



## For Immediate Release

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## **“Patti Smith: Dream of Life” Presents Evocative Portrait of the Legendary Rocker and Artist, Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2009, at 9 p.m. in Special Presentation on PBS’ POV**

Smith was both participant and witness to a seminal scene in American culture; film portrays her friendships and work with Robert Mapplethorpe, William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Sam Shepard and Bob Dylan

*“Created over a heroic 11 years ... a lovely ... first feature. ... Mr. Sebring creates a structure for the film in which past and present seem to flow effortlessly and ceaselessly into each other.”*

— Manohla Dargis, The New York Times

Shot over 11 years by acclaimed fashion photographer Steven Sebring, **“Patti Smith: Dream of Life”** is a remarkable plunge into the life, art, memories and philosophical reflections of the legendary rocker, poet and artist. Sometimes dubbed the “godmother of punk” — a designation justified by clips of her early rage-fueled performances — Smith was much more than that when she broke through with her 1975 debut album, *Horses*. A poet and visual artist as well as a rocker, she befriended and collaborated with some of the brightest lights of the American counterculture, an often testosterone-driven scene to which she brought a swagger and fierceness all her own.

In **“Patti Smith: Dream of Life,”** the artist’s memories of these times, and of a period of domestic happiness and the tragedies that brought her back to the stage, attain an intense, hypnotic lyricism, much like that of her own songs. The two-hour film has its American broadcast premiere in a **POV (Point of View)** special presentation on **Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2009**, at 9 p.m. on PBS, concluding *POV*’s 22nd season. (Check local listings.) American television’s longest-running independent documentary series, *POV* is the recipient of a Special News and Documentary Emmy for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking.

**“Patti Smith: Dream of Life,”** winner of a 2008 Sundance Film Festival Award for Excellence in Cinematography, is a riveting, intimate telling of Smith’s long, strange trip. She may not be the only middle-class Jersey girl to have made the leap to New York City in pursuit of artistic dreams, but she may be the only one to have emerged — and survived — as a multifaceted poet, artist and rock star. Through performance footage, interviews, poems, paintings, photographs and Smith’s voice-over reminiscences, **“Dream of Life”** reveals a complicated, charismatic personality wrestling with the paradoxes of being an artist in America and of being a woman in a male-dominated music scene.

Smith also wrestles with the tragedies — the deaths of her husband and brother — that brought her back to New York and to performing. Layering Smith’s words over innovative camera techniques, the film explores how one woman discovered herself through music, how she survived tragedy, how she raised two children and how she endeavors in a quest for peace, for herself and for the world.

In telling Smith's story, Sebring plumbs the history of several important cultural movements. Smith's collaborations and close friendships with poets William Burroughs, Gregory Corso and Allen Ginsberg, photographer Robert Mapplethorpe and musicians Bob Dylan and Michael Stipe reveal the links that make her a bridge between the Beats, the punk movement and musicians of today. The colorful moments in **"Dream of Life"** are plenty: Smith as an angelic street urchin, reciting "A Prayer for New York" in footage from 1975; a jam session with her 1970s collaborator, playwright Sam Shepard; Smith reading an Allen Ginsberg poem at Ginsberg's funeral; and Smith hanging out on the beach with Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

Shot in lush, textured 16mm film, **"Dream of Life"** is a vibrant chronicle of rock history and the story of a bold woman who would not be denied on stage or off. It is also the story of a survivor whose creative intelligence thrives more than 30 years after the world first became aware of her.

"A few weeks after I met Patti in 1995, she invited me to see her perform at Irving Plaza in New York City," says Sebring. "I was completely blown away; she wasn't the person I had met at her home in Detroit. She had been this really sweet, almost innocent woman. And then at Irving Plaza, she was raging, spitting music and spewing poetry. It was fantastic. After the show, I asked her, 'Has anybody ever filmed you?' I didn't know at the time that there was so little documentation of her aside from concert footage.

"I kept shooting as Patti's life kept changing; over the years, we've become like brother and sister," Sebring says. "They call her the punk poet prophet. Well, I'm one of her soldiers, or one of her messengers. I want to turn people on to Patti Smith."

**"Patti Smith: Dream of Life"** is a production of Clean Socks and THIRTEEN.

#### Credits:

Director: Steven Sebring; Co-producers: Steven Sebring, Margaret Smilow, Scott Vogel; Cinematographers: Phillip Hunt, Steven Sebring; Editors: Angelo Corrao, Lin Polito; Executive Producers: Steven Sebring, Margaret Smilow; Sound Design: Margaret Crimmins, Greg Smith, Dog Bark Sound. Running Time: 116:46

#### Awards and Festivals:

2008: Official Selection, Sundance Film Festival – *Excellence in Cinematography Award*; Full Frame Documentary Film Festival; Philadelphia Film Festival; Seattle Film Festival; Washington, D.C. Film Festival; Provincetown Film Festival; Milan International Film Festival; Berlin International Film Festival; Jerusalem Film Festival. (For a complete list, visit [www.dreamoflifethemovie.com](http://www.dreamoflifethemovie.com).)



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Produced by American Documentary, Inc., and now in its 22nd season on PBS, the award-winning *POV* series is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today's best independent documentary filmmakers. Airing June through September, with primetime specials during the year, *POV* has brought more than 275 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *POV's Borders*. Since 1988, *POV* has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information is available at [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

**POV Interactive** ([www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov))

POV's award-winning Web department produces special features for every POV presentation, extending the life of our films through filmmaker interviews, story updates, podcasts, streaming video and community-based and educational content that involves viewers in activities and feedback. POV Interactive also produces our Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, *POV's Borders*. In addition, the *POV Blog* is a gathering place for documentary fans and filmmakers to discuss and debate their favorite films, get the latest news and link to further resources. The POV website, blog and film archives form a unique and extensive online resource for documentary storytelling.

**POV Community Engagement and Education**

POV works with local PBS stations, educators and community organizations to present free screenings and discussion events to inspire and engage communities in vital conversations about our world. As a leading provider of quality nonfiction programming for use in public life, POV offers an extensive menu of resources, including free discussion guides and curriculum-based lesson plans. In addition, POV's *Youth Views* works with youth organizers and students to provide them with resources and training so they may use independent documentaries as a catalyst for social change.

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***DVD REQUESTS: Please note that a broadcast version of this film is available upon request, as the film may be edited to comply with new FCC regulations.***



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