

FILMOPTION INTERNATIONAL PRESENTS A GREEN LION PRODUCTION

SAVING MINDS



PRESS KIT

SYNOPSIS

Myriam Anouk gazes nervously across a busy Montreal intersection. The streets are eerily familiar. In the aftermath of her mother's death twenty years earlier, she had turned to walking four to eight hours a day as a means of coping. When these extreme walks failed to quiet the voices in her head, and her condition worsened, a friend called an ambulance. And so began her long and difficult relationship with the mental health system.



Alo, an up-and-coming comic who lives with several conditions, including bipolar disorder, finds a freedom of sorts on the stage telling jokes and anecdotes that over time reveal a deeply troubled self. Although Alo's and Myriam Anouk's backgrounds are worlds apart in many ways, both share an unwavering determination to improve their health and long-term outcomes.

SAVING MINDS captures the intimate stories of Alo and Myriam Anouk as they navigate their way to recovery, and provides insights from experts in the field, presenting a clear picture of mental health care today. The film also features Joanne Greenberg, the internationally acclaimed author of *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (1964). Now in her eighties, she takes us back to a much earlier time when her own prognosis was very grim. Greenberg's candid testimony offers hope to others facing similarly difficult challenges.

Shot in Montreal, Boston, Colorado, Chicago, Vermont, and England, *SAVING MINDS* gives viewers a ringside seat as a new approach to mental health care emerges; one that moves beyond the biological-medical model entrenched in the 1980s towards a more therapeutic and empathetic approach that puts the patient first and uses medication cautiously. The film aims to spark a public debate on why a new vision of care is long overdue.



DIRECTOR'S INTENTION

Weighing into the discussion about the treatment of mental illness at a time when the chemical imbalance theory and other accepted truths were being challenged, was both inspiring and unnerving. In a field where psychiatry and psychology remain at loggerheads and pharmaceutical companies continue to put profits ahead of people, where does that leave patients who are experiencing terrifying breakdowns? What steps can they and their families take to get through a crisis without becoming lifelong mental patients?

One thing is certain: society is failing people. This is due to a shocking lack of knowledge among the public, which is reinforced by the stigma of mental illness, resulting in too many people living lives of isolation. Much of my knowledge is first-hand. For 25 years, I have advocated for my son who suffered depression as a teenager and, through a series of unfortunate events, continued to decline despite herculean efforts on our part. My family's experience helped lay the groundwork for *SAVING MINDS*.

My intention was to mix the character-driven documentary genre with visual essay. To follow real people against the backdrop of a secondary narrative from acclaimed experts in the field such as Dr. Joanna Moncrieff, Dr. Martin Harrow, and award-winning medical journalist, Robert Whitaker, author of the pivotal book, *Anatomy of an Epidemic*. I deliberately left space for people to see themselves through the film's narrative. Feedback at this early stage confirms the approach is working. Viewers are responding by telling their own stories and expressing strong opinions. *SAVING MINDS* is meant to open the floodgates and to invite everyone interested in mental health care to contribute to the discussion. I owe my deepest gratitude to the participants of this documentary and thank them for their courage and trust.

- Catherine Mullins



PROFILES OF MAIN CHARACTERS

ALO AZIMOV

Alo Azimov is an emerging comedian, and a fixture on the Montreal comedy scene for the past couple of years, as well as an English Literature major at Concordia University. As a non-binary person, Alo's pronouns are they and them. They were raised in Ville Saint-Laurent – a borough of Montreal – in a Jewish family of European and Middle Eastern descent. Their family members were very private people who believed in keeping problems to themselves. Alo upholds these values for the most part, except when performing on stage and during profound interview moments. In *SAVING MINDS*, Alo brings just the right balance of zaniness, intellect, and disarming truths, allowing us a window into what it is like to live with mental illness.



MYRIAM ANOUK AUGEREAU

By her late forties, Myriam Anouk had spent half her life grappling with the psychological difficulties that had put obstacles in her way of becoming the person she was meant to be. Myriam Anouk grew up in the diverse cultural milieu of Montréal's Le Plateau-Mont-Royal. She earned a B.A. in cinema and landed a job as a script supervisor. Her career aspirations were cut short a few years later, when, following the death of her mother and only parent, Myriam Anouk experienced full-blown psychosis. Though hospitalized and treated over many years, psychiatrists neglected to delve into the traumatic experiences that could have been contributing factors. In *SAVING MINDS*, we witness Myriam Anouk taking charge of her mental health journey.



CREW

DIRECTOR Catherine Mullins	PRODUCER Catherine Mullins	DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Michael Wees	EDITOR Vidal Béïque
MUSIC COMPOSER Eric LeMoyne	FILM ANIMATORS Fred Casia Elise Simard	SOUND EDITOR AND MIXER Gaël Poisson Lemay Jean-Pierre Bissonnette	NARRATOR Jennifer Seguin

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES**CATHERINE MULLINS****DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER**

An award-winning director-producer, Catherine Mullins heads Montreal-based Green Lion Productions, which she founded in 1989 for the purpose of producing social-issue documentaries. Distinguished productions include *The Human Race – a Species at the Crossroads* (series); *Untangling the Mind – the Legacy of Dr. Heinz Lehmann*; and *A Bridge to Mars*, about humankind's quest for Mars. Mullins made her directorial debut in 2005 with *Their Brothers' Keepers – Orphaned by AIDS*; followed by the equally powerful feature, *Being Innu*, about the lives and hopes of Innu youth of Labrador; and *They Shine*, a follow-up to *Their Brothers' Keepers*. Catherine began researching *SAVING MINDS* in 2015. It is scheduled for release in 2021.

**MICHAEL WEES****DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

Michael Wees is an award-winning Montreal-based cinematographer, working in film, television, and media arts for over twenty-five years. His diverse portfolio showcases a wide range of interests: feature documentaries, theatrical shorts, experimental and dance films. Michael shares his passion for filmmaking by mentoring the next generation of creative minds, as a part-time faculty member of Concordia's Film Production Program, and in Media Arts at John Abbott College. Forever inquisitive, Michael is most at home on location exploring and experiencing our world through light and lens.



BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES (continuation)

VIDAL BÉÏQUE

EDITOR

Vidal Béïque is a Canadian editor whose career stretches back to 1979. His work on documentaries, TV specials and drama series has earned him over twenty awards and nominations including a Gemini, three "Prix Gémeaux" plus an Emmy nomination. Vidal has a thirst for good stories that engage the viewer.



ERIC LEMOYNE

MUSIC COMPOSER

A keyboardist who studied under jazz legend, Art Roberts, Eric LeMoyne performed with many musicians of the 1970s and '80s when the Montreal music scene was in full swing. He then landed a job with the famed Morin Heights Recording Studio in Quebec's Laurentians, where he collaborated on numerous film scores before opening his own studio. For the past thirty years, Eric LeMoyne has composed the music for documentaries by some of the most thoughtful filmmakers in Canada and abroad. His work has been rewarded many times, including the Gemini Awards.



TECHNICAL INFORMATION

SHOOTING FORMAT
HD

PROJECTION FORMAT
DCP, Blu-ray and DVD

LENGTH
89 minutes

GENRE
Documentary

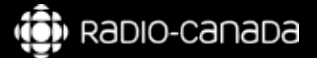
AVAILABLE LANGUAGES
English and French

FORMAT
Scope 2.35

SOUND
5.1

COUNTRY OF PRODUCTION
Canada

YEAR
2020



CONTACT

PRODUCTION COMPANY

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