

# KINO LORBER

## RADIO UNNAMEABLE

**A Documentary Film by  
Paul Lovelace and Jessica Wolfson**

**87 minutes / 2012 / USA / English  
HDCAM / 16:9 / Stereo LT/RT / Color and Black & White**

**PRESS CONTACTS:  
Rodrigo Brandão – [Rodrigo@kinolorber.com](mailto:Rodrigo@kinolorber.com)  
Adam Walker – [Adam@filmforum.org](mailto:Adam@filmforum.org)**

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## PRODUCTION CREDITS

DIRECTED AND PRODUCED  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Paul Lovelace and Jessica Wolfson  
P. Ellen Borowitz, MJ Glembotski, Caryl  
Ratner

CINEMATOGRAPHY  
EDITOR

John Pirozzi  
Gregory Wright

ORIGINAL MUSIC

Jeffrey Lewis

SOUND RECORDIST

Paul Lovelace

SOUND DESIGN AND MIX

Benny Mouthon CAS and Brian Bracken

## INTERVIEWS INCLUDE

Margot Adler (*Radio Personality*)  
Steve Ben Israel (*Actor*)  
David Bromberg (*Musician*)  
Simeon Coxe (*musician – Silver Apples*)  
Robert Downey Sr. (*Filmmaker*)  
Ken Freedman (*WFMU Station Manager*)  
Danny Goldberg (*Record Producer*)  
Arlo Guthrie (*Musician*)  
Paul Krassner (*Comedian*)  
Julius Lester (*Musician/Author*)  
Ed Sanders (*Writer/Musician – The Fugs*)  
Vin Scelsa (*Radio Personality*)  
and many more...

David Amram (*Musician*)  
Joe Boyd (*Record Producer*)  
Len Chandler (*Musician*)  
Judy Collins (*Musician*)  
Marshall Efron (*Humorist*)  
Bob Fass  
Wavy Gravy (*Performer/Activist*)  
Larry Josephson (*Radio Personality*)  
Kenny Kramer (*Comedian*)  
Judith Malina (*Actor*)  
Steve Post (*Radio Personality*)  
Jerry Jeff Walker (*Musician*)

## ARCHIVAL AUDIO AND VIDEO APPEARANCES INCLUDE

Bob Dylan  
Jose Feliciano  
Allen Ginsberg  
Herbert Hunke

Shirley Clarke  
Kinky Friedman  
Abbie Hoffman  
The Incredible String Band

Dave Van Ronk  
Karen Dalton  
Holly Woodlawn  
Carly Simon

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## SHORT SYNOPSIS

Influential radio personality Bob Fass revolutionized the airwaves by developing a patchwork of music, politics, comedy and reports from the street, effectively creating free-form radio. For nearly 50 years, Fass has been heard at midnight on listener-sponsored WBAI-FM, broadcast out of New York. Long before today's innovations in social media, Fass utilized the airwaves for mobilization, encouraging luminaries and ordinary listeners to talk openly, taking the program in surprising directions. *RADIO UNNAMEABLE* is a visual and aural collage that pulls from Bob Fass's immense archive of audio, film, photographs, and video that has been sitting dormant until now.

## SYNOPSIS

In 1963, one man radically transformed the FM dial. *RADIO UNNAMEABLE* tells the story of the groundbreaking New York disc jockey Bob Fass and his innovative use of the airwaves to inform, entertain and encourage dialogue amongst listeners.

His program is entirely free form, there's no telling what might happen next. It is a place to hear great music, conversations with artists and activists, audio experiments, and where the average listener can discuss local and international issues, from problems with landlords in the Bronx to the war in Afghanistan. Bob Fass is still on the air today, approaching 50 years behind the microphone, and he remains as vital and current as ever.

Radio Unnameable's orbit of listeners are active participants and a key component to the program. Bob Fass's goal was to create a participatory democracy on the air, utilizing this community as an organizing tool, working with listeners to stage protests and events, such as the 1967 "Sweep-In" where listeners gathered to clean up a Lower East Side block during a garbage strike. He has talked callers down from bad trips and even averted a suicide attempt. Parallels can be drawn to today's innovations such as Facebook, Twitter, flash mobs, etc.. The listeners were "citizen reporters" and on Radio Unnameable, every voice is heard.

From the beginning, major cultural figures have dropped by the studio to perform, take calls and engage in the program's spontaneity. The list of notables who've appeared is astounding: Bob Dylan, Abbie Hoffman, Allen Ginsberg, Joni Mitchell, Yoko Ono, Muddy Waters, Timothy Leary amongst many more. The film showcases these appearances alongside current sounds that Fass champions.

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As a station, WBAI is filled with volatile internal politics. Fass often finds himself in the middle and as a result has been forced off the air numerous times. One such incident, in the late 1970s, saw him being carried away in handcuffs.

The station today is flirting with bankruptcy and many staff members are volunteers, including Fass, who's been unpaid for years. His timeslot is never safe and support at WBAI is tenuous.

Since its conception, there have been no boundaries for Radio Unnameable. Fass's unique and influential program has blazed a trail for everything from NPR to Howard Stern. *RADIO UNNAMEABLE* is not only about Bob Fass and his remarkable journey, but also radio's evolving landscape and the necessity for free expression on the airwaves.

## VISUAL STYLE

*RADIO UNNAMEABLE* is a visual and aural collage that pulls from Bob Fass's immense archive of audio from his program, film, photographs, and video that has been sitting dormant until now. As radio is an aural medium, we have established a distinctive visual style that combines extensive archival materials and breathtaking nighttime images of New York City with the sounds and voices heard on Radio Unnameable. Sometimes these images will be directly related and other times their connection will be abstract and visceral. As the film spans almost 50 years, we have utilized different mediums to expand the palette: Super 8 and 16mm film, Hi-8 video, and HD, with both original and historical footage to help convey the changing landscape throughout the history of Fass's program.

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## PRINCIPAL CREW BIOS

### **PAUL LOVELACE** Director / Producer / Co-Editor / Sound Recordist

Paul Lovelace's documentary short ROBERT CHRISTGAU: ROCK N' ROCK ANIMAL, about the esteemed Village Voice music journalist, won acclaim at film festivals worldwide in 2000. In 2006, Paul produced, wrote and edited the PBS documentary AMERICAN ROOTS MUSIC: CHICAGO. Paul's first documentary feature THE HOLY MODAL ROUNDERS...BOUND TO LOSE, a portrait of the psychedelic folk duo The Holy Modal Rounders, was released theatrically in 2007 and on DVD in 2008. As an editor, Paul has worked on series for MTV, The Food Network, Travel Channel amongst others. He has edited commercials and promos for Rock Star Games, Blue Man Group and several music labels. Together with his partner Jessica Wolfson, he has directed and produced several short films that have played renowned international film festivals including the 2009 film HUGO which aired on PBS's Saturday night series REEL 13.

### **JESSICA WOLFSON** Director / Producer

Jessica Wolfson has produced many critically acclaimed documentary films and series including TRUST US THIS IS ALL MADE UP, CRAZY SEXY CANCER, and award winning web series GIRLTALK. At IFC Original Programming, Jessica developed and produced documentaries including THIS FILM IS NOT YET RATED by Kirby Dick; WANDERLUST by Bob Pulcini & Shari Springer Berman; THE BRIDGE by Eric Steele and series GREG THE BUNNY and DINNER FOR FIVE (2005 Emmy nomination). Jessica has managed the grassroots theatrical campaigns for several documentary films. She has worked in marketing and distribution at companies such as B-SIDE ENTERTAINMENT and TRIBECA FILM. Jessica is currently in production on two feature length documentary films A GIRL AND A GUN and REVENGE OF THE MEKONS.

### **JOHN PIROZZI** Cinematographer

John Pirozzi is an acclaimed cinematographer whose career has spanned over the past 15 years. He has shot many feature films and documentaries such as the 2007 Sundance darling BROKEN ENGLISH by filmmaker Zoë Cassavetes, LEONARD COHEN: I'M YOUR MAN by Lian Lunson, Z CHANNEL: A MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION the Cannes premiered documentary by Xan Cassavetes and BLING: A PLANET ROCK by Raquel Cepeda. Pirozzi has shot beautiful second unit photography on many films including ALPHA DOG, BOYS DON'T CRY, CITY OF GHOSTS and Jem Cohen's INSTRUMENT. Pirozzi recently directed and produced SLEEPWALKING THROUGH THE MEKONG a documentary film about the band Dengue Fever. He is currently in post-production on DON'T THINK I'VE FORGOTTEN: CAMBODIA'S LOST ROCK

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AND ROLL, a feature length documentary about the history of rock music in Cambodia.

## **GREGORY WRIGHT** Editor

Gregory Wright is a Brooklyn based, feature and short form documentary film editor. He's worked on projects that range from marathon trail-runners attempting to circumnavigate Mt. Rainer in a single sprint in THE WONDERLAND PROJECT, to a vivid portrait of the characters behind Compton's notorious low-rider car clubs in SUNDAY DRIVER. He's collaborated on several video art installations in New York and edited and co-produced pilots and TV series for a handful of networks including Bravo, Discovery Networks, MTV and PBS. He is currently cutting DON'T THINK I'VE FORGOTTEN: CAMBODIA'S LOST ROCK AND ROLL. Perennially a devotee to freeform, alternative radio, Greg has held DJ positions at stations WESU and WCNI.

## **JEFFREY LEWIS** Original Score / Illustrations

Born and raised Lower East Sider Jeffrey Lewis leads a double-life, as both a comic book writer/artist and a musician (or is that a triple-life?). His band Jeffrey Lewis & The Junkyard also has a schizophrenic existence, ranging between contemplative folk narratives and distortion-fueled garage rock. Live shows incorporate "low budget videos," Jeff's large illustrations displayed to accompany certain songs, such as Jeff's educational multi-part "History of Communism" or flights of fancy like "The Creeping Brain". In 2001, Jeffrey Lewis signed to Rough Trade Records (The Smiths, The Strokes, Belle & Sebastian, etc) and has since released five albums, in addition to touring the world and performing with Stephen Malkmus & the Jicks, Devendra Banhart, Black Dice, Thurston Moore, The Fall, The Vaselines, Beth Orton, Frank Black, The Fiery Furnaces, Daniel Johnston, Scout Niblett, The Mountain Goats, The Moldy Peaches, Cornershop, The Cribs, Dr. Dog, Kimya Dawson, Adam Green, Akron/Family, Roky Erickson, Au Revoir Simone, Peter Stampfel, and other luminaries.

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## REVIEWS:

*“Bob Fass, one of the more famous/notorious personalities New York media and an icon of free-speech radio...his legacy, and his archives, are as epic as the medium gets...extraordinary archival material and some sparkling footage of New York.”*

- John Anderson, *Variety*

*“RADIO UNNAMEABLE superbly recreates a time when the radio mattered.”*

- Robert Silva, *Indiewire*

*“Top notch. Drawing from Fass’s extensive personal archive of audio recordings, RADIO UNNAMEABLE celebrates one of radio’s unsung heroes and his remarkable life in and out of the spotlight.”*

- Alexis Hauk, *Radio World*

*“Fass has come to define an era of radio that had a profound influence on our culture. Paul Lovelace and Jessica Wolfson tell Fass’s story by utilizing a treasure trove of archival material, interviews and audio.”*

- Tom Hall, *Filmmaker Magazine*

*“Smartly utilizing excerpts from Fass’ unfathomably large archive of radio broadcasts, the filmmakers give a palpable sense of the anarchic freedom of his time and of his influence...Fascinating and well-worth the audience’s attention.”*

- Basil Tsiokos, *What (not)To Doc*

*“Examines the legacy of a New York counter-cultural legend. A love letter to the radio show hosted by Bob Fass... the man who turned free-form radio into an art form.”*

- Jon Kalish, *Current Magazine*

*“The first “electronic community,” ...The call-in moments, ranging from the dramatic to the humorous to the serene, are the film’s best at conveying the intimate connection between Fass and his listeners...The film’s visual rhythm is hardly soporific, re-creating the atmosphere of Fass’ studio through a lively mix of period film footage, stills and show logs, accompanied by new interviews and vintage audio of Fass’ shows salvaged from reel-to-reel tapes.”*

- *Indy Week*

*“Doc rescues a late-night NYC DJ from obscurity...”*

- John DeFore, *Hollywood Reporter*

**LISTEN TO BOB FASS ON RADIO UNNAMABLE THURSDAY NIGHTS from  
MIDNIGHT to 3:00AM on 99.5FM OR STREAM IT on [wbai.org](http://wbai.org)**