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For the program companion website, visit pbs.org/independentlens/jean-michel-basquiat/

**TAMRA DAVIS'S *JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT: THE RADIANT CHILD*
TO PREMIERE ON *INDEPENDENT LENS*
TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2011 AT 10PM ON PBS**

Definitive Documentary on the Meteoric Rise and Fall of the Brilliant Young Artist

(San Francisco, CA) Centered on a rare interview that director Tamra Davis shot with her friend and contemporary Jean-Michel Basquiat over 20 years ago, *Jean-Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child* is the definitive chronicle of the short but brilliant life of the young artist who revolutionized the New York art scene almost overnight. *Jean-Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child* will premiere on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by America Ferrera, on Tuesday, April 12, 2011 at 10 PM (check local listings). The film is part of an April Art Month lineup, which also includes *The Desert of Forbidden Art*, *Waste Land*, and *Marwencol*.

Told through interviews with his fellow artists, friends, and lovers, including Julian Schnabel, Larry Gagosian, Bruno Bischofberger, Fab 5 Freddy, Suzanne Mallouk, and Kenny Scharf, the film recounts Basquiat's lightning-quick ascension from street kid to art world star. In the gritty, crime-ridden city that was New York in the late 1970s, artists, punk rockers, and writers flourished in the grimy oasis of the East Village. Among them was Basquiat, a Haitian/Puerto Rican graffiti artist from Brooklyn, who covered the city with the tag SAMO. In 1981, he put paint on canvas for the first time, and by 1983 he was an artist with rock star status. In 1985, he and Andy Warhol became close friends and painting collaborators; however, they soon parted ways, and Warhol died suddenly in 1987. Basquiat's heroin addiction worsened, and he died of an overdose in 1988 at the age of 27, leaving behind an enormous body of work including thousands of paintings and drawings with the potential to sell for more than a million dollars



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today. With compassion and psychological insight, Tamra Davis details the mysteries that surround this charismatic young man, an artist of enormous talent whose fortunes mirrored the rollercoaster quality of the downtown scene he seemed to embody.

To learn more about the film, and the issues involved, visit the companion website for *Jean-Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child* at www.pbs.org/independentlens/jean-michel-basquiat. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section, where viewers can share their ideas and opinions.

Featured On Air Participants

Bruno Bischofberger is an art dealer and gallerist in Zurich. He co-founded *Interview Magazine* with Andy Warhol in 1969 and commissioned the “Collaboration Paintings” with Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

Diego Cortez is a curator and art dealer.

Jeffrey Deitch is an art dealer who runs Deitch Projects.

Fab 5 Freddy is a hip-hop pioneer, painter, historian, and former graffiti artist.

Larry Gagosian is an art dealer who owns the Gagosian Galleries in New York, London, Los Angeles, Rome, and Athens.

Suzanne Mallouk is Jean-Michel Basquiat’s former girlfriend; she is now a psychiatrist.

Annina Nosei is an art gallery owner.

Glenn O’Brien is a writer and editor; in 1980, he wrote the screenplay and co-produced *New York Beat*, which starred Jean-Michel Basquiat and was released in 2000 as *Downtown 81*.

Julian Schnabel is an artist and filmmaker.

Tony Shafrazi is the owner of the Shafrazi Art Gallery in New York.

About the Filmmaker

Tamra Davis (Director/Producer)

Tamra Davis is a film, television, and music video director. She has made numerous music videos for bands such as N.W.A., Sonic Youth, and Hanson. Her Tone Loc video for *Wild Thing* was one of MTV’s most played videos of the 80s. Her first feature film, *Guncrazy*, starring Drew Barrymore, was on *The New York Times*’ Top Ten list and garnered a Golden Globe nomination for Barrymore. Davis’s other films include *Billy Madison* with Adam Sandler, *CB4* with Chris Rock, and *Half Baked* with Dave Chapelle. After she directed *Crossroads* with Britney Spears, she temporarily retired to have children with her husband, Mike D. of the Beastie Boys.

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While spending time at home and on the road with her family, she discovered a love for television and directed episodes of *Grey's Anatomy*, *Ugly Betty*, and *My Name Is Earl*. She also has a self-made series on the internet called the *Tamra Davis Cooking Show*, in which she shares her passion for food, filmmaking, and family.

Davis met Jean-Michel Basquiat when she was a film student working at a Los Angeles art gallery. Basquiat was in town for his first show at the Larry Gagosian Gallery and they immediately bonded over their love of cinema.

Davis filmed Basquiat painting for his show, and whenever he would come to Los Angeles, she would film more. In 1985, when he was 25 and quite successful, she shot a lengthy interview with him. Less than two years later, he died. Davis put away the footage. As she says, "I knew that one thing that made Jean-Michel very upset was when his friends sold work he had given them. I didn't want him to think, even in death, that I was one of his friends who would sell his work for profit."

Twenty years later, she was speaking with a friend who was working on a retrospective of Basquiat's work at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). Her friend asked to see the footage and Davis screened a 20-minute edit. It became clear that the footage provided a rare glimpse into, and a very intimate portrait of, one of America's most important artists.

Davis decided that it was important for Basquiat's voice to be heard and for the real story of what happened to be told. She embarked on a journey to interview those who were close to Basquiat and search for archival footage from a fantastic time in New York — the 1980s. With her original footage, these new interviews, and archival footage, she constructed a film that is both documentary and a moving narrative.

"The film is a very personal and intimate portrait of an artist and my friend," says Davis. "I am so grateful to all the people who've helped me create an in-depth study of his life. He was an incredible artist who lived life to the fullest, died too young, and left an amazing body of work behind."

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities, and moments in history. Presented by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

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