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THE LADY IN QUESTION IS CHARLES BUSCH
a new documentary by John Catania and Charles Ignacio makes its
US Theatrical Debut March 24, 2006

January 6, 2006 (New York) – Producers/Directors John Catania and Charles Ignacio’s captivating documentary, **THE LADY IN QUESTION IS CHARLES BUSCH**, makes its US theatrical debut March 24, 2006, at New York City’s Quad Cinemas (34 W. 13th Street). The film goes on to open in Los Angeles at Laemmle’s Sunset 5 (8000 Sunset Blvd.), on April 7, and San Francisco at the Castro Theatre (429 Castro Street) on April 14, with other theatrical engagements to follow.

In Catania and Ignacio’s first feature documentary we look deep inside the world of one of the most prolific, talented, and outrageous New York theater artists of the last two decades, beloved playwright, actor, novelist, drag artist, and *leading lady*, Charles Busch. Splashed on the map in 1984 at the dingy yet inspired Limbo Lounge as one of the burgeoning artists of New York’s East Village arts scene, Busch’s scandalously sex-charged, cross-dressing classic, **Vampire Lesbians of Sodom** became a theater phenomenon. It transferred from the Limbo Lounge to the Provincetown Playhouse and ran an unprecedented five years, securing its place as one of the longest-running shows in Off-Broadway history. **Vampire Lesbians of Sodom** also marked the birth of one of New York’s most memorable theatrical companies, Theater-in-Limbo, as Busch’s legendary Limbo plays brought together an eclectic troupe of actors whose talents are on display in rare archival video footage.

The documentary begins in 2000 at the opening night of Busch’s hit Broadway comedy, **The Tale of The Allergist’s Wife**. “I never knew the big bucks that could be made by exploiting your family,” explains Busch. Lifted from years of eavesdropping on his own family drama, **The Tale of The Allergist’s Wife** offers a window into Busch’s traumatic, yet wildly creative childhood. Having lost his mother at age seven, he reacts to this tragic event, as well the absence of his father, by immersing himself in a world of classic movies. Ignoring the demands of school, Busch watches movies day and night, preferring the black and white world of 1930’s and 40’s Hollywood to his own painful reality.

But expert knowledge of Hollywood was not enough to keep Busch from nearly flunking out of school. Swooping to the rescue was a real-life Auntie Mame figure in the form of his mother’s oldest sister, Lillian Blum. Aunt Lillian saves the young Charles from the stifling suburbs and brings him to Manhattan where his creative appetites are finally sated. Busch discovers his talents and he makes it through high school and then Northwestern University, but upon graduating is hit with a new harsh reality: his dream of being up on the stage is thwarted at every turn by theater directors who find him “too odd, too gay.” Busch says of this time, “If nobody else was going to put me in a play I decided I would have to get it done myself. So I became a writer so I would have the opportunity to act.” So begins Busch’s journey to become one of the most recognizable figures in New York theatre today.

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After graduating from Northwestern Busch spends six years touring the country in one-man shows, performing everywhere from bars to college activity centers. Childhood friend Andy Halliday explains, "He'd go anywhere. He would open in a garage. He had to perform, it was like a drug." Then one fateful summer night in 1984, while attending a bizarre, experimental performance at New York's gritty Limbo Lounge, Busch is inspired to write the wildly popular **Vampire Lesbians Of Sodom**.

The overwhelming response in the Village to the racy skit compels Busch to write more plays for his newly formed troupe of off-beat actors, and within a few years the new Theatre-in-Limbo company has a string of plays to their name. **Psycho Beach Party**, **Times Square Angel**, **The Lady In Question**, and **Red Scare On Sunset**, all play Off-Broadway and establish Busch as one of the few theater artists who maintains his own company, writing plays and starring as leading lady in every work. Busch's highly nuanced artistry soon becomes the gold standard for drag performance in New York.

Eventually after seven non-stop years (1984 to 1991), the legendary Theatre-in-Limbo is torn apart by fatigue and AIDS, as several core members are lost to the epidemic. Then, after a long decade of reflection and experimentation, and just as the millennium turns, Busch experiences a new wave of success when he writes his hit Broadway comedy, **The Tale Of The Allergist's Wife**. The future seems only rosy for Charles Busch, when in the wake of his triumph his life is almost cut short. Just hours before emergency surgery a doctor explains to him, "Mr. Busch what you have kills 50% of the people in the first half-hour, and the rest by the weekend..."

Against enormous odds Charles Busch survives and rallies: in quick succession he writes the new Broadway book to a Rosie O'Donnell/Boy George musical, **Taboo**; returns triumphantly to the Off-Broadway stage in a new play, **Shanghai Moon**; and stars in **Die, Mommie, Die!**, his first feature film as *leading-lady*. As a packed theater of adoring fans welcomes Busch to the Castro Theatre stage in San Francisco for the **Die, Mommie, Die!** premiere, Busch finally reveals the true inspiration and motivation behind his unparalleled drag artistry...

Producers/Directors John Catania and Charles Ignacio began shooting **THE LADY IN QUESTION IS CHARLES BUSCH** in November of 2000 at the opening night of **The Tale Of The Allergist's Wife**. They followed Busch for much of the past four-and-a-half years, gaining extraordinary access to Busch's life. They earned Busch's trust to tell his unique story through their nearly 10 years of on-and-off collaboration with him through the PBS series **In The Life**, where Busch appeared numerous times and where Catania and Ignacio were long-time producers. The documentary cleverly excerpts dramatic movie trailers of the Hollywood classics that inspired Busch as a child, uses archival music from the Golden Age of Hollywood, and weaves in clips from an original 1920's-style silent short directed by and starring Busch, created especially for the documentary. Also included are rare clips from Busch's Theatre-in-Limbo performances.

THE LADY IN QUESTION IS CHARLES BUSCH made its World Premiere at the 4th Annual Tribeca Film Festival in the Documentary Competition, and also screened at numerous lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered film festivals including New York's NewFest, the Provincetown International Film Festival, OutFest in Los Angeles, Frameline in San Francisco, and Reel Affirmations in Washington D.C. The film was honored with the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the 2005 Fire Island Film and Video Festival.

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