PULLING BACK THE COVERS ON A BILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY

SYNOPSIS

Love stories are universal. Love stories are powerful. And so are the women who write them.

Love Between the Covers is the fascinating story of the vast, funny, and savvy female community that has built a powerhouse industry sharing love stories. Romance fiction is sold in 34 languages on six continents, and the genre grosses more than a billion dollars a year -- outselling mystery, sci-fi, and fantasy combined. Yet the millions of voracious women (and sometimes men) who read, write, and love romance novels have remained oddly invisible. Until now.

For three years, we follow the lives of five very diverse published romance authors and one unpublished newbie as they build their businesses, find and lose loved ones, cope with a tsunami of change in publishing, and earn a living doing what they love—while empowering others to do the same. Romance authors have built a fandom unlike all others, a global sisterhood where authors know their readers personally and help them become writers themselves. During the three years we've been shooting *Love Between the Covers*, we have witnessed the biggest power shift that has taken place in the publishing industry over the last 200 years. And it's the romance authors who are on the front lines, pioneering new ways to survive and build communities in this rapidly changing environment.

DIRECTOR BIO

Director/Producer **Laurie Kahn's** first film, *A Midwife's Tale*, was based on the 18th century diary of midwife Martha Ballard and Laurel Ulrich's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *A Midwife's Tale*. It won film festival awards and a national Emmy for Outstanding Non-Fiction. Her film *TUPPERWARE!* was broadcast in more than 20 countries, won the George Foster Peabody Award and was nominated for a national Best Nonfiction Director Emmy. Kahn previously worked on *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, The American Experience, FRONTLINE'S Crisis in Central America, All Things Considered, and Time Out. She's a resident scholar at Brandeis's Women's Studies Research Center.*

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MAIN CHARACTERS

MARY BLY

Tenured Shakespeare professor by day, bestselling romance author ELOISA JAMES by night. This romance heavy-hitter navigates the high-powered New York publishing industry with her friend and personal assistant Kim Castillo, who helps to make Eloisa James the Harper Collins “rock star of social media.”

LEN BAROT

Surgeon, farmer, publisher, and well-known author of lesbian romance fiction, writing under the pen names RADCLYFFE and L.L. RAAND. Bold Strokes Books, the publishing house Len founded a decade ago, now publishes more than 140 authors worldwide, providing both advice and safe haven to its authors and readers.

BEVERLY JENKINS

Pioneer of African American romance, author of historical, suspense and inspirational romances. Beverly and her vibrant community of readers explore their heritage through love stories rich in history, powerful heroines, and gallant heroes. She’s amazed and humbled knowing that she makes a difference in people’s lives “with just paper and ink.”

SUSAN DONOVAN and CELESTE BRADLEY

Best friends, divorcees, single mothers, and New York Times bestselling writing partners. Susan and Celeste write through personal tragedy and professional disaster, confronting the publishing industry head-on. It's them against the world.

JOANNE LOCKYER

A young Australian environmental consultant and aspiring romance author trying to publish her first novel. Her critique partner and good friend, Elizabeth Essex, helps her as she navigates writing challenges and continues to write through a devastating breakup.

PROJECT HISTORY
by Laurie Kahn, Director

Romance is the behemoth of the publishing industry; it outsells mystery, sci-fi, and fantasy combined. Yet no filmmaker has ever taken an honest look at the amazing global community that romance writers and readers have built.

As a documentary filmmaker, I want to bring the lives and work of compelling women to the screen, because any industry dominated by women is typically dismissed as trivial and "merely domestic." My previous films -- *A Midwife's Tale* and *Tupperware!* – are very different from one another, but they were both shaped by my desire to look honestly at communities of women who haven't been taken seriously (but should be), who deserve to be heard without being mocked.

I knew very little about the romance community when I decided to make this film. But the further I got into this subject, the more convinced I became that the romance community is not only an interesting sisterhood including more than 100 million women around the globe, but also a phenomenon to learn from.

No filmmaker has ever had the access we've had. We have been allowed to film behind-the-scenes strategy and editorial meetings at publishing houses; we've been included in the private lives of our main characters; we've captured public and private moments at conferences where thousands of romance readers and romance writers are gathered; we've been invited to shoot on trips with authors and their fans in South Carolina, Alaska, and Texas; we've been allowed to film both high-end and low-budget romance cover shoots; and we've been granted an unusually intimate interview with superstar Nora Roberts.

Love Between the Covers is one part of a larger effort called the Popular Romance Project that I dreamt up five years ago. To pull off this huge project, I found fabulous partners: The Library of Congress Center for the Book, the Roy Rosenzweig Center for

History and New Media, and the International Association for the Study of Popular Romance (IASPR). They've all been a pleasure to work with!

The Popular Romance Project explores the fascinating, often contradictory origins and influences of popular romance as told in novels, films, comics, advice books, songs, and internet fan fiction, taking a global perspective—while looking back across time as far as the ancient Greeks.

In addition to the film the Popular Romance Project includes:

- PopularRomanceProject.org – the interactive, content-rich website launched in 2011 by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media. The site allows its users to see romance novels in a broad context across time and place—with a huge archive of *Love Between the Covers* interview excerpts, teaching resources, and blogs by romance authors, scholars and industry insiders.
- *What Is Love? Romance Fiction in the Digital Age* – an international, multimedia conference of scholars, writers, and readers, hosted by The Library of Congress Center for the Book, funded by Harlequin and the Nora Roberts Foundation. The conference took place on February 11, 2015 at the Library of Congress -- open to the public and free. It was an exciting, stimulating day for all who were there, and videos of the panels will be available at the Library of Congress website.

Our advisory board and colleagues at IASPR have been there to help us every step of the way. IASPR's current president, Pamela Regis, was the co-chair of the conference at the Library of Congress.

Many institutions and individuals have supported this project: the National Endowment for the Humanities, Mass Humanities, the Nora Roberts Foundation, Romance Writers of America, Amazon.com, Harlequin Enterprises, the Tavris Fund at Brandeis University, our amazing supporters at Kickstarter, and those who've donated through our website, lovebetweenthecovers.com.

THE CREW

WILLIAM ALBERT ANDERSON

Editor **Bill Anderson,** who has been a Sundance Story/Doc Fellow twice, has cut over 100 programs in the last thirty years, ranging from dramatic and documentary features to television mini-series and documentaries. His feature films include *Looking for Richard* directed by Al Pacino and *A Shock to the System*. His documentaries include *A Brief History of Time* directed by Errol Morris and over a dozen titles for the PBS series AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE, including the Emmy Award-winning mini-series, *Concealed Enemies*. He has edited documentary films that have been seen on *American Experience, Frontline, Nova, POV* and he has edited IMAX films seen at science museums worldwide. In addition, he was the extraordinarily talented editor of Blueberry Hill Production's *A Midwife's Tale* and *TUPPERWARE!*

JOSEPH FRIEDMAN

Director of Photography **Joseph Friedman** is a Manhattan based cinematographer with a wide variety of experience shooting documentaries, music videos, corporate assignments, narrative features as well as period pieces that currently play in historical museums around the United States. His work has appeared on all the major networks, HBO, PBS, many of the cable channels, and in theatrical distribution around the country. He won an Edward R. Murrow Award, one of the highest accolades in the news business. Joe was DP for Bennett Singer's recent film, *Electoral Dysfunction.* He's currently shooting for *NOVA*, the acclaimed PBS science series.

GIL TALMI

Gil Talmi is a world-renowned Emmy nominated composer with a focus on socially conscious films. Gil has scored the Peabody Award winning documentaries *Between The Folds* and *Who Killed Chea Vichea* as well as *New Year Baby*, winner of the Amnesty International 'Movies That Matter' Award. Gil's most recent feature work includes music for *Savannah* (dir. Annette Haywood-Carter), *Entre Nos*, (wr/dir. Paola Mendoza and Gloria LaMorte), and *David* (dir. Joel Fendelman). Furthermore, Gil has written music for the documentaries, *Bill W., Forgotten Ellis Island* and *Daisy Bates: First Lady Of Little Rock*. Gil was nominated for a National News and Documentary Emmy Award for his work on *CBS Evening News* and recently won Best Documentary Score of 2012 for his score for *Tales Of The Waria*.

SHARON SHATTUCK

Animator **Sharon Shattuck** is a filmmaker and animator based in New York City. She is the co-creator of the New York Times Op Docs series *Animated Life*, which illustrates historical moments of scientific discovery using stringent journalism and paper puppets (the latest, "Seeing The Invisible," premiered on September 16th, 2014). Her animations are featured in several award-winning documentary films and shorts, including the Emmy-nominated feature, *The City Dark*, which aired on PBS's POV series in 2012, and *The Search For General Tso,* which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2014. She is preparing to unroll her feature film directorial debut, *From This Day Forward*, about growing up with a transgender parent, in early 2015. Her short video and animation work has appeared on PBS, Slate, ProPublica, Vice, and Radiolab, and she is a contributing blogger for the Huffington Post and the Advocate. She has degrees in environmental science and journalism.

SOFIA WARREN

Animator **Sofia Warren** is a Brooklyn-based filmmaker, animator, and illustrator. Her animations are featured in the horror-comedy *Clinger*, premiering at Slamdance 2015, and in numerous commercials. She also worked on the documentary *Finding Tatanka*, which screened at Big Sky Documentary Festival and Portland Film Festival. One day, she hopes to host a dinner party with Jan Svankmajer and Richard Linklater. Sofia graduated from Wesleyan University, where she studied film.

CREDITS

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William A. Anderson

Director of Photography
Joseph Friedman

Original Score
Gil Talmi

Animators
Sharon Shattuck
Sofia Warren

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Beverly Jenkins
Susan Donovan
Celeste Bradley
Len Barot (Radclyffe)
Joanne Lockyer

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Hannah Reinish

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Karen MacDonald

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