had a policy of not hiring married women. (Voice actor: David Chinchilla)

Amy Phelps, Curator, San Francisco Zoo. An enormous fan of Anne's writings, Amy searched for and rediscovered Anne, and then ignited the recognition efforts from the giraffe keepers who brought Anne out of her 30 year giraffe hiatus.

Lisa Clifton-Bumpass, Giraffe Behaviorist, Oakland Zoo. She invited Anne to go to Africa for Anne's first trip back in 57 years.

John Doherty, Reticulated Giraffe Project, Samburu, Kenya. John and Anne met in 2013. Both hold the same views about animals: they are equal to humans and have as much right to be here as we do. They believe that local people must be an integral part of conservation efforts in order to be successful.

Francois Deacon, Jason Pootoolal, Fred Bercovitch, Zoe Mueller, Andy Tutching, scientists and giraffe keepers. In the current chapter of Anne's life, she learns about their current research studies and work, and incorporates her findings in an update of the giraffe 'bible', The Giraffe (2014).

Jacob Leidiera, a native Kenyan Samburu warrior and partner in the Reticulated Giraffe Project. Anne and he discuss engaging young people in the fight to save giraffes.

Sandy Middleton, Former Professor at University of Guelph and member of the Promotion and Tenure Committee. Middleton supported Anne and was the sole member of the all-male committee to vote in her favour.

Keith Ronald (Deceased since the time of his interview). Former Chairman of Biology and head of the Promotion and Tenure Committee at the University of Guelph. Ronald denied Anne tenure, preventing her from continuing her career at the University of Guelph. Although the times were very different in the 70's, Ronald remained unapologetic about the decision.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

ALISON REID (Director, Writer, Producer) is an award-winning director who began her career as a stunt coordinator and second unit director. After accumulating 300 credits, she formed Free Spirit Films to produce projects diverse in genre but similar in their exploration of the human spirit. Reid received the 2007 Crystal Award for Emerging Director from DGC/WIFT. Her independent feature, *The Baby Formula* (2009), sold internationally, won the Audience Award at the Inside Out LGBT Film Festival, 'Best LGBT Film' at Nashville Film Festival and was nominated for the Golden Zenith at the Montreal World Film Festival. Her television directing credits include *Saving Hope*, *Heartland* and *Murdoch Mysteries*.

JOANNE P. JACKSON (Producer) is an award-winning documentary and television producer who has been the driving force behind many compelling, thought-provoking projects over the last 25 years. She has worked as an in-house producer and as a production executive for three networks (YTV, WTN and Discovery). Her projects have garnered eight Gemini and one Canadian Screen Award nomination. Feature documentary films include *The Messenger* (2015), *The Big Wait* (2010) and *Long Haul Big Hearts* (2007). *The Messenger*, a highly acclaimed and visually thrilling film that unravels the mystery surrounding the decline of migratory songbirds, is a Canada/France co-production directed by Su Rynard. Released theatrically in the USA, UK and Canada, it has screened in over 130 US and 33 Canadian cinemas and community venues, and at many international film festivals. Accolades for *The Messenger* include a 2016 Canadian Screen Award nomination for 'Best Cinematography in a Feature Documentary'; 2015 Hot Docs 'Top Ten Audience Choice' film; Winner, 2015 'Best Conservation Program' Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival; 2016 Best of Fest and Best Theatrical Documentary, International Wildlife Film Festival; Special Mention for 'Best Documentary', CinemAmbiente 2015, Italy; and the Grand Buffon, top prize at Pariscience 2016, Paris, France.

PAUL ZIMIC (Executive Producer) began his work in the movie business at the age of 14 working as an usher in his hometown movie theatre. He graduated university studying communications and took a job in Toronto buying television advertising on behalf of film distributor, Twentieth Century Fox. Over the next 10 years, Zimic enriched his passion for movies by coordinating the international sales department for Alliance Independent Films and later moved to Communications Manager at the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television and eventually Associate Publisher with the infamous industry trade magazine, *Playback*. Zimic witnessed the true capacity of television while selling advertising and sponsorships for the CBC during the 2004 Summer Olympics Games. In 2005 Paul Zimic formed Grindstone Media, a film and television production and distribution company.

DALE HILDEBRAND (Director of Photography) is a multi-award-winning DOP and filmmaker who loves to create visually captivating stories that convey both passion and compassion. After producing a series of action films for Universal Pictures and a variety of Canadian production companies, Dale began to focus on his independent productions, and telling stories in a voice uniquely his own. His documentaries have had international releases. Having traveled the world, and inspired by diverse cultures from around the planet, Dale's project *Peace* won the Banff Television HDTV Pitchfest, and one of his latest productions, *TO in 24* won, has been nominated, or is an official selection to 28 film festivals around the globe (including numerous Best Cinematographer awards, Best Picture awards, a Gemini Award and three Gemini nominations). When Dale is not working on long-format productions, his focus is on branding

and commercial work. Dale has an ongoing roster of clients ranging from NHK (Japan), Discovery (USA), MuchMusic, OMNI TV, Rogers, United Nations, UNICEF, Children's Aid Society, International Institute for Child Rights and Development, Mood Disorders Association of Ontario, Canadian Association for Community Living, Toyota, Honda, Subaru, Mitsubishi, BASF, Unilever, Dairy, Farmers of Canada, Stop Violence Against Women, Canadian Association for Mental Health, Bell Canada, Ontario Tourism and many more.

IRIS NG (Additional Photography) is a cinematographer with over a decade of experience collaborating with award-winning filmmakers and artists. Her credits encompass art, narrative films, documentary series, commercials, and music videos, with a focus on long-form documentaries including *Stories We Tell* directed by Sarah Polley (Best Canadian Film – Toronto Film Critics Association, Best Documentary – Los Angeles Film Critics Association, and Best Non-Fiction Film – New York Film Critics Circle), *Herman's House* directed by Angad Bhalla (Emmy Award for Outstanding Arts & Culture Program), *The Ghosts in our Machine* directed by Liz Marshall (Best Canadian Feature – Planet In Focus International Film and Video Festival), and most recently, a portion of the 10-part Netflix documentary series *Making a Murder*; Storyline Entertainment's *League of Exotique Dancers*; and Yap Films' *Loretta Lynn: Still a Mountain Girl* for the PBS series *American Masters*. She has also lensed films directed by Min Sook Lee, Fredrik Gertten, Michael McNamara, Vikram Jayanti, Martha Burns, Fisher Stevens, and artists Chris Curreri, Richard Fung and Oliver Husain.

MIKE MUNN (Editor) Acclaimed for both his dramatic and documentary editing, Mike Munn began his career with the Toronto 'new wave', editing features for Bruce McDonald (*Roadkill*), Srinivas Krishna (*Masala and Lulu*) and Peter Mettler (*Tectonic Plates* and *Picture of Light*). He went on to cut numerous features for Canadian and international directors, including John Greyson (*Law of Enclosures*), Richard Kwietniowski (*Owning Mahowny*), Daniel MacIvor (*Past Perfect* and *Wilby Wonderful*), Nisha Ganatra (*Cake*) and Bruce McCulloch (*Comeback Season*). As well, Mike has edited several award-winning documentaries, including *Stories We Tell* for director Sarah Polley, and *Rush: Beyond the Lighted Stage* for directors Sam Dunn and Scot McFadyen. Throughout his very productive career, Mike has continued to regularly consult on independent projects and to seek opportunities to collaborate with creative filmmakers, whether they are firmly established or just starting out. Mike's work has been recognized formally through award nominations as well as being highlighted in film reviews from around the world. His versatility and filmic sensibility allow him to bring a unique vision and precision to both drama and documentary projects.

CAROLINE CHRISTIE (Editor) Over the past 25 years, Toronto based editor Caroline Christie has worked in a variety of cinematic forms: award-winning feature documentaries (*Army of One*, *Project Grizzly*); TV comedy series (*The Awful Truth with Michael Moore*, *Dan For Mayor*, *InSecurity*, *Puppets Who Kill*); experimental short films (Michael Snow's *Hue Chroma Tint*, Peter Lynch and Max Dean's *A Short Film About Falling*, Elida Schogt's *Zyklon Portrait*); award-winning dramatic shorts (Peter Lynch's *Arrowhead*); series television (*Republic of Doyle*, *Private Eyes*, *Frankie Drake*) and feature films including Terrance Odette's *Fall* and Peter Lynch's post-noir feature, *Birdland*.

TOM THIRD (Composer) Canadian Screen Award and Gemini Award-winning composer, Tom Third, has been scoring films and television for over 20 years, and has more than 200 episodes of television to his credit. His work employs an innovative combination of traditional instruments with electronic and digitally manipulated sounds. Most recently he was the composer for documentaries *What Wala Wants* and *Yellow is Forbidden*. His cutting edge production is informed by his experience as a recording artist with Network Records and the release of three critically acclaimed electronic CD's. In 1999, he co-wrote songs sung by Gary Busey and rapper Ice-T for the feature *Jacob Two Two and the Hooded Fang*, and scored the feature *Four Days* starring Colm Meaney that same year. In 2000, Tom began work in dramatic episodic television with the Showtime series *Queer as Folk* and won the MPSE Golden Reel Award for music editing. This was followed by the series *ReGenesis* (52 episodes for Shaftsbury Films). In 2004, Tom won the Volkswagen Score competition sponsored by the Berlin Film Festival and juried by world renowned editor/filmmaker Walter Murch. Other notable assignments include the multi-award winning drama *Durham County* for HBO Canada, *The Listener* (Fox and CTV) and *Shoot the Messenger* (CBC 2016). He won the CSA for the TV movie *Borealis* (aka *Survival Code*).

* * * *