



OUT OF ORDER



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'Leave Them Laughing'

A Musical Comedy about Dying

by Academy Award®-winning director John Zaritsky

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The Film

Proposal for a one-off documentary

1 x 90 and 1x 60 minute versions

To be released January 2010

On stage in actual and dramatized flashbacks to her giddy days as a comedienne and chanteuse, and on camera in the unashamed current reality of her condition, LEAVE THEM LAUGHING tells Carla's own glad, sad story in her own voice through diary entries, travelogues, interviews and skits. Films of her last brave travels to Australia, Britain and Mexico demonstrate the ferocity of her intention to suck the last molecules of pleasure from her life.

*"A journalist asked me what I wanted to do before I died,
and I quite naturally answered: Johnny Depp."*

We are confident that a musical comedy about the nearness of death will be a unique and compelling vehicle to engage an audience with a subject that might otherwise be shunned for its graphic toll of suffering and pain.

But beyond the inexorable progress of the disease is the inescapable truth that all of us, sooner or later, will have to confront our own individual demise. No one could serve as a more inspiring forerunner along that path than Carla Zilbersmith, who faces her own extinction with wit, wisdom, courage, music and love. That she will die before her audience, her son, her friends, and her parents, there is little doubt. That they need grieve for her suffering while she still is living, there is no reason. Later, she says, there will be too much time for tears and sorrow.

We see a universal appeal for this unique portrayal of a woman's capacity for humor in the face of tragedy.

Carla's outrageous and colorful sense of humor remains intact, even as her physical body weakens; who else would have the words "Out of Order" tattooed on her feet!



A little about Carla

For more than fifteen years, Carla Zilbersmith wrote and presented an amazing array of musical and theatrical scores, scripts, one-woman plays, and songs. She and her band the SubUrbans were Lilith Fair finalists, she was the founding member of We're Redheads, a women's sketch comedy troupe, and her one-woman musical, Wedding Singer Blues, received rave notices up and down the west coast, including a Best of the Bay award. The Los Angeles Times compared her favorably to Lily Tomlin.

ALS imposes a cruel and literal deadline; Carla has up to two years to live. Our goal — and hers — is to bring the film to the screen for her to see.

We plan a 90-minute version for theatrical and festival release and a 60-minute documentary for international and domestic broadcast.

Synopsis

Ninety riveting minutes of songs about life and quips about death from the wheelchair of a woman who vows to exit laughing. Once a nationally-known performer of ballads, skits and self-parody, now fated by Lou Gehrig's Disease to perish within a year or two, the remarkable Carla Zilbersmith will leave a teen-aged son, a few fans and students who adore her, and this 90-minute pre-mortem retrospective of a life lived fully, but far too fast.

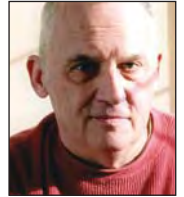
The Creative Team

For Academy Award®-winning director John Zaritsky and writer/musician/businesswoman Montana Berg, the opportunity to work together is a match made in Vancouver, BC, in 2007. Two years later, MagicalFlute Films is a bi-coastal, bi-national venture into the artistic and emotional dimensions of documentary cinema, a genre that John Zaritsky has been ennobling for more than thirty years.

Cinema . . . in the key of compassion

Director/Executive Producer

John Zaritsky has won more than 30 awards for his documentary films. Some of his major honors include an Academy Award® for his documentary “Just Another Missing Kid”, a Cable Ace Award for “Rapists: Can They be Stopped”, a Golden Gavel Award from the American Bar Association for “My Husband is Going to Kill Me”, a Robert F. Kennedy Foundation Award for “Born in Africa”, and an Alfred Dupont Award from Columbia University’s School of Journalism for “Romeo and Juliet in Sarajevo”.



His films have won awards at the New York Film Festival, the American Film Festival, Banff Television Festival, Houston International Film Festival, Columbus Ohio Film Festival, and the John Muir Medical Film Festival. Three films, “Broken Promises”, “Born in Africa”, and “Romeo and Juliet in Sarajevo” were nominated for Emmy Awards. In addition, Zaritsky was nominated for a Gemini, Canada’s national television award, fourteen times and won seven.



Zaritsky made films from his home base in Toronto for twenty years. He moved to Vancouver in 1999 to direct the film *Ski Bums* (Sundance 2002) and never left the west coast. He created the production company Point Grey Pictures and since then Point Grey Pictures has produced the documentaries *Men Don’t Cry: Prostate Cancer Stories*, and *No Kidding: The Search for the World’s Funniest Joke*, both commissioned by CBC’s *Witness* series. Most recently, John has directed the Gemini winner *College Days College Nights*, *The Suicide Tourist* and *The Wild Horse Redemption* for Point Grey Pictures.

Producer

Montana Berg recently founded MagicalFlute Films, LLC. She is in the process of co-producing her first documentary with executive producer/director John Zaritsky. Berg has a strong background in business and finance. Prior to this venture, Berg served as president of an international manufacturing business with annual revenue of \$15 million dollars. Her responsibilities included overseeing day-to-day operations of the production with 70+ employees reporting to her. She was also directly involved in budgeting and played an active role in marketing and sales. During her tenure, she successfully launched the product (kitchen cabinets) in Shanghai, China.



Berg is also an established freelance writer and photographer. Her articles and photographs (published under the penname Renate Siekmann) have been featured in a number of different regional newspapers. She has published more than 100 articles covering a wide array of topics including gourmet foods and cooking, travel, recreational activities and classical music. She also co-authored the latest editions of two books, the *Adventure Guide to the Bahamas* and the *Adventure Guide to Bermuda*. Furthermore, she has written extensively about the business of photography and published well over 140 photographs.



Point Grey Pictures/MagicalFlute Films

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The Story

A Canadian California comedienne rolls toward doomsday vowing that humor will be the last sense to go. She is Carla Zilbersmith, ex-actor, ex-singer, ex-teacher, ex-redheaded hottie, and soon to be ex-human being.

Imagine Lily Tomlin or Carol Burnett on a respirator and a feeding tube, limp, lascivious, and unable to put on her own lipstick -- the loss to humanity, the (literally) sick jokes.

"I have Lou Gehrig's Disease or ALS – a fatal incurable illness . . . which means global warming is your problem."

Relax — Lily and Carol, combined age 145, are fine. Carla Zilbersmith, on the other hand, will die within two years, perhaps sooner, at 46, condemned by Lou Gehrig's disease to perish as a feeling, knowing nucleus within a shell of limpid clay. She'll leave a body of work, a non-working body, a teenaged son, and a flame-throwing wheelchair.

She'll also be outlived by her parrot. Carla's trying to teach him to say, "This woman is dead."

"Until I'm completely paralyzed, I have no doubt I can get a guy to have sex with me. I still count as "anything that moves."

All she'll have to look backward to from her wheelchair or hospice bed — or from whatever corner of heaven is reserved for atheists — will be a one-woman swan song called LEAVE THEM LAUGHING. Directed by Oscar-winner John Zaritsky, featuring songs and skits from Carla's working years and wacky wisdom from her final hours, the film is a giddy, gripping Lonely Planet guidebook to lead us along our own solitary journey to the flat line.

Stylistically, LEAVE THEM LAUGHING will be a compelling journey through Carla's vibrant and varied career. Zilbersmith promises that LEAVE THEM LAUGHING will be a knee-slapper, but she'll need someone else to slap her knee. Already, Carla's body is so withered, barely a year after her dead-end diagnosis, that she has had the words "Out Of Order" tattooed on her feet. Yet the star of the show is defiant: she fully intends to smirk herself to death.

Carla Zilbersmith once wrote a ballad called "You Take My Breath Away" and meant it as a love song, not a shout-out to a Yankee first baseman.

"Having Lou Gehrig's Disease sucks, because I hate baseball. I'd much rather have been diagnosed with a basketball disease. Maybe Wilt Chamberlain Disease. That's the one where you have sex 20,000 times and then you die."

She has tickets to watch the figure skating competition at the Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver, her home town. The flame shall be lit in February, 2010. She'll make it, if she dies slowly.

Picture her in her prime: touring her multi-character Wedding Singer Blues up and down the Left Coast, crooning with the Boston Philharmonic, teaching theater arts at a college near San Francisco, slithering between the sheets in her self-described "hot little body" and nurturing a son named Maclen — for the two most gifted Beatles.

It could have been worse; he could have been GeoRin.

(Continued on other side)



Carla and Maclen enjoying some laughs with director John Zaritsky

The Story

The Los Angeles Times once compared her favorably to Tomlin, yet she won no Grammys, claimed no Tonys, earned only limited fame, uploaded a few YouTube clips and paved a mile-long paper trail of denied insurance claims. (And the Times declared bankruptcy.)

“Dead is the new alive.’ Now I know what you’re thinking: I was just being trendy. But trust me. It won’t be long before all of you start to follow my lead.”

It’s so hard for us to let go of who we were, what we had and what we dreamt we would be,” Zilbersmith writes in the blog that is her only remaining medium of public expression. “I wanted to ‘make it’ as a performer, to find ‘the one’ and live happily ever after, and of course to watch my son get married and have kids that I could swear in front of. None of that is going to happen for me and yet I feel like a success. Go figure.”

Fighting a war she cannot win, Carla is holding on to life’s pleasures as long as possible, traveling in her final months of mobility to Australia, England and Disneyland. Singing at the Sydney Opera House was also on her bucket list.

Now it is just about over -- but she believes that there remains room for levity between the “over” and the “just about.”

“I pray I can have the strength to be like those Buddhist Monks destroying the elaborate sand mandalas they just completed,” she says. “I imagine them hiking up their robes, joyfully kicking up sand and laughing. That is how I want to go.”

“I don’t miss mediocre sex or bad sex, just the great sex. There’s no gender up in heaven so it’s only this distinction that helps us figure out who was a man and who was a woman. The men even miss the disastrous sex.”

At the heart of LEAVE THEM LAUGHING are Carla’s blog entries, read in her own faltering voice, the best and truest insight into her necessity to compress Shakespeare’s Seven Ages of Man into a year or a year and a half.

Indomitable in spirit – though ALS is dominating her physically straight into the grave – she has traveled to Britain, Australia, and Mexico since her diagnosis. Here she is on a Mexican beach with her Beatle-browed son:

Maclen helps me down the stairs to the beach and I use my cane to get down the slope of sand to the water’s edge. Downhill is tough for me. Now comes the tricky part. I need to stand (now without the cane) in the water to get out deep enough to paddle out. Mac is holding me steady but I keep falling over onto him. Or onto my astonishingly white ass. Once I’m deep enough, I don’t have the arm strength to get my arms on either side of the board and Velcro the hand because the waves are still crashing me this way and that. Without a word passing between us, Mac and I start to laugh. We laugh and laugh until our bellies ache and time stands still and it’s just the two of us, doing what we do best together and damn it, I’m happy. I really am. I’m happy because I’m laughing in warm water in the sun with my beautiful boy.

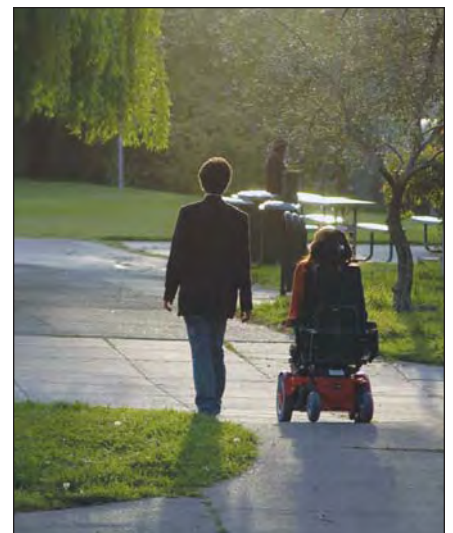
“I don’t want to live beyond a time when I can breathe my own oxygen, eat my own food and speak my own words,” Carla says. “I don’t want to dig my fingernails into this life, clutching until I draw blood. I DO want to go gentle into that good night. Does that make me a coward or brave?”

Her son is certain of the answer.

“Use humor to take arms against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” sixteen-year-old Maclen told a gathering of friends in a recent pre-death eulogy. “Use love to combat uncertainty, find happiness wherever you can, and, most importantly, live your life until you can live no more. My mom does.”

Not even Carla Zilbersmith pretends that dying young is a laff. The uniqueness of her story – and of LEAVE THEM LAUGHING – is not that she can laugh about her fate, but that she also, eloquently, teaches us how, and when, to cry.

“How many ‘last times’ have you had when you absolutely knew it was the last?” she muses. “Last day of high school or college? Making love one last time with an ex? Moving from a home that you’ve lived in for a long time? Aren’t those last times rich – swollen with memories, mourning, passion and possibility? I have ‘last times’ a lot.”





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June 17, 2009

Re: Leave Them Laughing
By: Montana Berg

Dear Sir or Madame:

This is to advise you that Montana Berg, the above referenced member of the International Documentary Association, has been accepted into our Fiscal Sponsorship Program. We are pleased to support Montana Berg's documentary, *Leave Them Laughing*.

On behalf of the International Documentary Association, I would like to urge you to support *Leave Them Laughing*. The filmmaker has demonstrated high professional standards and the project promises to be a contribution to both the media arts and cultural history. We also found the budget to be feasible.

The International Documentary Association has been in existence since 1982, and for some time has allowed members to use its 501(c)(3) status to solicit charitable contributions for selected documentary projects and to apply for grants to agencies which require such status. We have agreed to act in that capacity in this instance. The International Documentary Association will administer any funds received in support of this project. Donations to the IDA are tax deductible to the extent allowed by the law.

We look forward to working with you and appreciate your time in considering Montana Berg's documentary film, *Leave Them Laughing*.

Very truly yours,

Michael Lumpkin
Executive Director
International Documentary Association

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Alan Ett Creative Group

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