



Official Selection International Rome Film Festival 2010

the

# CANAL ST MADAM

a documentary film





"[T]hrough sheer force of her selfmocking wit and outgoing personality, Maier... manages to generate and sustain a rooting interest."



"The Canal Street Madam plays a little like Grey Gardens, only this time the mom runs a whorehouse and her daughter is one of the whores."



"What do you do with a woman who boldly declares that she's a whore? If you're Cameron Yates, you follow her around for years and discover that she has a fascinating, funny, troubling story to tell.... The Canal Street Madam is a compulsively watchable documentary."

#### EYEWEEKLY.com

"If there was ever a sex worker who deserved to have her own talk show, it's former New Orleans madam Jeanette Maier... the film's treatment of sex workers' rights issues is unflinchingly raw and powerful."

## indieWIRE<sup>\*</sup>

"Yates' verite style film combines serious commentary on media, politics and morality with humor ....Maier herself is an intoxicating character, who uses her mix of Southern charm, a filthy mouth and confident charisma to advocate for the rights of sex workers."

## FILMMAKER

"The Canal Street Madam is a portrait of a very complicated woman living a very complicated life... She is wild, shrewd, intense, generous, manipulative, loyal, self-aggrandizing, incredibly sad and incredibly funny."

### FILMSCHOOLREJECTS

"The Canal Street Madam accomplishes several impressive feats when most docs can hardly accomplish one. It is, in so many ways, a complete work of non-fiction."



"This nuanced film about ex-madam Jeanette Maier, who ran a New Orleans brothel before it was busted by the FBI, is a complex study of the high price of sex work."

a film by Cameron Yates

#### **FEATURING**

The Canal Street Madam  Her Mother  Her Daughter  Her Elder Son  Her Younger Son  Her Best Friend.	TOMMIE TAYLORMONICA MONTEMAYORSAMMY MONTEMAYORALEX MAIER
WITH SPECIAL APPEARANCES BY	
US Senator (R-LA) Plaquemines Parish President	DAVID VITTERBILLY NUNGESSER JR.
CREDITS	
Director/Cinematographer	CAMERON YATES
Producer	MRIDU CHANDRA
Executive Producer	PHILIPP ENGELHORN
Co-Producers	ESTHER B. ROBINSON
Editors	
Co-Editor	
Original Music	T. GRIFFIN

#### LOG LINE

An FBI raid on Jeanette Maier's infamous family-run brothel in New Orleans destroyed her livelihood. Stigmatized by felony, fearing recrimination from powerful clients and determined to protect her children, Jeanette sets out to re-invent herself.

#### **SYNOPSIS**

Until an FBI bust upended her life, Jeanette Maier was a successful New Orleans madam. Her discreet clientele included a number of powerful, high-ranking politicians. The ensuing very public trial - both in the courtroom and in the media – focused salaciously on the fact that Jeanette's brothel was a family affair – Jeanette ran the business with her mother and she employed her own daughter as an escort. Jeanette and her family ended up infamous, their futures blighted by felony convictions, yet their well-connected clients escaped exposure. Now, the Canal Street Madam sets out to reinvent herself, to reclaim her public persona, and to protect her family as she fights back against a system that silences the powerless and protects the elite.

This verité documentary offers a first person, intimate view of lives rarely seen on their own terms. It reveals the cost of public exposure and how unequal enforcement of the law plays out for sex workers and for their clients. It uses FBI wiretaps, brothel home-movies, and haunting '80s stripper and family snapshots to create a complex portrait of their lives and motivations. The Canal Street Madam becomes a behind-the-scenes indictment of hypocritical politicians, the challenges of single parenthood, and the lack of protection for women whom society relegates to an underclass, yet who service society's most powerful.

a film by Cameron Yates

#### ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The Canal Street Madam takes a non-judgmental and unsentimental look at a hard life, made harder by an FBI bust. In the wake of the loss of their business and the limiting options of felony convictions, Jeanette and her unconventional family make a fresh start. Capitalizing on this new beginning, the film captures the family's introspection as they try to make sense of their past and chart a new course for the future. This intimate look into a family that is both mundane and extraordinary gives us fresh perspective on choices that at first glance seem cruel but which in context begin to make an odd sense.

As Jeanette exploits her newfound notoriety and engages her best friend Lori in her endeavors, we witness her attempts to re-make her life post-brothel. From new business startups like a "Burning Rubbers with the Madam" explicit CD to soy candle production, Jeanette tries and tries again to re-cast her life in new terms. But these attempts are always linked to her former profession—creating a provocative and not always successful dance with her conditions of parole and the media.

On one hand this dance allows her to sell her story to CBS, for a primetime made-for-TV movie starring Annabella Sciorra (Jeanette Maier), Ellen Burstyn (Tommie), & Dominique Swain (Monica)—providing her with money for a new home. But her relationship with the media isn't always positive—her appearance on the Opie & Anthony radio show, recorded live at the Hard Rock Cafe in New York City, ends particularly badly, with drunken men yelling "How Many Abortions?" and "Show Your Tits!" repeatedly until a bodyguard has to escort her off stage.

At first subdued by this media ordeal, Jeanette begins to understand how she must control her own message, both in intimate ways—like apologizing to her daughter for the environment in which she was raised—and in larger ways, as she engages with political campaigns to decriminalize prostitution. This nascent empowerment leads her to register to vote for the first time, and ultimately her realization of the dark compact she made with the political elite of New Orleans. While she saw her silence as the ticket to her survival (both a caring and protective act for her clients and a bulwark against death threats), she begins to realize it is also the instrument of her continued subjugation.

Her complicity begins to raise new issues. What does it mean to be a voting citizen who knows the darker proclivities of politicians? For the audience, what does it mean for our larger democratic process if the political power of our towns and our country includes using the law to buy women, to enforce their silence, and to escape equal judgment? Whose power is protected? Whose power do we, the average citizen, protect?

In the end, the film becomes a portrait of a woman, politicized in her own way, on her own terms, for her own rights. Never simple. Always surprising. Jeannette and her family teach us to celebrate the strength of family, to recognize the unexpectedly heroic struggle of one woman to remake her life against the odds, and to remember that the outcasts among us may be the ones who can best reveal the truth about justice, power, and democracy.



a film by Cameron Yates

#### **DIRECTORS STATEMENT**

In the summer of 2003, I was traveling around the South and ended up in New Orleans, where I read a story in the local newspaper about a madam, Jeanette Maier, who had been arrested for running a brothel with her mother and daughter. I was immediately intrigued by the idea of three generations of women working together in the sex industry. I tracked down Jeanette while she was serving time in a halfway house, and, in our first conversation, we spoke on the phone for three hours about corruption in New Orleans and about why women get busted for prostitution while their johns go free.

I started filming Jeanette just after she served her time, as she struggled to find work outside the sex industry. She began marketing herself as "The Canal Street Madam," selling T-shirts and bumper stickers, and recording a sexually explicit CD. I was very curious what a notorious madam with a felony conviction would do next. I also wanted to examine the impact on her family of the bust and the subsequent media exposure to which they were subjected. There seemed to be



a lot of blame being passed around from daughter to mother to grandmother, but Jeanette seemed determined to bring her family back together.

I filmed Jeanette on my own, trying to make the camera feel like an extension of myself and not a threatening recording device – keep in mind her phone had been tapped by the FBI for months before she was busted. We drove around New Orleans in her pickup truck exploring the city and talking about her family and prostitution. More and more, it became apparent that Jeanette was upset by the hypocrisy of the system and would talk about the fact that some of her most famous clients were high-ranking politicians that patronized her brothel for years. She felt betrayed by them because they all abandoned her when she was arrested.

Jeanette's story offers an opportunity to look at societal views on sex and prostitution and their intersection with laws and the economy. She was a single mother who found independence as a businesswoman and as a sex worker catering to the leaders of our society – politicians, doctors, and businessmen. It's important to consider the reasons why many women go into prostitution, and why they suffer the social stigma of selling sex but their clients do not for buying it. It's a conversation particularly relevant in the current financial crisis and with recent political scandals involving former NY Governor Elliot Spitzer and Louisiana Senator David Vitter.

This documentary does not endorse a political point of view on prostitution, but it does present Jeanette's belief that prostitution should be decriminalized. Prostitution is a difficult subject to talk about, complicated by a matrix of moral, social, and religious viewpoints, but it is a part of most cultures. More than one in every ten American adult males has paid for sex at some point in his life. In 2008, about 84,000 people were arrested across the nation for prostitution-related offenses. A more open dialogue about sexuality and the realities of its expression can only contribute to the democratic functioning of our society, and I hope this film encourages viewers to contemplate their own feelings on the subject.

a film by Cameron Yates

#### THE FILMMAKERS

CAMERON YATES (Director/Cinematographer) is the Documentary Features Programmer for NewFest: The New York LGBT Film Festival and a Documentary Programming Consultant for the Hamptons International Film Festival. He has also worked for the Sundance Film Festival, the New York Film Festival, Albert Maysles, and Zeitgeist Films, and has been a contributor to indieWIRE. Cameron's first film, 14 and Payrolled, a half-hour portrait of four teenagers working as pages for the Virginia House of Delegates, premiered on PBS in 2003. He has also served as a director of photography on several documentary television projects. The Full Frame Documentary Film Festival awarded Cameron the 2009 Garrett Scott Documentary Grant, given to emerging filmmakers who bring a unique vision to the content and style of contemporary documentary production. Cameron is a graduate of New York University, is a resident of Brooklyn, NY, and has made frequent filmmaking trips to New Orleans since 2004. The Canal Street Madam is his first feature documentary.

MRIDU CHANDRA (Producer) has been producing social issue documentaries and narrative films for the past decade. In addition to co-producing Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin (Sundance 2003, POV 2003), she produced Let the Church Say Amen (Silverdocs 2003, Sundance 2004, Independent Lens 2005), which was selected by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences as one of the "most outstanding documentaries" of 2004. Her Indie feature projects include line producing Love, Ludlow (Sundance 2005), associate producing Punching at the Sun (Sundance 2006), and most recently producing three-time festival best film winner Poundcake. She has taught graduate level classes at The New School's Department of Media Studies and has been a research fellow and director of the documentary ethics project at American University's Center for Social Media, where she co-wrote, with Pat Aufderheide and Peter Jaszi, "Honest Truths: Documentary Filmmakers on Ethical Challenges in Their Work." She also lectures in the "Made in NY" PA training Program, providing skill development and mentorship for individuals from diverse communities seeking entry level positions in the NY film and television industry. Currently, she is directing a trilogy of short documentaries about India in America.

PHILIPP ENGELHORN (Executive Producer) founded the not-for-profit Cinereach in 2006. Both a film foundation and production company, Cinereach empowers filmmakers working at the intersection of engaging storytelling, visual artistry, and vital subject matter. Cinereach has awarded more than \$3 million in grants to over 50 films and is currently in production on its first fiction feature, shooting in New Orleans this summer. Philipp is a member of the Board of Directors of Synergos, a non-profit dedicated to eliminating global poverty and social injustice. He also serves on the board of the Patrons of the Pinakothek in Munich. He is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School Of the Arts.

ESTHER B ROBINSON (Co-Producer) was chosen as one of Filmmaker Magazine's "25 to Watch" in 2006. Her critically acclaimed directorial debut, A Walk into the Sea: Danny Williams and The Warhol Factory, took top prizes at the Berlin, Tribeca, and Chicago film festivals and is currently in international theatrical release. From 1999-2006. Esther was the Director of Film/Video and Performing Arts for the Creative Capital Foundation and one of the principal architects of its innovative grant-making system. In 1998, Esther produced the feature documentary HomePage with filmmaker Doug Block, which screened in competition at the 1999 Sundance and Rotterdam Film Festivals and at South by Southwest before being broadcast on HBO/Cinemax, ZDF/ARTE, and in over a dozen different countries. In 1998, she also co-founded Wavelength Releasing, a company formed specifically to address new forms of distribution/exhibition. Wavelength was responsible for the first fully digital film release (The Last Broadcast). Esther also produced the national PBS series Alive TV (formerly Alive From Off Center) and co-produced Cable Ace Award nominee Still/Here. In addition to co-producing The Canal Street Madam, she is also currently producing Strong Island (Yance Ford) and Savior (Darius Marder). Esther is also a guarterly contributor to Filmmaker Magazine, a Co-Chair of The Cinema Eye Honors, and the founder of ArtHome (ArtHome.org), an entrepreneurial nonprofit that helps artists build solid financial futures through the creation of assets and equity. She holds a film and television degree from New York University.

a film by Cameron Yates

BASIL TSIOKOS (Co-Producer) has been a Programming Associate, Documentary Features for the Sundance Film Festival since 2005. In addition to co-producing The Canal Street Madam, he also serves as a consultant for filmmakers and festivals, offering project feedback and advice on festival and promotional strategy. Basil was on the staff of NewFest: The New York LGBT Film Festival beginning in 1996, and served as the organization's Executive and Artistic Director between 1998-2008. Since 2009, he has been the guest curator of an annual film series for the Jacob Burns Film Center. Basil has also served as a coordinator of the IFP's No Borders Co-Production Market, screened for POV, and has been a guest programmer for the Miami Gay & Lesbian Film Festival and for Germany's touring Verzaubert Film Festival. Basil has served on festival juries and panels for the Atlanta Film Festival, Atlantic Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival, Cleveland International Film Festival, Full Frame, IFP, LaCinemaFe, Outfest, SXSW, Starz Denver Film Festival, and AIVF, He is an occasional contributor to indieWIRE, and may be found on Twitter as @1basil1 offering advice and information to filmmakers. Basil is a graduate of Stanford University (BA) and New York University (MA).

SHANNON KENNEDY (Editor) is an award-winning documentary film editor, whose credits include A Walk into the Sea, which won the Teddy Award at the 2007 Berlin Film Festival and the NY Loves Film Best Documentary Award at the 2007 Tribeca Film Festival and The Trials of Daryl Hunt, an official selection of the 2006 Documentary Competition at the Sundance Film Festival and a recipient of the DuPont Award. She also edited, along with director Kimberly Reed, Prodigal Sons, which has won numerous best documentary awards at festivals internationally. Her latest film is Vlast (Power), which just premiered at MOMA. Kennedy was also an Additional Editor on El General, which won Natalia Almada the Documentary Directing Award at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, and Life 2.0, which premiered at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival.

SAKAE ISHIKAWA (Editor) began her editing career as a staff assistant editor at Maysles Films Inc, working with esteemed editors such as Deborah Dickson, Charlotte Zwerin, Bob Eisenhardt, and Bruce Sinofsky. Her credits include Todd Haynes' acclaimed independent film Safe (first assistant), 1997 Academy Award nominated Suzanne Farrell: Elusive Muse (associate editor), 2003 Sundance selection The Education of Gore Vidal (editor), NY Times Television programs Raising the Flag (editor) and Battle Plan Under Fire (editor), 2009 SXSW selection Still Bill (editor), 2009 PBS' Global Voices episode Witnesses to a Secret War (editor), and 2009 Sundance selection Quest for Honor (contributing editor). Sakae is also a contributing editor to the Metropolitan Opera's HD series.

MARY MANHARDT (Co-Editor) is the Emmy Award-winning editor of Liz Garbus and Jonathan Stack's The Farm: Angola, USA (nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature); Liz Garbus' The Execution of Wanda Jean; Marshall Curry's Streetfight (nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 2006) and Racing Dreams; Carlos Sandoval and Catherine Tambini's Farmingville; and Nanette Burstein's American Teen which she edited with Burstein and Tom Haneke. Her work has aired on HBO, PBS, ABC, and MTV, and has been honored in film festivals worldwide, including Sundance, IDFA, Tribeca, Hot Docs, and South by Southwest.

T GRIFFIN (Composer) is a songwriter, composer and producer working in Brooklyn, New York, Alone and with his band The Quavers he has released four critically-acclaimed CDs of songs in a homespun electronic style that's been described as "porch techno." He has scored films for Tze Chun (Children of Invention, 2009), Landon Van Soest (Good Fortune, 2009), Michael Almereyda (New Orleans, Mon Amour, 2008), Cynthia Lester (Slamdance Jury Prize Winner My Mother's Garden 2008) Kim Reed (Prodigal Sons, 2008), Esther B Robinson (Berlin Teddy Award Winner A Walk Into The Sea, 2007) as well as shorts for Peter Sillen and Jem Cohen and others. He wrote original songs and a full score for avant-garde theater director Anne Bogart's A Midsummer Night's Dream, and has created and performed live soundtrack shows for Sam Green (Utopia in Four Movements, 2010 Sundance Film Festival), Jem Cohen (Empires of Tin, 2007 Viennale), Brent Green, Lance Weiler and for an international tour of the late Danny Williams' Warhol Factory films. As a producer and player he has worked with musical luminaries including the late Vic Chesnutt, Patti Smith, Tom Verlaine, and members of godspeed you! black emperor, Fugazi, and The Ex. Griffin was a 2008 fellow at the Sundance Institute Composer's Lab.

#### a film by Cameron Yates

#### JEANETTE MAIER TIMELINE

- 1958 October 4. Jeanette Maier is born in Galveston, Texas.
- 1990 Jeanette's Kenner escort service, Going Bananas, is busted.
- 1991 Jeanette begins studying nursing at Delgado Community College.
- 1996 She opens her first brothel on North Alexander Street in New Orleans.
- 1999 She opens the two-story Victorian now known as the Canal Street Brothel.
- 2001- May. A client named Dr. Howard Lippton, facing criminal charges, tells
  the FBI that the Canal Street Brothel might be a mafia front for drug trafficking. This prompts the FBI to begin wiretapping the brothel's telephone.
- 2001 September 11. Attacks on the World Trade Center in NY and the Pentagon in Washington, DC. The FBI suspends wiretapping the brothel for a few hours on this day.
- 2001 October. The FBI busts the Canal Street Brothel.
- 2002 May 21. Jeanette Maier and Tommie Taylor both plead guilty to conspiracy to travel in interstate commerce in aid of a prostitution enterprise.
   Tommie also pleads guilty to money laundering.
- · 2003 February. Jeanette's trial begins.
- 2003 May. Jeanette is sentenced to 3 years probation, 6 months in a halfway house, and a \$10,000 fine for conspiracy to travel in interstate commerce in aid of a prostitution enterprise.
- 2003 June 4. CBS airs 48 Hours Investigates: The Canal Street Brothel.
- 2003 June-November. Jeanette serves her sentence in a halfway house.
- 2004 October 31. CBS airs the Sunday Night Movie, The Madam's Family: The Truth About the Canal Street Brothel starring Annabella Sciorra (as Jeanette), Ellen Burstyn (as Tommie), and Dominique Swain (as Monica).
- 2005 August. Hurricane Katrina hits New Orleans.

- 2007 July 9. Senator David Vitter (R-LA) publicly acknowledges that his
  phone number appeared in the records of the DC Madam, Deborah Jeanne
  Palfrey.
- 2007 July 10-16. Jeanette reveals to the press that Vitter was also once a client of hers. Despite corroboration by others, Vitter denies he was involved with New Orleans prostitutes.
- 2008 Jeanette is featured on several national TV programs, including Larry King Live, in response to the Elliot Spitzer scandal.
- 2008 March 18. In order to expose political hypocrisy, Jeanette publicly reveals during a radio interview that New Orleans' Plaquemines Parish President Billy Nungesser, Jr was a long-time client. Nungesser denies the charges.
- 2008 May 1. The DC Madam allegedly commits suicide.
- 2008 October 4. Jeanette celebrates her 50th birthday.



#### a film by Cameron Yates

#### **END CREDITS**

Director Cameron Yates
Producer Mridu Chandra
Executive Producer Philipp Engelhorn
Co-Producers Esther B. Robinson

Basil Tsiokos Charlie Olsky

Editors: Shannon Kennedy

Sakae Ishikawa

Co-Editor Mary Manhardt

Original Music T. Griffin

Featuring Jeanette Maier

Monica Montemayor Sammy Montemayor

Alex Maier Tommie Taylor Lori Sumrall Lionel Jackson Karen Parker

Cinematography Cameron Yates
Additional Camera Charlie Olsky
Assistant Editors Boon Shin Ng
Andrew Skean

Andrew Skea

Motion Effects Ben Brown

Cooper Miller

Research Emilee Y. Thomas

Post Production Assistants

Chris Evans Gina Tolentino

Post Production Facility Prime Focus
Colorist Alexander Berman
On Line Editors Eugene Lehnert

Anthony Matt

Project Manager Bridget Carroll

Audio Post Production Gigantic Studios NY

Sound Editors Eric Milano

Branka Mrkic

Alicia Hook

Re-Recording Mixer Tom Paul

Original Music recorded at

Shiny Little Studios, Brooklyn, NY

Saxophone Matt Bauder
Violin Catherine McRae
Guitars, keyboards, samplers & recording

T Griffin

#### Social Media Coordinator

Graphic Design Legal Services

Fiscal Sponsor

Lauren Burger Method, Inc. Karen Shatzkin Film Forum

World Premiere Publicity Services by David Magdael & Associates

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

ABC

APTV

CBS

CNN

Court TV

C-Span

Fox News Channel

Gambit Weekly

WDSU Ch 6, New Orleans

WGNO ABC26. New Orleans

WVUE Fox 8. New Orleans

WWL TV Ch 4. New Orleans

infowars.com

prisonplanet.com

The Times-Picayune, New Orleans

"The Madam's Family: The Truth About The Canal Street Brothel" © 2004 Orly Adelson Productions, Inc.

#### a film by Cameron Yates

"Santa Baby"

Written by Joan Javits, Philip Springer & Tony Springer

"Wipe Out"

Written by Bob Beryhill, Pat Connolly, Jim Fuler & Ron Wilson

"Milkshake"
Written by Chad Hugo & Pharrell L. Williams
Performed by Kelis on "Tasty"

"Holiday"

Written by Curtis Lee Hudson & Lisa C. Stevens Performed by Madonna on "Madonna" Sire/Warner Bros. Records

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS Pat and Monroe Baisden Greg and Liz Yates

Star Trak/Arista Records

SPECIAL THANKS

Shannon Attaway
Fenton Bailey
Randy Barbato
Chad Bolton
Brian Brooks
Duana Butler
Amit Chandra
Tze Chun
Bruce Clark
Jennifer Cochis
David Courier
Jeff Crouere

Jenn Devine
Danielle DiGiacomo
Meredith Donnelly
Sandi DuBowski
Kelcey Edwards
Israel Ehrisman

Inga Fairclough
Sarah Falcon
Robyn Few
Paul Fitzgerald
Laura Flanders
Kevin Fontenont
Nikke Gadsden
Nancy Gerstman
Elliot Graham
Jason Guerrasio
Eugene Hernandez

Fred Karnes Inna Katkova Gina Kim Lesli Klainberg Jennifer C. Lane

Gary Lee Carol Leigh

Billy Luther Mike Maggiore Kay Marden Mary Martin Albert Maysles Provino Mosca **Donal Mosher** Jarod Neece Daniel Neumann **David Nugent** Ian Olds Alison Oliver Mike Palmieri David Petersen Janet Pierson Laura Poitras Sam Pollard Amanda Pope Thom Powers Rachael Rakes Jan Ramsey Greg Rhem Rajendra Roy

Emily Russo
Carla Saad
Ivan Schonfeld
Svati Shah
Anita K. Sharma
Bennett Singer
Sonali Sridhar
Bryan Stamp
Michael Stutz
Caroline Suh
Milton Tabbot
Laura Terruso
Sadie Tillery

Esther Vaz Hansen Patrick Walsh John Waters Josh Weinstein Ryan Werner Adam White Rob Williams

With deepest gratitude to

Jeanette Maier,

Paula Williamson

her family and friends.

For Conner

Courtenay Rucker

Bird Runningwater







