



Directors Launch Kickstarter to Fund “What Is Love?” Documentary

November 10, 2015

by Andrew Botsford

Quick question: Without consulting the internet, any idea what the most frequently Googled question was in 2011, 2012, and 2014?

It turns out that more people, millions of them in fact, were searching for the answer to “What is love?” in those three years than any other question.

This serendipitous tidbit of information was discovered by multi-media artists and filmmakers Jane Martin and Alex Mankiewicz fully six months into filming a documentary whose concept and title, “What Is Love?”, pose the same profound question. With 140 interviews in the can and about another 30 to go, the two women recently launched a [Kickstarter campaign](#) in a bid to raise \$21,500 to help fund the completion of the project.



“What is Love?” co-directors Jane Martin, left, and Alex Mankiewicz. Photo courtesy Jane Martin.

If the target pledge total is reached by November 23, 2015 and the project funded, some 60 percent will be used to cover the costs of post-production, with the remainder divided between additional filming, marketing and outreach, music rights, foreign language translation and Kickstarter fees. As of November 9, 2015, 80 backers had pledged a total of \$17,368.

Martin acknowledged in an email last week that the \$21,500 goal of the Kickstarter campaign, if the total is reached by the deadline, will only provide about a third of the overall budget for the project. Like documentary filmmakers everywhere, she and Mankiewicz will have to scramble to find more funding to cover all the costs.

“Fortunately,” Martin wrote, “having both worked in film and television, we have some of the equipment and know-how to do a lot of it ourselves.”



In the same email, she described the feature-length documentary as “an intimate and boundless exploration of love by a cross-section of humanity ... exploring the various aspects of love. None of our interviewees have known the question in advance, and all have given generously of their hearts and minds.”

Using a two-camera setup, with one moving camera, Martin began filming responses to the question in September 2014 in her East Hampton studio. After Mankiewicz joined her on the project, the two shot footage in New York City and Westchester, working with cinematographer Nate Best.

The team has another shoot lined up in late November, after the Kickstarter campaign is over, and plan to shoot in Australia, where Mankiewicz has been living over the last few years, and possibly again in the U.S. in the spring. In addition, the filmmakers are broadening the reach of the film by including Skype interviews from around the world.

Over the winter months, the partners anticipate working on logging and editing the footage shot so far, along with developing graphics, selecting—and obtaining the rights to—music, and other post-production chores to pull the film together.

In the same email, Martin echoed the “Back Story” section of the Kickstarter campaign web page in describing why she decided to tackle the question in a documentary. “The project started when a relationship of mine ended and I was left wondering if I really knew what love was,” the co-director wrote.

So Martin began filming interviews in East Hampton to find out if anyone had the answer. “On a solo trip to Australia I met Alex and you could say that focusing my life on ‘Love’ via the film led to finding it,” wrote Martin in the same email. “The trials of love are universal and that is part of what the film explores.”

Beyond their unique personal experience of this universal component of the human condition, the two women are well suited to the task at hand. Both are visual artists who have extensive experience in the film world.

After film studies at New York University, Jane Martin worked in the film and television industry in New York and Paris. Her first documentary, a 25-minute ode to New York City titled [“Silent Sentries,”](#) was broadcast on four PBS stations nationally, including numerous showings on PBS Channel 13 in New York. The film also premiered at festivals in France, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Portugal and the U.S.

On the visual arts side, Martin has worked in video stills and video installation, photography and painting. Her representation in museum, corporate and private collections includes work at the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, and at Guild Hall Museum in East Hampton and the Islip Museum, where she has also had solo shows. Beyond Long Island, Martin has also exhibited extensively in

the U.S. and Europe.

As a member of a filmmaking family, [Alex Mankiewicz](#) grew up in London, Hollywood and New York. From art departments to assistant director positions, she has worked in film and television in different capacities on studio and independent productions in Paris, Los Angeles and New York. Living in such far flung countries as France, Japan and Australia, she has worked for HBO and Merchant-Ivory, curated film festivals and taught storyboarding.

Her work as an illustrator and printmaker ranges from graphic novels to editorial pieces and political cartoons, with pieces held in private collections in the United Kingdom, Europe, Japan and the United States.

Both women are offering artworks—"Shelter-Sky," a museum quality archival pigment print by Jane Martin, and "Love Ink," a museum quality archival Giclee print by Alex Mankiewicz—as two of the special premiums for backers of the Kickstarter campaign.

On the Kickstarter web page, Martin and Mankiewicz offered this cogent assessment of what they are hoping to achieve: "An understanding of the power of love is more necessary than ever in a world that is plagued by negativity. The aim of 'What is Love?' is to create a positive and dynamic dialogue for all of us."

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To make a donation or discover more on the "What is Love?" documentary project and Kickstarter campaign, click [here](#). The fundraiser runs through November 23, 2015.

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