

# MAKERS

## WOMEN IN HOLLYWOOD

### OVERVIEW:

**MAKERS: Women In Hollywood** showcases the women of showbiz, from the earliest pioneers to present-day power players, as they influence the creation of one of the country's biggest commodities: entertainment. In the silent movie era of Hollywood, women wrote, directed and produced, plus there were over twenty independent film companies run by women. That changed when Hollywood became a profitable industry. The absence of women behind the camera affected the women who appeared in front of the lens. Because men controlled the content, they created female characters based on classic archetypes: the good girl and the fallen woman, the virgin and the whore. The women's movement helped loosen some barriers in Hollywood.

A few women, like 20th century Fox President Sherry Lansing, were able to rise to the top. Especially in television, where the financial stakes were lower and advertisers eager to court female viewers, strong female characters began to emerge. Premium cable channels like HBO and Showtime allowed edgy shows like *Sex in the City* and *Girls*, which dealt frankly with sex from a woman's perspective, to thrive. One way women were able to gain clout was to use their stardom to become producers, like Jane Fonda, who had a breakout hit when she produced *9 to 5*. But despite the fact that *9 to 5* was a smash hit that appealed to broad audiences, it was still viewed as a "chick flick". In Hollywood, movies like *Bridesmaids* and *The Hunger Games*, with strong female characters at their center and strong women behind the scenes, have indisputably proven that women centered content can be big at the box office. When Kathryn Bigelow became the first woman to win an Oscar for Best Director, many women in Hollywood held their breath, hoping the tide was beginning to turn.

Audiences hear from actress-producer-activist Jane Fonda; television powerhouse Shonda Rhimes, who created *Grey's Anatomy* and *Scandal*; screenwriter Linda Woolverton, who re-imagined the traditional Disney princess by making Belle (*Beauty and the Beast*) a self-possessed, strong-willed young woman; writer-director-actress Lena Dunham, who mines comedy and drama gold by exploring what it's really like to be a young woman today; Sarah Jessica Parker, star of *Sex in the City*; and six-time Academy Award nominee Glenn Close. Produced by Rory Kennedy with Producer/Director Linda Goldstein Knowlton. Narrated by Julia Roberts.

Expanding on the critically acclaimed PBS documentary *MAKERS: Women Who Make America*, which told the story of the modern American women's movement, each documentary in this six-part PBS series examines the impact of the women's movement on six fields once largely closed to women: business, space, Hollywood, comedy, war and politics. In each field, women have pried open, and profoundly reshaped, the central institutions of American life and culture. In the last half-century, women have fought their way into nearly every sphere of American life, from the battlefield to the comedy club, the soundstage to the Senate. Through intimate interviews with trailblazing women known and unknown, viewers are given a rare glimpse—sometimes funny, sometimes sad, and always candid—of what it was like to be pioneers in their fields. Directed by some of the country's leading independent filmmakers, *MAKERS* brings to life new and unforgettable stories that every woman, man, girl and boy should know. Other documentaries in this series include *Women in Comedy*, *Women in Business*, *Women in Space*, *Women in War*, and *Women in Politics*.

**MAKERS** is also a growing archive of women's stories. At [makers.com](http://makers.com) you can meet over 250 Makers including these women:

**Diahann Carroll** is an award-winning actress who broke barriers in American television as the first African American woman to not only star in a series, "Julia", but also to portray a non-stereotypical black character. In 1962, Carroll became the first African American woman to win a Tony Award, which she won for her role in "No Strings". Her successful career has spanned nearly six decades. Her film work includes "Claudine", for which she received a 1974 Best Actress Academy Award nomination, "Carmen Jones", "Paris Blues", "Porgy & Bess", "Hurry Sundown", "I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings" and "Eve's Bayou". Carroll continues to work as an actress and recently wrote a memoir on her life "The Legs Are the Last to Go: Aging, Acting, Marrying & Other Things I Learned The Hard Way".

**Zoey Deschanel** is an actress and musician currently starring on FOX's hit comedy series *New Girl*. In 2012, she earned an Emmy Award nomination for the show. Since landing her first role in a feature film, "Mumford," Deschanel has gone on to star in big-budget movies including 2004's "Elf" and has also become a darling of hit independent films like the "(500) Days of Summer." Deschanel is one half of music duo She & Him. The group released their first self-titled album in 2008 and two years later, She & Him, Volume 2 came out.

**Diane English** is an Emmy-winning film and television producer, director, and screenwriter. She is best known for creating the show "Murphy Brown," which ran on CBS from 1988 to 1998. English's work on *Murphy Brown* earned her an Emmy for Outstanding Writing in a Comedy Series and two more for Outstanding Comedy Series. In addition to her Emmy's, English has been honored with two Writers Guild of America Awards, a Genie Award from American Women in Radio and Television, a Freedom-to-Write-Award from PEN Center USA West, and the Commissioners' Awards from the National Commission on Working Women for her positive portrayal of working women on television.

**Nora Ephron** was a best-selling writer, director, and producer. Her career as a screenwriter began with a television movie titled *Adam's Rib* (1973). She went on to write, direct and produce 15 films, but she is best known for her romantic comedies, such as *When Harry Met Sally* (1989), and *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993). Her most recent film, *Julie & Julia*, was released in 2009 to rave reviews.

**Miranda July** is a filmmaker, artist and writer. She is the author of *It Chooses You* (2011) and *No One Belongs Here More Than You* (2007), a collection of short stories that won the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award. July wrote, directed and starred in two feature-length films, *The Future* (2011) and *Me and You and Everyone We Know* (2005), winner of the special jury prize at the Sundance Film festival and four prizes at the Cannes Film Festival, including the Camera d'Or.

**Callie Khouri** is a screenwriter, producer, and director. In 1992 she won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for the movie *Thelma & Louise*. Having lived in Nashville and grown to understand the complex nature of the town, Khouri developed the ABC hit drama series *Nashville* which premiered to wide acclaim in 2012. Khouri's other films include *Something to Talk About*, *Divine Sisters of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, and *Mad Money*.

**Jean Kilbourne** is a feminist author, and speaker, who focuses on the image of women in advertising. Best-known for her critical studies of alcohol and tobacco advertising campaigns, she is also credited for introducing the concept of media literacy as a way to prevent problems resulting from mass media advertising. She is the author of *So Sexy So Soon The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect their Kids* (2008), and *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel* (1999) which won the Distinguished Publication Award from the Association for Women in Psychology. Additionally, Kilbourne is a prolific filmmaker and documentarian. Her most recent documentary, *Killing Us Softly 4: Advertising's Image of Women* was released in 2010.

**Gong Li** is a Chinese actor from Shandong, China. Li has been credited with bringing Chinese cinema to European and American audiences, and has received numerous international accolades for her work, including awards from the Berlinale Camera, Cannes Film Festival, and New York Film Critics Circle. In 2000, Li was named a UNESCO Artist for Peace, the first Chinese actor to be awarded as such.

**Jane Lynch** is a singer, actor and comedian. Her breakout role came in 2000, when she played a dog handler in Christopher Guest's mockumentary *Best in Show*. Many know her as Sue Sylvester, "Glee"'s aggressive cheer-leading coach, for which she won an Emmy in 2010 and a Golden Globe in 2011. In 2011, Lynch also hosted the Emmy Awards and published her memoir, *Happy Accidents*.

**Ellen DeGeneres**, an entertainment pioneer, best known for *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*. She's been included in *Forbes*'s "100 Most Powerful" and *Time*'s "100 Most Influential" lists and has hosted the Oscars, the Emmys, and the Grammys to wide acclaim. She is the best-selling author of *Seriously...I'm Kidding*, *The Funny Thing Is...*, and *My Point...And I Do Have One*. Her many humanitarian efforts include anti-bullying campaigns and support for Hurricane Katrina victims, as well as animal rescue, global warming and breast cancer awareness organizations.

**Jane Fonda** is an award-winning actress, writer, fitness guru and activist. Fonda's work on stage and screen has earned numerous nominations and awards, including Oscars (Best Actress in 1971 for *Klute* and in 1978 for *Coming Home*) and an Emmy for her performance in *The Dollmaker*. Along with starring roles in dozens of highly acclaimed productions, Fonda also took on responsibilities as a film and television producer. Her credits include *Coming Home*, *The China Syndrome*, *Nine to Five*, *Rollover*, *On Golden Pond*, *The Morning After* and *The Dollmaker*. Fonda revolutionized the fitness industry with the release of *Jane Fonda's Workout* in 1982. She followed with the production of 23 home exercise videos, 13 audio recordings, and five books – selling 16 million copies all together. Fonda has long been known for activism and advocacy on environmental issues, peace, and the empowerment of women and girls.

**Marlo Thomas** is an award-winning actress, author and activist whose body of work continues to have an impact on American entertainment and culture. She burst onto the scene as the star of television's *That Girl*, which she also conceived and produced. Thomas is the author of numerous bestselling books. She has been honored with four Emmy Awards, a Peabody, a Golden Globe, a Grammy and has been inducted into the Broadcasting Hall of Fame. Her activism has been equally recognized with the Helen Caldicott Award for Nuclear Disarmament, the ACLU's Thomas Paine Award, the American Women in Radio and Television Satellite Award, and the William Kunstler Racial Justice Award. It is a commitment to helping others that runs in her veins – she is the National Outreach Director for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the pioneering children's hospital founded by her father, Danny Thomas.

**Sherry Lansing** was a trailblazer, visionary, and leader in the motion picture business for almost 30 years and involved in the production, marketing, and distribution of more than 200 films, including Academy Award winners *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Braveheart* (1995), and *Titanic* (1997). In 1980, she became the first woman to head a major film studio when she was appointed President of 20th Century Fox. Lansing has received numerous honors and awards for her work including the 1996 Foundation of Motion Pictures Pioneers first woman to be awarded the Pioneer of the Year.

**Nichelle Nichols** is an American actress and singer. As Lieutenant Uhura on the legendary television series *Star Trek*, Nichols played, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, "the first non-stereotypical role portrayed by a black woman in television history." Thanks to her popularity with *Star Trek*, Nichols also began volunteering her time with NASA, in a highly effective campaign to recruit minority and female personnel for the space agency. She served on the Board of Governors of the National Space Society, a nonprofit, educational space advocacy organization. She has continued to appear in various television and film roles, returned to singing, and in 1994, she published her autobiography *Beyond Uhura: Star Trek and Other Memories*. She was awarded her much deserved star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1992.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

See the below discussion questions, grouped together by overarching themes raised in *MAKERS: Women in Hollywood*.

### General Lead-ins

Having watched *MAKERS: Women in Hollywood*, will you pay more attention to who is behind the scenes as much as who is on screen?

What are your own favorite moments for women in film?

### Representation of Women

Are their female archetypes you could imagine adding to the Hollywood canon?

*Seinfeld* didn't originally have a female character and only included one because NBC had made a pledge to not green light any shows that didn't have female characters. What other protocols could studios and stations implement to ensure greater representation?

Sara Jessica Parker has always stated that the value of *Sex and the City* is showing the intimacy of women's friendships. And for many women this show provided that affirmation. Why is it important for Hollywood to affirm what we may already know to be true?

Shonda Rhimes, in talking about the reaction of her male peers to a segment of *Grey's Anatomy*, says: "Nobody would watch a show with a woman who had sex with a guy she just met." The success of the show proved their instincts wrong. From *Seinfeld's* masturbation episode to *Girls*, women's sexuality is most misrepresented in Hollywood. Why are we more comfortable with men's sexual exploits than women's sexual autonomy?

Lena Dunham has had her characters challenged for not being great role models. As she points out – is Larry David a good role model? Woody Allen? Why do we have different expectations of what women should be and what men should be?

## Women Trailblazers

When Hollywood meant "silent movies," women behind the scenes and on screen were as successful as men. Bearing this out, in the early 1900s Alice Guy Blache was a well-known female director, she was also one of the most successful. Mabel Normand starred right along Charlie Chapman. Think about how many other women's names have been lost from this history? How can we preserve their legacies so we know the full history of film?

Julia Louis-Dreyfus notes about *Seinfeld* that "We weren't trying to change the world, we were trying to make something really funny." But how nice that along the way they did get to shatter some expectations. What changes do you think were a result of her role on *Seinfeld*?

For Lena Dunham and her creation of *Girls*, she said her best assumption was to go in thinking that anything was possible. Lucky for her, she has gotten away with most of what she wanted to. Could our imaginations and initiative be the only thing standing in the way of women achieving more?

## Barriers for Women in the Field

Once movies proved they could be profitable, women were shut out. Before that time women were included more regularly. Yet many films by women went on to be hugely financially successful. Why were women overlooked as financial assets?

Katniss, star of *The Hunger Games*, is a character than anyone can relate to – boys and girls and anyone who has a desire to protect another person. And the box office success is once again proving that women led films can deliver on the bottom line. With so many examples of women led films being a financial success, what else might stand in the way of women led films being better supported?

When Sherry Lansing was the first woman elected to head a Hollywood studio the headlines said "Former Model to head 21st Century Fox." How have headlines read when men have achieved similarly?

The progress for women in Hollywood is pretty dismal: in 2013 women directed 6% of the top 250 grossing films and 14% of TV shows. Only 30% of characters are female – and that number hasn't changed since the 1950s. Is women's role in directing over-rated? What could you imagine coming from more women directed films?

Paula Weinstein notes that by the 1980s most studios had "a" woman. That seeming progress created false assumptions that there was more representation than there really was. Plus that put added pressure on that one woman to make change for all women. Having more women in power, what changes would you imagine?

A way for women to get power over film was to add enough star power to the film and with that also add some production credits. How to make "women's films" appear to be in everyone's best interest, not just women's?

Talking about *9 to 5* Jane Fonda notes it as a movie that both reflected a mass movement and ultimately helped bolster that same movement. Office workers now had a film to support and expose their experiences. Are there other movies that helped to with mass political struggles? Besides the educational and PR value, how else can movies help social issues?

*Bridesmaids* proved women could be funny, too. And the film was Judd Apatow's biggest financial success. Yet, women-centered films are still seen as risks. What would it take to persuade people otherwise?

## The Audience's Role

Knowing how valuable the box office bottom line is – will you think differently about what movies you do/don't support?

"Knowing the statistics fuels us," remarks actress Alfre Woodard about the dismal stats on women in film and television. As viewers now knowing these same stats, what fuels you?

## GREAT MOMENT FOR WOMEN IN HOLLYWOOD:

- 1966 Marlo Thomas creates *That Girl*
- 1968 *Julia*, starring Diahann Carroll, debuts on TV. It is the first show featuring a middle class African American character.
- 1980 *9 to 5* was a huge box office success
- 1991 *Thelma & Louise* offers new female archetype for women and inspires fans. Callie Khouri, the film's writer, wins Best Original Screenplay — a first for women screenwriters. From 1997 to 2003 *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* woos fans.
- 1998 *Sex and the City* starts its six-year run on HBO.
- 2010 After 30 years of directing films, Bigelow becomes the first woman to win an Academy Award for Best Director for *The Hurt Locker*.
- 2012 Ava DuVernay is the first African American woman to win a Sundance Film Festival Best Director Award for *Middle of Nowhere*
- 2012 *Girls*, a show about women in their 20s created by and starring Lena Dunham, airs on HBO.

## FAST FACTS:

- Women directors represent 50% of film school graduates, but only 6% of directors of the top grossing 250 films of 2013.
- Of the 129 top grossing films, only 30 % of on air speaking characters are female.
- Women make up only 23% of crew members on the 2,000 highest grossing films of the past 20 years. (<http://stephenfollows.com/gender-of-film-crews/>)
- Only 15% of major Hollywood releases employ a female lead and many still play into the "damsel in distress" stereotype. (Forbes, Scott Mendelson, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/scottmendelson/2014/07/21/scarlett-johannsons-lucy-angelina-jolies-maleficent-lead-girl-powered-blockbusters/>)
- Of the top 250 domestic grossing films, women wrote 10% of the movies, women comprised 2% of all special effects supervisors, and 15% of all executive producers. (Center for the Study for Women in TV & Film)
- Of the top 100 films of 2013, females accounted for 15% of protagonists, 29% of major characters, and 30% of all speaking characters. (Center for the Study for Women in TV & Film)
- Females are almost four times as likely as males to be shown in sexy attire. Further, females are nearly twice as likely as males to be shown with a diminutive waistline. Generally unrealistic figures are more likely to be seen on females than males. (Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, *facts are supported by research conducted by Stacy Smith, Ph.D. at the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism*)
- Even among the top-grossing G-rated family films, girl characters are out numbered by boys three-to-one. That's the same ratio that has existed since the end of World War II. (Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, *facts are supported by research conducted by Stacy Smith, Ph.D. at the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism*)
- "2013's Forbes' list of [Hollywood's Highest-Paid Actors](http://www.forbes.com/sites/moiraforbes/2013/08/06/hollywoods-highest-paid-actors) banked a collective \$465 million, *almost two and a half times more* than what the top-paid actresses brought in." (Forbes article <http://www.forbes.com/sites/moiraforbes/2013/08/06/hollywoods-highest-paid-actresses-where-gender-bias-reigns-supreme/>)

## RESOURCES:

Indie Wire - Women and Hollywood  
[blogs.indiewire.com/womenandhollywood/](http://blogs.indiewire.com/womenandhollywood/)

Huffington Post – Women in Hollywood  
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tag/women-in-hollywood/>

Elle – Women in Hollywood  
<http://www.elle.com/pop-culture/women-in-hollywood>

ESSENCE – Black Women in Hollywood  
<http://www.essence.com/package/black-women-hollywood-2014/>

Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media  
[www.seejane.org](http://www.seejane.org)

Gamechanger  
[www.gamechanger-films.com](http://www.gamechanger-films.com)

Women Make Movies  
Film Facts and Other Online Resources and Links [http://www.wmm.com/resources/film\\_facts.shtml](http://www.wmm.com/resources/film_facts.shtml)

*In Her Voice: Women Directors Talk About Directing* by Melissa Silverstein

USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism  
[www.annenberg.usc.edu/](http://www.annenberg.usc.edu/)

Dr. Stacy Smith  
[stacysmi@usc.edu](mailto:stacysmi@usc.edu)  
<http://annenberg.usc.edu/Faculty/Communication%20and%20Journalism/SmithS.aspx>

Gender Inequality in Popular Films: Examining On Screen Portrayals and Behind-the-Scenes Employment Patterns in Motion Pictures Released between 2007-2013: <http://annenberg.usc.edu/pages/~media/MDSCI/Gender%20Inequality%20in%20Film%202007-2013%20Final%20for%20Publication.ashx>

New York film Academy – Gender Inequality in Film  
<http://www.nyfa.edu/film-school-blog/gender-inequality-in-film/>

Fandor – Hollywood's Challenge: Where are the Women Directors?  
<http://www.fandor.com/press/infographics/where-are-the-women-directors.pdf>

The Bechdel Test  
Simple quiz on how a movie rates in terms of gender fairness. Three criteria: are there two or more females in a movie, do they speak and do they talk about something besides a man?  
[www.bechdeltest.com](http://www.bechdeltest.com)

