



MINE

Directed by Geralyn Pezanoski

“The best movie I saw during the week-long SXSW Film Festival”
- Karen Valby, **Entertainment Weekly**



**United States / 2009 / Documentary
In English / 81 min.**

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SYNOPSIS

Hailed as “absorbing,” “a must see,” “Oscar material” and “the best movie at SXSW,” MINE is a feature-length, independent documentary about the essential bond between humans and animals, set against the backdrop of one of the worst natural disasters in modern U.S. history: Hurricane Katrina. This gripping, character-driven story follows New Orleans residents as they attempt the daunting task of trying to reunite with their pets who have been adopted by families all over the country, and chronicles the custody battles that arise when two families love the same pet. Who determines the fate of the animals—and the people—involved? A compelling meditation on race, class and the power of compassion, MINE examines how we treat animals as an extension of how we view and treat each other.

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

WINNER –

Audience Award for Best Documentary – **SXSW Film Festival**

Audience Award – **San Francisco Documentary Festival**

Official Selection –

Silverdocs Film Festival

San Diego Film Festival

Boston Int’l Film Festival

St. Louis Film Festival

Mill Valley Film Festival

Camden Int’l Film Festival

Landlocked Film Festival

Martha’s Vineyard Film Festival

Sedona Int’l Film Festival

New Hampshire Film Festival

Tales from Planet Earth Environmental Film Festival

San Francisco DocFest

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Geralyn Pezanoski

Like millions across the country I was profoundly affected by the startling images I witnessed during coverage of Hurricane Katrina: people stranded on rooftops, suffering crowds at the Super Dome, and the decimation of one of America's most culturally vibrant and diverse cities. And like millions of others I was devastated as well by images of the thousands of animals in distress – their helplessness bringing into even greater relief the chaos and overwhelming scope of the tragedy. So when I read about a nascent but quickly growing rescue effort being carried out by animal lovers from across the country and the world, I decided to go to New Orleans to document this incredible undertaking.

During the ensuing six weeks I filmed dozens of intrepid rescue workers, devoted animal rights advocates, and thousands of animals in need of saving - even after they were 'rescued'. While a few residents trickled back into New Orleans and managed to reclaim their pets, most were displaced and barred from entering the city, so I watched day after day as these unclaimed animals were loaded onto trucks and planes and sent to shelters across the country, their fates uncertain. While the hope was that many of these animals would either be fostered until their owners claimed them, or adopted into new homes, the reality was that many of them would meet the same fate as millions of other animals around the country: being euthanized before the year's end. It was this horrific thought that led to my decision to foster (and eventually adopt) a Katrina dog, a pointer mix I called Nola. She was skin and bones when I met her, and she refused to leave my side for more than a couple of seconds. It didn't take either of us long to bond.

As the months went on, my crew and I began to see an increasing number of residents returning to New Orleans to try to rebuild their lives. It became apparent that legions of them - people who had lost *everything* – were desperate to find their pets. We heard about hundreds of other cases across the county: people who were still displaced but on the hunt for their animals. But as broad and deep as the story went, there seemed to be strangely little information about it in mainstream media. I had many questions: Why hadn't people been allowed to evacuate with their animals? Now that these animals were adopted into new homes, who had the authority to decide whether they should be left where they were or returned to their previous owners? Why were original owners running into such resistance in trying to find and reclaim their pets? What would I do if someone came looking for Nola, to whom I had become so attached?

I explored these questions and many more during the three years I spent making ***MINE***. My primary focus was on a handful of extraordinary Katrina victims committed to finding their animals even years after the disaster, but the story extends to rescue workers and new adoptive guardians, who, like me, decided to take in pets left behind and care for them as their own. We met and interviewed hundreds of people over the years, and what emerged was a profound story of the bond between humans and animals, and the power of that bond to ameliorate human suffering. Equally striking, however, were stories both of the continuing prevalence of racism and classism in America, and the incredible power of compassion in the wake of tragedy. All of these stories become one in ***MINE***.

I hope that *MINE* puts a human face on issues that may seem far removed from the lives of most Americans, but in fact affect us all - and that the film will promote much needed dialogue not just about how we treat our animals, but how we treat each other.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY & FILMOGRAPHY

Geralyn Pezanoski – Director, Producer

Geralyn Pezanoski, Co-Founder of Smush Media, has 12 years of experience in film and video production and makes her feature directorial debut with *MINE*. Film producing credits include the narrative short, *On A Tuesday* (Santa Barbara & LAIFF) and *Motherland* (SXSW), and directing credits include the doc series *Firehouse* (Sony Pictures Entertainment). She lives in San Francisco with her husband Peter and their dog Nola.

Erin Essenmacher – Producer

Erin Essenmacher is a writer, director and producer with over 10 years of experience in corporate, non-profit and broadcast production with a strong focus on documentary. Credits include a wide range of independent and broadcast documentary projects for PBS, The Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, The History Channel and Court TV. Erin recently completed a short documentary and oral history project for the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay area and is currently in pre-production on the film *Presidential Race*. She splits her time between the San Francisco Bay Area and New York City.

Arlo Rosner – Director of Photography

Arlo Rosner is an award-winning cinematographer, with a broad range of experience in commercials, music videos, narrative, documentary, and television. Arlo has a degree in film from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. In addition to his many accolades and three Addy Awards, he won a gold statue at the 2005 Clio Awards. His most recent credits include director of photography on the acclaimed feature documentary *Beautiful Losers*.

Jason Rhein – Director of Photography

Jason Rhein is a director of photography and media producer based out of New Orleans, where he is currently working on his second season as Music Producer & Supervisor for Playhouse Disney's *Imagination Movers* series. He is also the Technical Director for the nationally syndicated public radio-show *American Routes*. Jason recently worked as Sound Designer on the documentary *Member of the Club*, as the editor on the short *Watermarks* and has done camerawork for a number of other projects, including the short film *Code 7*. Jason plays bass in the rock band, Rotary Downs (also showcasing at SXSW this year). *MINE* is Jason's debut feature as director of photography.

Jen Bradwell – Editor

Jen is a Bay Area editor with years of post-production experience in feature and broadcast documentary projects. Her work has been broadcast on PBS, Current TV and MTV's Logo Network and has screened at film festivals around the world. Jen's recent documentary credits include the evocative series *The Monastery* for The Learning Channel and *Boys in Winter*, which won Best Documentary at the New York

Independent Film Festival.

CREDITS

Crew

Director: Geralyn Pezanoski

Producers: Geralyn Pezanoski
Erin Essenmacher

Directors of Photography: Jason Rhein
Arlo Rosner

Editor: Jen Bradwell

Associate Producer: Alison Pezanoski-Browne

Cast

Karen O'Toole

Gloria Richardson

Malvin Cavalier

Jesse Pullins

Tiffany and Jeremy Mansfield

Randy Turner