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### The Heretics: Feminism Then and Now

The richness of these women, their lives, and their stories make multiple viewings a must.

It was 1960. We were living in Fort Lauderdale. They'd recently made "Where the Boys Are". I was 12. I knew a few emotions, but only one deeply: Fear. Of my father. I was raised in the culturally clichéd nuclear family featuring an abusive father. I never knew when he would verbally attack me or my mother.

I don't know how the magazine came to be in our house, nor do I remember its name. I was thumbing through it though – this monthly aimed at mid-teen girls. I don't remember what about this article made me read it. It was about a date. The boy raped the girl. I'm not sure if the word, 'rape,' was in this article. But that's what it was about. Date rape. Whether or not the word was used, this was the first time I'd heard of the phenomenon of rape. I never finished the article. The moment I learned of this horrific relation between male and female I began burning up inside with anger that such a thing existed. I didn't know what to do with my anger. I didn't say anything to anybody. I just fumed. I'd added a second deeply felt emotion to my repertoire. Aside from my nuclear family, this was my initiation into the worlds of gender relations and politics. In addition to the massive global oppression of women by men, this personal experience is a primary reason I consider "The Heretics" to be a critically important film.

Written and directed by Joan Braderman, "The Heretics" documents the The Heresies Collective, a feminist group in lower Manhattan, in the early 70s, and the Collective's publishing of 28 issues of "HERESIES: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics" between 1977 and 1992. Braderman, an aspiring filmmaker new to New York, joined the Collective in 1975. Thirty years later she revisited with 28 members in locals domestic and international to explore their pasts and presents. Through contemporary interviews, archival images and footage, animation and narration, Braderman uses the Collective as a springboard to approach the broader feminist movement.

Films are mosaics – images put together to form a larger image. Given "The Heretics" 91 minute running time, its giant story, and 28 interviewees, the individual pieces which make up this film are, of necessity, small. "The Heretics" could easily be a 12 hour or more HBO or Showtime presentation. But Braderman and editor Scott Hancock do a brilliant job of painting a large, vivid image of feminism past and present in these short 91 minutes. The richness of these women, their lives, and their stories make multiple viewings a must. There is so much in each individual piece.

In lieu of a mini-series, the interested viewer may download all 28 issues of "HERESIES" from the film's [Heresies](#).

But wait, there's more. Keep your remote control handy. Near the film's conclusion there are quick flashes of website URLs of contemporary feminist organizations. You'll want to pause your DVD player and write down those websites. The need to protect and support the female gender has never been greater. *D. Schwartz Mar 4, 2010*

