

Kartemquin Films and Argot Pictures present

*The 50th Anniversary theatrical release of a
newly restored 16mm print & 2K DCP of*

Inquiring Nuns

(1968, 66 mins)

Directed by Gordon Quinn & Jerry Temaner

Music by Philip Glass

*A beloved but rarely seen gem of pure cinéma vérité
in which Sister Marie Arné and Sister Mary Campion
tour Chicago during the Summer of Love, asking:*

“Are you happy?”



A Kartemquin Film. www.kartemquin.com

Bookings: Jim Browne. Jim@argotpictures.com. 646-732-3725.

Publicity: Tim Horsburgh & Julia Martin. info@kartemquin.com. 773-472-4366.

Opening theatrical run engagements:
New York / November 23 - Dec 2 / Museum of the Moving Image
Chicago / November 30 - Dec 6 / Gene Siskel Film Center
Los Angeles / December 7 / Billy Wilder Theater
(co-director Gordon Quinn attending opening weekend in each city)



"Inquiring Nuns is the closest thing to a 'pure' documentary that I have ever seen."
— William Routt, *Film Quarterly*, 1968

"A lovely, weirdly potent time capsule... a single, polyphonic ode to late '67 Chicago and what was on the mind of its collective citizenry."
— Michael Phillips, *Chicago Tribune*, 2016

"Quinn and Temaner are filmmakers and "inquiring reporters" with great insight, and a lot to tell us about ourselves."
— Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 1968

"A provocative meditation on the complexities of happiness as well as a moving ode to the vitality of human connection. It serves as a refreshing rebuke to our modern political climate favoring bullying and division over understanding and unity."
— Matt Fagerholm, *RogerEbert.com*, 2016

"Handled with such surpassing understanding that it becomes a quite profound and moving experience for the viewer... a marvelous revelation of our time and ourselves."
— Richard Christiansen, *Chicago Daily News*, 1968

Synopsis

One of the earliest examples of Kartemquin co-founders Gordon Quinn and Gerald Temaner's exploration into the world of cinéma vérité, *Inquiring Nuns* captures the attitudes, fears, and dreams of everyday Chicagoans, giving audiences and researchers insight into the political and social climate of 1960's Chicago. The film's music is composed by Philip Glass in his first credited film score.

Two young Catholic nuns crisscross Chicago, from a supermarket to the Art Institute to church on Sunday, in order to ask random strangers the question, "Are you happy?"

The answers include:

"Groovy!"

"I could be happier."

"Mostly, except about Vietnam."

"Well, certainly, Notre Dame won yesterday!"

"Yeah, because I went to communion this morning."

They meet a lonely girl, a happy mother, young lovers, hippie musicians, a sociologist, and even the actor Lincoln Perry, better known as Stepin Fetchit. The interviewees are sometimes taken aback, nervous, or clamoring to get into view of the camera. The humor and pathos of these encounters elevates the film into a serious and moving inquiry of contemporary society and the manner which people examine their own lives.



History and restoration

Inquiring Nuns is the second film by Kartemquin Films, the legendary Chicago production collective begun in 1966 that has now produced over 65 documentaries such as *Hoop Dreams* and *The Trials of Muhammad Ali*, and 2018 hits *Minding the Gap* and *America to Me*.

Operating from a manifesto of “Cinematic Social Inquiry” and inspired by Jean Rouch’s *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961), the film was shot in 1967 and premiered at the 1968 Chicago International Film Festival, where it was reviewed by a young Roger Ebert. **Funded by InterMedia, a Catholic arts-supporting organization that was interested in using cinéma vérité to foster democratic virtues**, the project was not intended for a commercial market. It was split into two 34 minute parts, which made it easier for the film to be taken to church basements and to other educational, discussion-based screenings.

The newly restored 16mm print was supported through a grant by the National Film Preservation Fund, combines the halves into a single film, which is the directors’ longstanding preference and matches its original festival showing. The preservation by ColorLab showcases the beauty of Quinn’s cinematography, shot on Kartemquin’s “Camera #1”, a custom-modified crystal sync Auricon with a used manual zoom lens Quinn purchased from Albert Maysles, and to which he added a World War II gunner handle bought from a pawn shop as an extra grip for steadiness. [Watch a video about Camera #1.](#)



Inquiring Nuns provides an opportunity to learn about the attitudes of everyday American citizens during a time of political and social tensions. Many of the answers given by interviewees involve the Vietnam War, economics, or religion. These are not political pundits or

opinions columnists, but rather mothers with their children, students on their way to recitals, and couples on dates. Though the respondents are nearly all Chicago residents, their answers resonate with opinions of Americans all over the country during this time period, many of whom were growing frustrated with America's involvement overseas.

Additionally, this 1968 film is a distinctly American response to the pioneering French documentary *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961)—which co-directors Quinn and Temaner saw as students at the University of Chicago—making it relevant to world cinematic history.



Credits

Cast/Interviewers

Sister Marie Arné
Sister Mary Campion

Directors

Gordon Quinn
Gerald Temaner

Camera

Gordon Quinn

Sound

Gerald Temaner

Editor

Gordon Quinn

Assistant Editors

Daniel Auerbach
Alfred R. Franklin

Consultant

Ronald Holloway

Music

Philip Glass

Executive Producer

Louis Marrone
Vaile Scott

Produced by

InterMedia
Kartemquin Films

About Gordon Quinn

Artistic Director and co-founder of Kartemquin Films, Gordon Quinn has been making documentaries for over 50 years. With his first film *Home for Life* (1966) - which Roger Ebert called “extraordinarily moving” - Gordon established the direction he would take for the next five decades, making cinéma vérité films that investigate and critique society via the lives of real people. Whether as a director or as an executive producer, Gordon has helped shape over 60 Kartemquin films, and been integral to the creation of countless more from around the world. His creative legacy includes *Hoop Dreams* (1994), the PBS series *The New Americans* (2003), and the Emmy Award-winners *The Interrupters* (2011), *The Trials of Muhammad Ali* (2013), *Life Itself* (2014), and *The Homestretch* (2014). He was also a key leader in creating the Documentary Filmmakers Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use. He has been honored by the International Documentary Association (IDA) with their 2015 Career Achievement Award; and received career tributes from Hot Springs Documentary Festival, Houston Cinema Arts Festival, CIMMfest, St. Louis International Film Festival, and more. Recent films executive produced by Gordon include *Minding the Gap* (2018 Sundance Special Jury Award winner for Breakthrough Filmmaking), *Edith+Eddie* (2018 Academy Award® nominee for Best Documentary Short), and *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail* (2018 Academy Award® nominee for Best Documentary Feature). His latest credit as a director is *'63 Boycott* (2017, an official selection of MoMA's Documentary Fortnight, DOC NYC's Shorts Short List, and winner of Best Short Documentary at Nashville Film Festival), which uses footage Quinn shot as 21 year-old on October 22, 1963, when more than 200,000 students walked out of Chicago Public Schools, to explore contemporary issues around equity, education, and youth activism.

About Gerald (“Jerry”) Temaner

Jerry Temaner co-founded Kartemquin (he is the “tem” in Kartemquin). He was involved in making such early Kartemquin films as *Home for Life* (1966), *Marco* (1970), *Thumbs Down* (1968), and *Inquiring Nuns* (1968). Jerry taught at and headed up the Media Center at University of Illinois, Chicago and he was on the faculty of Northwestern University's film department. He also taught film history at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. Prior to his work in film, he graduated from the University of Chicago (where he met Gordon Quinn) with a degree in philosophy and worked for Mortimer Adler. He is retired and lives in the south loop of Chicago.

About Kartemquin Films

Kartemquin Films is a collaborative community empowering filmmakers who create documentaries that foster a more engaged and just society. For 52 years, Kartemquin has embraced a vision of democracy through documentary, producing a repertoire of over 65 documentaries including the Academy Award-nominated *Hoop Dreams*, and the 2018 Academy Award-nominees *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail* and *Edith+Eddie*, and 2018's best reviewed documentary *Minding the Gap*, and 2018's best reviewed original TV series, *America to Me*. The organization's films have also garnered other major prizes, including six Emmys, two Peabody Awards, and multiple Independent Spirit, IDA, PGA, DGA and festival awards, and duPont-Columbia and Robert F. Kennedy journalism awards.

Kartemquin is also recognized as a leading advocate for independent public media, and has supported the careers of hundreds of artists through its filmmaker development programs that expand the industry and support sustainability within the field, such as KTQ Labs, Diverse Voices in Docs, and the acclaimed Kartemquin Internship. www.kartemquin.com