

**For Immediate Release**

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**INDEPENDENT LENS:  
“BIRD BY BIRD WITH ANNIE”  
BY FREIDA LEE MOCK TO PREMIERE  
NATIONALLY ON ITVS’S NEW SERIES ON PBS**

**Film Profiles Best-Selling Author and Humorist Anne Lamott**

**BIRD BY BIRD WITH ANNIE** *Airs Nationally on  
Independent Lens April 22nd, 2003 at 10:30 P.M. on PBS*

*“Writing functions for me in terms of helping me find out who  
we are, how to live and why we’re here. — Anne Lamott*

(San Francisco, CA) —**BIRD BY BIRD WITH ANNIE** from Academy Award-winning filmmaker Freida Lee Mock is an engaging profile of the best-selling author and laugh-out loud humorist Anne Lamott (*Rosie, Traveling Mercies, Bird By Bird, Operating Instructions, Crooked Little Heart*). The moving story of a survivor and an iconoclast, the film follows Lamott through a year of writing, teaching and mothering. Lamott, a “sober alcoholic” and single mother who is both a born-again Christian and a liberal activist, shares her self-effacing and ruthlessly honest insights into such universal concerns as loss, alienation, bad hair days, loneliness, creativity, motherhood, retail therapy, faith and the meaning of life.

The film lets Lamott tell her own life story, recounting her childhood as a shy little girl who, much like her character Rosie, found solace in the written word. She talks about her

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feelings of being different and about the “drive-by shoutings” of boys who teased her for her kinky white hair. Channeling rejection into humor, Lamott found acceptance as the class clown, and discovered drinking at an early age. By 13, she says, she had become a regular drinker.

**BIRD BY BIRD WITH ANNIE** explores the many facets of Lamott’s life—her years as an alcoholic, her pregnancy and experiences as a single mother, her writing and her spiritual life. She stumbled upon St. Andrews Presbyterian Church one day when she was wandering in a Sausalito flea market recovering from a hangover. It became her church home and has been her safe haven ever since.

Throughout **BIRD BY BIRD WITH ANNIE**, Lamott’s generosity of spirit is evident. A frequent and popular speaker at writers’ conferences, she demystifies the creative process and urges her listeners to keep writing no matter what. The film shows her working with writing students, reading at bookstores, speaking at church and working as a lay minister at a convalescent home. Lamott likes to pass on the “secret of life” that she found written on a computer terminal bearing a picture of Koko the gorilla: “The law of the American jungle: Remain calm and share your bananas.” In the film, in her books and in person, Lamott lifts, comforts and inspires, all the while keeping us laughing.

For more information, go to [www.pbs.org/independentlens/birdbybird](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/birdbybird)

### **BIRD BY BIRD Credits**

Producer, Writer and Director  
Cinematography

Freida Lee Mock  
Erik Daarstad  
Jon Else  
Bob Elfstrom  
Terry Sanders  
Anne Stein  
Isaiah Stein

Editor  
Music

## About the Filmmaker

### **Freida Lee Mock (Producer /Writer/ Director)**

Freida Lee Mock is a director, producer, and writer who has received an Academy Award, four Academy Award nominations, two prime time Emmy Awards, and three prime time Emmy nominations. She directed the 1995 Academy Award-winning Best Documentary Feature *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*, a portrait of artist/architect Lin and the gripping story behind the design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, its impact on the American people and on the life and work of Maya Lin in the following decade. Other films include *Return With Honor*, about American pilots shot down over North Vietnam and held in captivity; *Never Give Up: The 20th Century Odyssey of Herbert Zipper*, the extraordinary story of Vienna-born musician and conductor Herbert Zipper, who survived Dachau, Buchenwald and a Japanese concentration camp to become one of the great music educators of the world; *Rose Kennedy: A Life To Remember*; *Lillian Gish: The Actor's Life for Me* (Prime Time Emmy for Outstanding Informational Special, 1989); *The Kennedy Center Honors Biographies*, honoring individuals for lifetime achievement in the performing arts (Prime Time Emmy, Best Variety Special); *To Live Or Let Die*, which explores the moral and ethical issues involved in the care of very ill newborns; and *Screenwriters: Word Into Image*, a six-part film series on the art and craft of screenwriting.

Among other award-winning films are *The New Indians* (National Geographic Special) narrated by Robert Redford, which looks at the impact of Red Power in contemporary Native American life; *Jung Sai: Chinese Americans*, a history of the impact of Chinese immigration in America; and *Glory Road West*, an exploration of Indian/white relations, featuring Russell Means.

Mock studied history and law, is a graduate of UC Berkeley and began her career at David Wolper Productions working on the *National Geographic* and *Jacques Cousteau* series. She is a partner in Sanders and Mock Productions and co-founded the American Film Foundation with Terry Sanders to produce films on the arts, sciences and the humanities.

### **About Anne Lamott**

Anne Lamott is the author of six novels including *Hard Laughter*, *Rosie*, *Joe Jones*, *All New People*, and *Crooked Little Heart* (the sequel to *Rosie*), as well as three best-selling books of non-fiction: *Operating Instructions*, an account of life as a single mother during her son's first year; *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, a guide to writing and the challenges of a writer's life; and *Traveling Mercies*, a collection of autobiographical essays on faith. Anne Lamott has been honored with a Guggenheim Fellowship, and she has taught at UC Davis, as well as at writing conferences across the country. Her most recent novel is *Blue Shoe* (fall 2002, Riverhead).

### **About *Independent Lens***

*Independent Lens* is a groundbreaking weekly prime-time PBS series that airs on Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. and presents American and international documentaries and a limited number of dramas. Each week *Independent Lens* bursts onto the screen and presents a unique individual, community or moment in history to bring viewers gripping stories that inspire, engage, provoke and delight. From pioneering women surfers to brilliant composers to brave resistance fighters, *Independent Lens* introduces people whose stories are unforgettable. *Independent Lens* is for curious viewers of all ages, ethnicities and backgrounds; all that's required is a TV and an inquiring mind. The executive producer of *Independent Lens* is Sally Jo Fifer, ITVS Executive Director. *Independent Lens* is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), with additional funding provided by PBS.

### **About ITVS**

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web, and the weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by the vision of media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. 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. Contact ITVS at [itvs@itvs.org](mailto:itvs@itvs.org) or visit [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org).



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