



By Christopher Kulik
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Women have been struggling for centuries to claim independence. From poet Veronica Franco to pioneer Mary Wollstonecraft, suffragette Susan B. Anthony to activist Betty Friedan, many have changed things for the better, especially since the Women's Movement of the 1970s. Still, there are still battles waiting to be won, such as the smashing of the glass ceiling and restricting the government from controlling women's bodies. Much of the war rages on in other countries, many of which still lack gender rights and have laws which relegate women as nothing more than second-class citizens.

Filmmaker Jennifer Fox enjoys her independence in America. At 42 years old, her freedom is threatened by pregnancy, something that had always been expected of women. Fox had gone the abortion route before, but now she feels compelled to have this child, particularly since menopause was coming quickly. This reality has inspired her to examine women's roles in the 21st century. What does it mean to be an "independent woman?" What is the status of women on a global scale? Armed with a camera, Fox travels all over the world to find out...little realizing it would take over five years to complete the project.

Technically a six-part miniseries, *Flying* is the completely engrossing account of Fox on a mission. We get to know her through her history, family and friends, utilizing many interviews and archival footage. We understand her desire to stay true to herself and her values. We then follow her as she travels to seventeen countries, including Russia, South Africa, Germany, England, and India. There, she interviews women of varying degrees of age, career, and social status. Not only does Fox learn much about herself, she also discovers the continued limitations of her gender, with such practices as castration still being carried on.

Sure, this sounds like a visual dissertation for a PhD in Women's Studies. However, Fox remains firmly in the present, taking a *Sex in the City*-type attitude and approach to her objectives. In fact, one of her friends mentions nonchalantly she's making *Sex And The City II*, but we know it's much more than that; this is not a scripted television show, but a documentary. Yes, there is a feminist slant to the whole thing, though Fox is extremely careful not to come off as a radical or a trailblazer. Like most modern women, she has refused to let anyone control her or tell her what to do, which some may misconstrue as rebellion.

What may be most fascinating is perusing the different types of women's roles. There's the friend who got married right out of high school and had sacrificed career for children (aka the "traditional" route). There's the charming cougar who's sadly dying of cancer. There's the worldly woman who has a successful career while also raising children. There are the women who don't even think of masturbating because it's improper. Oh, and yes, there are indeed the occasional male views which state women should remain in a domestic prison.

Mixed with all of these revealing interviews are details of Fox's non-monogamous relationships. She's in love with her married lover Kai, but she also sees a delightful Danish chap named Patrick, who accepts her other relationship at face value. When the pregnancy comes along (and no I will not mention who the father is), it makes Fox seriously question the possibilities and

parameters of her love life. Naturally, she gets much advice from her mother, friends, and numerous acquaintances from overseas.

There will be those who don't have the patience for Flying. Some may look at this as some overdone vanity project. However, Fox raises a lot of questions, and turns upside down a lot of views which have existed for years. Despite the nearly six-hour running time, the material is always compelling and its heroine is always empathetic. The result is a staggering achievement, blowing off the lid of gender roles and then going to impressive lengths to keep it off. Themes aside, there is some gripping drama to be found here, as Fox's predicament gets more unpredictable as it goes along...while also not dwindling down to a typical love triangle. In short, Flying is highly recommended by the court.

For the past two years, Flying played around the film festival circuit. Now, the complete, uncut miniseries comes to DVD, courtesy of Alive Mind, in a fine 1.85 anamorphic transfer. Largely shot on digital video, the print is pretty much free of debris and dirt. Audio is presented in DD 2.0 Stereo, and subtitles are provided in English, French, and Danish. The lack of special features is a minor debit, with a trailer and an extreme close-up interview by SchoozeQueen magazine as the only offerings.

Lively, sexy, and genuinely intimate, Flying is independent filmmaking at its finest. Fox and the film are clear of all charges. Alive Mind is found not guilty, despite their less-than-stellar DVD presentation. Court is adjourned!