

“Ruminative, haunting, and strange.”

-Peter Keough
[The Boston Globe](#)

THE FAITHFUL

THE KING, THE POPE, THE PRINCESS

Documentary Feature, 90 mins. HD. Stereo. Color.

[Trailer](#) & [Website](#)

A Fish in the Hand Production

Produced in association with The Center for Independent Documentary and The Brooklyn Filmmakers Collective



The Faithful: The King, The Pope, The Princess

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LOGLINE

A lollipop officially licensed by the Vatican sparks filmmaker Annie Berman's 20-year exploration of fandom, memorabilia, memory, and legacy within the orbits of three of the biggest cultural icons of our time: Pope John Paul II, Elvis Presley, and Diana, Princess of Wales.



Top Left: *The Faithful* Film Still. Pope John Paul II's face emblazoned on a lollipop against a blue sky. **Top Right:** Filmmaker Annie Berman with lifelong Elvis fan, Jerry Engelby, at the 25th Elvis Week, on the anniversary of Elvis Presley's death, August 15, 2002. **Bottom Left:** Jerry and Annie, known by Elvis fans as the "Pink & Black Gals" walking down Graceland's driveway on an early morning visit to Elvis Presley's gravesite Memphis, TN, 2007. **Bottom Right:** Pope John Paul II snowglobes for purchase at a gift shop off Saint Peter's square for 12,000 Lire. Vatican City, Italy. 2000.

SYNOPSIS

A Pope John Paul II lollipop. An Elvis Presley shower curtain. A Princess Diana teacup. These are just some of the countless pieces of memorabilia that these pop culture icons' most devoted fans collect and cherish – but why? *The Faithful's* director, Annie Berman, explores the deep veneration and legacies of the Pope, the Princess, and the King. Over the course of 20 years, Berman profiles these figures' biggest fans and makes numerous pilgrimages to Vatican City, Graceland, and Kensington Palace. As the years go by, the film itself becomes increasingly entwined with Berman's daily life and identity, much like how these officially-licensed knick-knacks define the fans she filmed.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was born the same year Elvis Presley died, 1977, and grew up without any connection to him. And yet, like most of us, I have an image of Elvis permanently etched in my mind, and no idea how it got there.

The Faithful represents my twenty-year journey through the world of images and representations of three global icons: Elvis Presley, Pope John Paul II, and Diana Princess of Wales. It was a quest launched by... a lollipop. Not just any lollipop, but a rainbow swirl, found on a cart at the Vatican, emblazoned with the image of Pope John Paul II. This "pope pop" triggers intense questions about worship, consumerism, and media representation - inspiring me to visit Graceland, Vatican City and Kensington Palace with my cameras, intent on creating my own images.

What began as a voyeuristic encounter slowly enveloped me, the person behind the camera. I found myself returning year after year to the annual rituals, making my own pilgrimage, obsessively collecting more and more footage. A meditation on art, religion, and commerce becomes a personal transformation as the once cynical woman-with-a-movie-camera finds a deeper sense of purpose. I began to see myself in the faithful, understanding that my pursuit was part of a bigger more universal quest.

The film is a first-person journey structured by the process of shooting and constructing the film itself. I combine my DV camera footage, super-8 film reels, still photographs, animation, and my own reflective voiceover to reveal my own role in the process, and how images are always representations. My unobtrusive DV-cam location shooting style helped foster intimate relationships with my subjects over the course of twenty years and 200 hours of footage. These close relationships allowed for moments of unfiltered candidness. I raise more questions than answers so as to allow the viewer the pleasure of discovery.

ABOUT THE RELEASE

With the generous support of [Grant for the Web](#), our team found new ways to introduce films to global moviegoers in the current COVID era - using The Faithful to pave this path forward. Grant for the Web is a \$100M fund created to boost an open, fair, and inclusive internet for all creators. The Faithful was the first feature film supported by this grant. Together, we staged a worldwide DIY virtual release last March and released our data to the filmmaking community to strengthen the ecosystem of independent distribution direct to audiences.

An August 2021 theatrical release will coincide with the anniversaries of the deaths of Elvis Presley and Diana, Princess of Wales, and will be followed by a Fall 2021 educational release. SVOD is anticipated in 2022.

FILM CREW

Annie Berman (Producer, Director, Writer, Cinematographer, Narrator, Co-Editor)

Media artist living and working in New York City, Annie Berman was named one of Independent Magazine's 10 Filmmakers to Watch, her films, videos, performances, and installations have shown internationally in galleries, festivals, universities, and conferences, including the MoMA Documentary Fortnight, Rooftop Films, Galerie Patrick Ebensperger Berlin, Kassel Hauptbahnhof, Spring / Break Art Show, Flux Factory, Babycastles Gallery, and the Rome Independent Film Festival where she was awarded the Best Experimental Film Prize. Her work has received support from the Puffin Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, Wave Farm, Grant for the Web, the Leonard Bernstein Festival of the Arts, the Center for Independent Documentary, Signal Culture, The Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and UnionDocs. She holds an MFA in Integrated Media Art from Hunter College, and is a member of the Brooklyn Filmmakers Collective.

Andre Valentim Almeida (Editor)

Andre is an award-winning filmmaker whose work has screened at MoMA, the Carpenter Center for Visual Arts, and DocLisboa. His most recent film, *The Quest of the Schooner Creoula*, was awarded Best Film from the Doc Alliance, presented at Cannes.

Andrew Kirwan (Sound Designer, Mixer)

With a strong interest in film, TV drama and documentaries, Andy enjoys creating unusual and emotive sound. Andy has worked as a Sound Designer and Editor on animation, film, TV drama and documentaries. Some of his sound edit credits for feature and drama include *Zone 414*, *My Salinger Year* and the IFTA-nominated *The Image You Missed* and he has mixed for *Kathleen* (short film) and *Beb and Peep* (animation short). He won the Irish Animation Award (alongside Sol O'Carroll) for his work on *Danger Mouse*, and he has also worked on Boulder Media's *Micro-nauts*, Brown Bag Film's *Bing and Butterbean Cafe* and RTE's *Myago*.



The Faithful Film Still. Two nuns gazing at the Vatican.
Rome, Italy. Easter 2000



Ceramic busts of Elvis on display at a souvenir shop on Elvis Presley Boulevard. Memphis, TN. 2000.

PRESS QUOTES & CLIPS

“Ruminative, haunting, and strange” - Peter Keough, [The Boston Globe](#)

“The Trifecta!” - Robert Sillerman, the man who bought the rights to Elvis Presley for \$100M

“My favorite film we’ve screened!” - Matthew Meier, USC Cinematic Arts, Associate Programmer

“Fascinating; a filmmaker’s obsessive journey” - Gail Levin, art historian, biographer, artist

“This film reminds me why I wanted to make film’s in the first place.” - Sarah Enid Hagey, filmmaker

“The film’s voice is at once intimate, humorous, human, and insightful. A very ambitious undertaking, and yet so rewarding. An incredible romp. I loved it.” - Vivian Kleiman, filmmaker, educator, activist

“I was both fascinated and very moved by the human spirit evident in the film, the contemplation of connection, imagery, love and loss. An epic journey, both intimate and global. A work of art.”
-Anne Flatté, filmmaker

“Deeply thoughtful - like a Ross McElwee film with a hint of Jewish sensibility”
-Amy Geller and Gerald Peary, filmmakers, curators, educators

“An extraordinary compendium, and accomplishment... entirely resonant with our moment in time. -Judith Tolnick Champa, Independent International Curator

“Berman spent a year researching both the pope and Presley. She wasn’t looking to compare the two idols, exactly — the head of the Catholic Church can’t really be equated with a dead rock-and-roll singer with a taste for pills — but to evaluate the ways their most worshipful admirers honor them. Both inspire thousands to undertake annual pilgrimages in their names. Both are objects of mass-produced iconography sold by entire gift shops devoted exclusively to them. Both have given rise to organizations that control the dissemination of their likenesses. And both have been stripped of their human qualities — by the faithful.”

- The Pope, the King, and the Princess, The Boston Phoenix, Camille Dodero

“Annie Berman joins the 10 Filmmakers to Watch list for her documentary The Faithful, an exploration of fans, faith and image featuring Elvis Presley, Pope John Paul II, and Princess Diana.”

- [Top Ten to Watch, The Independent](#) by Michelle Meek



Known as Britain’s “Loyalist Royalist,” a small portion of Margaret Tyler’s Princess Diana collection, London, England, 2007.



Elvis tribute artist posing with an Elvis fan outside of Sun Studios. Memphis, TN. Elvis Week, 2000.

FILM CREDITS

Producer, Director, Writer, Narrator, Co-Editor

Annie Berman

Co-Producer

Sara Theriault

Collaborating Producers

Matt Mankins

Andre Valentim Almeida

Sarah Enid Hagey

Post-Producer

Oliver David

Associate Producers

Eric Forman

Sayaka Watanabe

Editor

André Valentim Almeida

Additional Editing

Sarah Enid Hagey

Sound Design & Mix

Andrew Kirwan

Restoration & Color

Paulo Cunha Martins

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Begonia Colomar

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