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Pressroom for more information and/or downloadable images:
<http://www.itvs.org/pressroom/>

Program companion website: <http://www.pbs.org/wildparrots>

**THE WILD PARROTS OF TELEGRAPH HILL,
AN *Independent Lens* SPECIAL EVENT
TO HAVE ITS TELEVISION PREMIERE ON PBS,
TUESDAY, MAY 29 AT 9:00 PM (Check Local Listings)**

*“Irving’s film seduces you with its easy rhythm and unexpected dramatic potency . . .
A beguiling, moving, and just plain fun documentary. Four stars!”*
— Michael Sragow, *BALTIMORE SUN*

*“If there is a more joyful, uplifting true story in a more enchanting documentary form, I’ve never seen it...It is
83 minutes of pure magic.”*
— Barry Paris, *PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE*

(San Francisco, CA) — A beautiful city. Parrots. Redemption. True Love. What more could an audience ask for? The surprise critical and box-office hit that enraptured filmgoers of all ages, **THE WILD PARROTS OF TELEGRAPH HILL** will have its television premiere on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard, on Tuesday, May 29 at 9:00 PM (check local listings).

THE WILD PARROTS OF TELEGRAPH HILL is a film about Mark Bittner, a homeless street musician in San Francisco, and a flock of parrots that mysteriously appear outside a cottage on Telegraph Hill. Mark falls in with the flock as he searches for meaning in his life, unaware that the wild parrots will bring him everything he needs. The film celebrates urban wildness, Bohemian and avian, and links the parrots’ antics to human behavior. A surprise ending ties the themes together and completes Mark’s search for meaning.

Mark Bittner was born and raised in southwestern Washington State. His ambition as a teenager was to be a great novelist, but he was alarmed by the uniformly miserable fates of all the writers whom he loved. So he decided to pursue a career in music instead. After hitchhiking through Europe in search of experience, he moved to San Francisco determined to sink or swim as a poet-singer-songwriter. He sank. Completely bereft, he turned to spiritual seeking and ended up on the street where he spent the next 14 years.

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Ultimately his search led him to the wild parrot flock, which, in turn, led him back to writing, and his first book: *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*. **THE WILD PARROTS OF TELEGRAPH HILL**'s companion Website (www.pbs.org/wildparrots) features detailed information on the film, including an interview with the filmmaker and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film and more.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Producer/Director Judy Irving is a Sundance and Emmy® Award-winning filmmaker whose previous credits include *Dark Circle*, a feature documentary about the nuclear industry, and *Out of the Way Café*, an hour-long drama. *Dark Circle* (1989) was recently honored in a special limited edition *P.O.V.* 20th Anniversary DVD Collection that features 15 of the most compelling films that aired on television's longest-running showcase for independent non-fiction film.

She spent childhood summers on the North Fork of Long Island, and came to love birds thanks to her grandfather. Judy graduated from Connecticut College with a degree in Psychology and worked as a freelance journalist in Montreal before hitchhiking across the continent and living on a handmade raft-house in British Columbia. Later, she received her Masters in Film and Broadcasting from Stanford University.

Her documentary film career has taken her to Alaska, Japan, Russia, Nepal and Zimbabwe with peace and the environment as her main areas of interest. Somehow, birds seem to show up in every movie. Judy's recent six-film documentary series about the San Francisco Bay Area's wildlife and open space led to her interest in the wild parrot flock flying the city's north waterfront. **THE WILD PARROTS OF TELEGRAPH HILL** has won Audience Awards for "Best Picture" at film festivals on both coasts, has screened theatrically in 500 cities, is among the top 25 highest-grossing theatrical documentaries of all time and is now in international distribution.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10:00 PM on PBS. Hosted this season by Terrence Howard, 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 a unique individual, community or moment in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), 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.

About ITVS

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the Emmy® Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10:00 PM on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television.

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ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting www.itvs.org. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

About PBS

PBS is a media enterprise that serves 354 public noncommercial television stations and reaches almost 90 million people each week through on-air and online content. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and dramatic entertainment, and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. PBS is a leading provider of educational materials for K-12 teachers, and offers a broad array of other educational services. PBS' premier kids' TV programming and Web site, PBS KIDS Online (www.pbskids.org), continue to be parents' and teachers' most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org Web sites on the Internet.

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