

# *Dreamcatcher*

A film by Kim Longinotto



Running Time: 98 minutes  
(United Kingdom)

**US/Canada Contact:**

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## SHORT SYNOPSIS

*Dreamcatcher* is a portrait of Brenda Myers-Powell, a former Chicago prostitute, who helps women and teenage girls break the cycle of sexual abuse and exploitation. The film lays bare the hidden violence that devastates the lives of young women, their families and the communities where they live. It is Brenda's compassion and unflinching intervention that turns these desperate lives around.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

On the West Side of Chicago at 3:00 A.M., a twelve-seat van with the words "Dreamcatcher Foundation" emblazoned across the side cruises through the dimly lit streets. The two women in the van are Brenda and Stephanie, survivors of the sex trade. The van slows down as they approach a young girl. Brenda leans out and calls, "Hey pretty, do you need some condoms?" This opening scene takes you immediately into the sharp end of the world of *Dreamcatcher*.

*Dreamcatcher* is a look at a troubled community through the eyes of one of its survivors, Brenda Myers-Powell. Brenda grew up in Chicago, became a teenage prostitute, developed a drug addiction, and years later came out the other side. Brenda's experience, combined with her irresistible personality, puts her in a unique position to help other trafficked women reclaim their lives. Along with her best friend from rehab, Stephanie Daniels-Wilson, Brenda established The Dreamcatcher Foundation. Their goal: to help women and girls learn that they don't need to use sex to survive.

The film is an intimate portrait of Brenda, whose brutal past gives her the strength and wisdom to change desperate lives for lives of dignity that were—until they met Brenda—unimaginable. Along with her small crew—producer Lisa Stevens, soundperson Nina Rice, and assistant producer Wilfred Spears—director and cinematographer Kim Longinotto was able to get close to the subjects of the film and so tell their stories.

In a late night intervention Brenda meets Marie, working one of the most dangerous tracks on the West Side. Marie has plans to start her own escort service, but after a few minutes of conversation, Brenda is able to reach beneath the fragile surface of Marie's bravado to reveal a woman desperately in need of help. In the scenes that follow, Marie goes from working the streets to getting into rehab and turning her life around. In another astonishing scene, in their classroom and one by one, teenage girls reveal to Brenda their desperate stories of childhood rape. Brenda's sensitive handling of these revelations sheds light on her own past, and reveals how and why she uses her own experiences to give others hope.

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Kim Longinotto came to the story through producers Lisa Stevens and Teddy Leifer. Stevens had met Brenda and Stephanie in 2009 while making the film *Crack House USA* in Chicago. For three years, Stevens maintained her friendship with Brenda and tried to raise outside interest in her story. But it wasn't until she met Teddy Leifer that she found a partner who believed in the film as much as she did. Leifer had recently produced *Rough Aunties* with Longinotto and eventually brought her to *Dreamcatcher*. On paper, the idea for a film was a challenging sell. Longinotto did not immediately respond to the story, so Leifer raised enough money for Stevens to go to Chicago and make a "taster tape." Stevens spent a week filming with Brenda and Stephanie. Then, with Ollie Huddleston (Longinotto's long-time editor), a twelve-minute tape was assembled, which immediately hooked the director and helped to unlock

production funding. “Brenda is incredible,” says Kim. “Once I saw her I knew I had to make a film about her.”



### **KIM LONGINOTTO – Director / Cinematographer**

Internationally acclaimed documentarian Kim Longinotto is well known for making films about extraordinary women, particularly female victims of oppression or discrimination. Longinotto studied camera and directing at the National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield, England, where she now occasionally tutors. While studying at NFTS, she made a documentary about the draconian all-girls boarding school she attended as a child, which was shown at the London Film Festival. She has continued to be a prolific observational documentary filmmaker ever since. Her films have won dozens of top awards at festivals worldwide, including the World Cinema Grand Jury Prize in Documentary at Sundance 2009 (*Rough Aunties*), a Peabody award (*Sisters in Law*), and a BAFTA (*Divorce Iranian Style*). Longinotto has directed many documentaries for broadcasters including BBC, HBO, PBS and Channel 4. One of her latest films, *Salma*, premiered at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival.

### **KIM LONGINOTTO FILMOGRAPHY**

Pride of Place (1976)	Director / Cinematographer
Theatre Girls (1978)	Director / Cinematographer
Underage (1982)	Director / Cinematographer
Eat the Kimono (1989)	Director / Cinematographer
Hidden Faces (1990)	Director / Cinematographer
The Good Wife of Tokyo (1992)	Director
Dream Girls (1994)	Director / Cinematographer / Producer
Shinjuku Boys (1995)	Director / Cinematographer / Producer
Rock Wives (1996) (TV)	Director / Cinematographer
Divorce Iranian Style (1998)	Director / Cinematographer
Gaea Girls (2000)	Director / Cinematographer / Producer
Runaway (2001)	Director / Cinematographer
The Day I Will Never Forget (2002)	Director / Cinematographer
Sisters in Law (2005)	Director / Cinematographer / Producer
Hold Me Tight, Let Me Go (2007)	Director / Cinematographer / Producer
Rough Aunties (2008)	Director / Cinematographer
Pink Saris (2010)	Director / Cinematographer
Salma (2013)	Director / Cinematographer
Love is All (2014)	Director
Dreamcatcher (2015)	Director / Cinematographer

### **LISA STEVENS – Producer**

Lisa Stevens has produced several landmark documentary series for National Geographic Channel: *Outlaw Bikers*, *Underworld Cities* and *Drugs Incorporated*. Along with Academy Award®-winning producer Jonathan Hewes and BAFTA award-winning director Anthony Wonke, Stevens produced *Crack House USA* for Channel 4 and MSNBC. She founded her own production company, Green Acres Films Ltd., in 2009. *Dreamcatcher* is a project that came about after years of communication with the main subjects of the film.



### **TEDDY LEIFER – Producer**

Teddy Leifer previously collaborated with Kim Longinotto on the 2009 Sundance Grand Jury Prize-winner, *Rough Aunties*. *Dreamcatcher* marks Leifer's sixth feature at Sundance since. His other producing credits include *We Are Together*, *Knuckle*, *The Interrupters* and 2013 Oscar® nominee *The Invisible War*. Teddy is a three-time Emmy® winner, a BAFTA nominee and Managing Director of Rise Films, which also produces the hit UK comedy, *Plebs*. He was recently listed as one of the "100 most innovative

and influential people in British creative and media industries" by the Guardian newspaper.

### **OLLIE HUDDLESTON – Editor**

Ollie Huddleston is an award-winning film editor with over 20 years of experience working in TV and cinema documentaries and dramas. His unique observational style has led to collaborations with some of documentary's leading lights including Kim Longinotto, Sean McAllister, Angus Macqueen, Leo Regan and Adam Curtis. The films have won prizes at festivals throughout the world, including Cannes and Sundance. Huddleston has twice been nominated for a BAFTA and has won two Royal Television Society editing awards.



## KEY CREDITS

Directed and photographed by	Kim Longinotto
Produced by	Lisa Stevens, Teddy Leifer
Editor	Ollie Huddleston
Music by	Stuart Earl
Sound by	Nina Rice
Executive Producers	Dan Cogan, Geralyn White Dreyfous, Regina K. Scully
Associate Producers	Wilfred Spears, John Stack





## TECHNICAL & CONTACT INFO:

Screen Ratio	16:9
Sound	Stereo
Frame Rate	25
Shooting Format	XD Cam
Screening Format	HD CAM DCP DIGIBETA BLURAY

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