



History of Female American Directors

By Allison Hudson

1896-1950

- ❖ Women in America were more likely to be actresses, writers, or editors than directors
- ❖ There were some female directors in the 20s and 30s, but the Studio System made it more difficult for women to get directing roles
- ❖ From 1943-1949, no women were directing films
- ❖ Some women made training videos in support of the wars
- ❖ <http://youtu.be/mRUuGvx4XCk>

Alice guy-Blaché

❖ First female director

[http://
youtu.be/DqID7RLoNAI](http://youtu.be/DqID7RLoNAI)

❖ Made first narrative film

- *The Cabbage Fairy* (1896)
- <http://youtu.be/CYbQO6pwuNs>

❖ Experimented with sound in
1905/06

❖ Opened Solax Studio in New
Jersey in 1910



Lois WEber



❖ Considered first American woman to direct

❖ First film: *Suspense* (1913)

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfgiUvBaosg&feature=share&list=PL403B1BE466EB828A>

❖ Films about women's social issues

- *Where are my Children?* (1916)

❖ Survived filmmaking until 1934

- Last film *White Heat*

Dorothy Arzner



- ❖ Only female director to survive the 1930s
- ❖ Invented boom mic while filming *The Wild Party* (1929)
- ❖ Last film was *First Comes Courage* (1943)
- ❖ Made training videos for WWII
- ❖ First woman to join the Director's Guild, as well as make a talkie

1950-Present

- ❖ Women made a comeback directing films in the last 60 years
- ❖ Took on more important issues in society
 - Minorities
 - Women's rights
 - Human rights
- ❖ Women got more recognition for their directing skills and began to win awards in male-dominant categories

Ida Lupino



❖ First film in 1949: *Not Wanted*

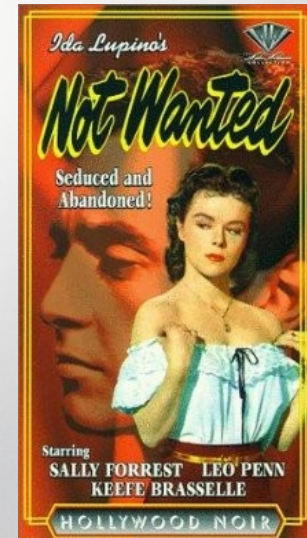
- <http://youtu.be/IZMSDjtivNc>

❖ Subject matter geared toward women

- *Outrage* (1950)
- A film about the aftermath of a rape

❖ Explored the male psyche

- *The Bigamist* (1953)
 - http://youtu.be/6HOew_inzX0
- *The Hitch-Hiker* (1953)





Shirley Clarke

❖ <http://projectshirley.com/>

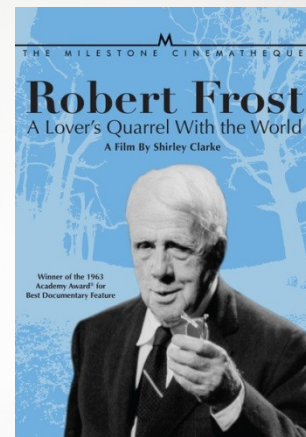
❖ First feature in 1961: *The Connection*

- Showed drug use and eventually avoided censorship

❖ Won Best Documentary for her film about Robert Frost

❖ 1967- *Portrait of Jason*

- Followed the lifestyle of a gay black man



Barbara Hammer

❖ [http://
youtu.be/pDDEuWONoj8](http://youtu.be/pDDEuWONoj8)



- ❖ Experimental filmmaker
- ❖ Gives voice to struggling minorities to achieve social change
- ❖ *Nitrate Kisses* (1992)
 - Untold queer histories
- ❖ *Maya Deren's Sink* (2011)

Julie Dash

❖ Her film gained theatrical release in LA & New York

- *Daughters of the Dust* (1991)
 - History of African-American women in what they are facing in present day
- <http://youtu.be/mqT0mcBLdmc>



Lizzie Borden

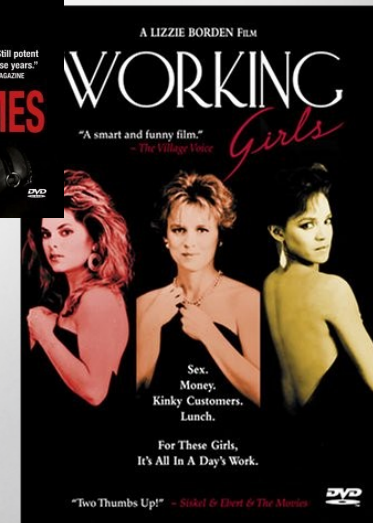
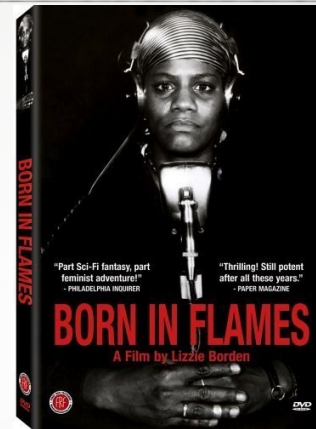
❖ Feminist filmmaker in the 1980s

❖ *Born in Flames* (1983)

- Women's revolution in a socialist society

❖ *Working Girls* (1986)

- A story about the life of upscale Manhattan prostitutes





Penny Marshall

- ❖ Began directing while starring in the TV series *Lavern & Shirley*
- ❖ Made the hits *Big* (1988) and *A League of Their Own* (1992)
- ❖ She was probably one of the first women to be successful as a director in post-Studio System Hollywood
- ❖ http://youtu.be/3M2_GWIJ-RY
- ❖ A lot more women have become directors through acting
 - ex. Jodie Foster & Angelina Jolie

Nora Ephron

❖Extremely successful director in Hollywood

❖First film: *This is My Life* (1992)

❖*Sleepless in Seattle* (1993)

❖*You've Got Mail* (1998)

❖*Julie & Julia* (2009)

❖Strong, independent female characters

❖Died in 2012

❖<http://youtu.be/JYmkNFqTSjI>





Nancy Meyers

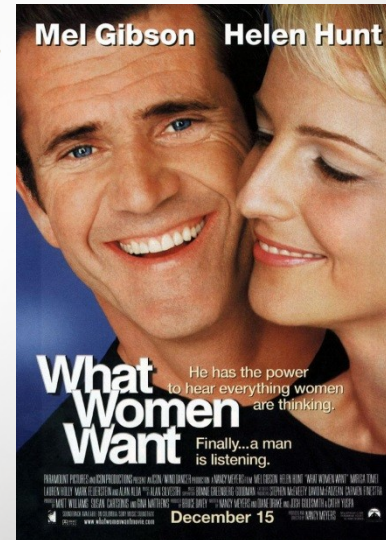
❖ One of the highest-grossing female directors in Hollywood

❖ Most successful film: *What Women Want* (2000)

❖ *Something's Gotta Give* (2003) and *It's Complicated* (2009) explore relationships of older couples

❖ <http://youtu.be/C4sB374J7>

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Darnell Martin

❖ First African-American woman to direct a major studio film

- *I Like it Like That* (1994)
- <http://youtu.be/dEqia7Unre4>

❖ Primarily directs TV

❖ *Cadillac Records* (2008)



Sofia Coppola

❖ <http://youtu.be/0Wmbm5f500A>



❖ First woman to be nominated for Best Director at Oscars

- *Lost in Translation* (2004)

❖ *Marie Antoinette* (2006)

❖ *Somewhere* (2010)

❖ *The Bling Ring* (2013)

Kathryn Bigelow

❖ First woman to win an Oscar for Best Director

- *The Hurt Locker* (2009)

❖ *Near Dark* (1987)

❖ *Point Break* (1991)

❖ *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012)

❖ Takes on traditionally male subject matter



Modern Rom-Coms

❖ There are still female directors who make romantic comedies

❖ Nancy Meyers, Nora Ephron, Penny Marsh

❖ Anne Fletcher

- *27 Dresses* (2008)
- *The Proposal* (2009)
- <http://youtu.be/ara7ZUX38ms>



Widening Genres

❖ Women are making blockbuster hits and other genres that are male-dominant

❖ Kathryn Bigelow, Nancy Meyers

❖ Catherine Hardwicke

- *Lords of Dogtown* (2005)
- *Twilight* (2008)
- *Red Riding Hood* (2011)
- http://youtu.be/IF_5bakDI90



Future

- ❖ Women will continue to increase their presence as directors in America
- ❖ More women are becoming well-known in the industry and winning awards
- ❖ Traditionally male genres are being re-envisioned by women
- ❖ It is important to study women's history as directors because they have different styles and viewpoints than men