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PBS'S INDEPENDENT LENS CELEBRATES THE HISTORY OF LGBTQ+ COMICS WITH THE TELEVISION PREMIERE OF "NO STRAIGHT LINES," ON JANUARY 23, 2023

NOVEMBER 18, 2022

The Documentary Follows the Evolution of LGBTQ+ Representation in Comics, Featuring Interviews with Alison Bechdel and Other Pioneers of Underground Newspapers and Queer Comics

(San Francisco, CA) November 18, 2022 — From Peabody Award-winning filmmaker Vivian Kleiman ("Color Adjustment") comes an in-depth look at the evolution of queer comics, starting in the 1970s when LGBTQ+ stories were not in popular culture. Through the careers of five scrappy and pioneering cartoonists who depicted everything from the AIDS crisis to "coming out" to same-sex marriage, "No Straight Lines" captures the beginnings of queer comics, from its origins as an underground art form to its progression into a social movement, culminating with its long-awaited mainstream acceptance into comic books, newspaper strips, and graphic novels.

Heralded as "enjoyable," "informative," and "quietly powerful" by the *Los Angeles Times*, and "entertaining and enlightening" by CBS News, "No Straight Lines" makes its television debut on PBS's Emmy Award-winning documentary anthology series INDEPENDENT LENS on January 23, 2023, at 10:00 p.m. ET (check local listings). The film will also be available to stream on the PBS Video app.

When Alison Bechdel received a coveted John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation fellowship, known as the MacArthur "Genius Grant," in 2014 for

her best-selling graphic memoir “Fun Home,” also the inspiration for the Tony Award-winning Broadway show of the same name, it signaled the acceptance of LGBTQ+ comics in mainstream American culture. However, that moment was, in reality, the culmination of a community’s decades-long history of tackling complex issues through a grassroots artistic movement.

“No Straight Lines” features interviews with five queer comic book artists, including Bechdel, Jennifer Camper (“Rude Girls and Dangerous Women”), Howard Cruse (“WENDEL,” “Stuck Rubber Baby”), Rupert Kinnard (“B.B. and the Diva,” “Cathartic Comics”), and Mary Wings (“Come Out Comix”). These pioneering queer artists use comics as a tool for social change and queer acceptance. They brought the queer experience to life in a changing world, showcasing the everyday pursuits of love, sex, and community through a humorous and artful lens, and pushing what was once a marginalized underground scene into the mainstream.

“‘No Straight Lines’ is the story of a DIY art form—often considered junk food for kids—that over the past 50 years has been used by queer artists as a powerful medium to represent our lives,” said Kleiman. “More than a chronology of milestone events, I wanted to create an intergenerational story of our emergence from rejection to acceptance, and help LGBTQI youth feel safe.”

In the documentary, artist interviews alongside their work, are interwoven with stories of landmark moments in LGBTQ+ history—from the Stonewall Riots to the AIDS epidemic and more. Taken together, it’s the story of how the queer comics scene shed light on the experiences of generations in a community previously underrepresented in the media and popular culture.

Visit the “[No Straight Lines](#)” page on INDEPENDENT LENS to learn more about the film.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS:

VIVIAN KLEIMAN

Director/Producer Vivian Kleiman is a Peabody Award-winning filmmaker and a Fleishhacker Eureka Fellowship artist. She was the story editor for “Wu-Tang Clan: Of Mics and Men,” and her work with landmark filmmaker Marlon Riggs includes “Tongues Untied,” among others. She taught at Stanford University’s Documentary Film and Video Graduate Program.

JUSTIN HALL

Producer Justin Hall edited the Lambda Award-winning, Eisner-nominated anthology “No Straight Lines: Four Decades of Queer Comics” and created the comics “True Travel Tales,” and “Hard to Swallow.” Hall is chair of the MFA in Comics Program at California College of the Arts, the first Fulbright Scholar of comics, and has curated international exhibitions of comics art.

CREDITS

Director & Producer
Producer & Principal Consultant
Executive Producers

Vivian Kleiman
Justin Hall
Ellen Poss
Gerald Herman
Cort Lane
Greg Sirota

Visit the INDEPENDENT LENS [website](#) for more information.

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series, airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 p.m. ET. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, Action Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram at @independentlens.

ABOUT ITVS

ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films, and then airs [them](#) for free on PBS via our weekly



series, INDEPENDENT LENS, as well as on other PBS series, and through our digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The National Endowment for the Humanities: American Rescue Plan, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit itvs.org.

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