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for Her

THE TOTALLY BIASED POLITICALLY INCORRECT PARTY PAPER FOR LESBIANS

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Women

## Paris Was a Woman

Written by Andrea Weiss; directed by Greta Schiller  
(Zeitgeist Films)

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here are many legendary lesbians and lesbian refuges from the past, but none are as celebrated and doted upon as the community of artists, writers and academics who nestled on Paris's Left Bank in the 1920s. If you've absorbed only snippets of information about the bold and luxurious women who loved women during this period, a new film, *Paris Was a Woman*, is your ticket to a



painless education about what was an admittedly rich time --culturally and romantically.

(Who knows-- one day historians may say the same about you and your circle in the East Village.)

If you're the type that already has cats named Gertrude and Alice, this film is going to be a virtual wet dream. But if, like me, in the past you

have been at all inclined to roll your eyes at the mention of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, declaring loudly that they are poster girls for lesbian grannies only, then you may be in for a big surprise. *Paris Was a Woman* profiles authors Stein, Colette, Djuna Barnes and *The New Yorker* correspondent Janet Flanner, painters Romaine Brooks and Marie Laurencin, photographers Berenice Abbott and Gisele Freund, publishers and booksellers Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier as friends (yes, like the TV show). Using new research,

recently discovered home movies and photographs with interviews and anecdotes, director Greta Schiller (*Before Stonewall*) has made these infamous women seem real-- young, adventurous, idealistic, silly and intimate. The film gives you a true sense of the freedom that these women rebelling against societal conventions found together, and how their intense energies and passions defined the community in which they made their lives and work.

The filmmakers are also quite faithful to the period, making *Paris Was a Woman* an engaging and stylish labor of love. And on a funny note, have you ever wondered how the whole lesbians/cats association started? I don't have a clue, but I chuckled heartily over how many cats are prominently featured in photos and home movies of these sophisticated lesbians of the past. Now someone should make a movie about that!

*Cathay Che* also contributes to *Time Out New York*, *Details*, *VH1* and *Party Talk* (9pm Wednesdays on Channel 35).

REVIEWED BY CATHAY CHE

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