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'Rebel Hearts', The Sundance Documentary About 1960s Activist L.A. Nuns, Lands At Discovery+

By Patrick Hipes

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Sundance Institute

EXCLUSIVE: [Discovery+](#) continues to ramp up it documentary slate. The fast-growing streamer has acquired rights to [Rebel Hearts](#), the [Pedro Kos](#)-directed documentary that premiered at this year's [Sundance Film Festival](#). It will now get a theatrical release as well as a global bow on the streamer later this year.

Rebel Hearts centers on a trailblazing group of nuns in 1960s Los Angeles who stood up to the patriarchy of the Catholic Church. The sisters that ran the progressive Immaculate Heart College in L.A. fought for equality (they marched in Selma), their livelihoods and their own freedom against an all-powerful Cardinal who opposed their actions. Their acts of faith, defiance and activism turned the church upside down. The pic uses archival footage, animation and two decades of never-before-seen interviews gathered by the film's producer Shawnee Isaac-Smith to tell the tale at the center of the film, a co-production between Merman and Anchor Entertainment in association with Level Forward and Quiet.

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Kira Carstensen, Isaac-Smith and Judy Korin are producers. Ethan Goldman, Kos, Abigail E. Disney, Adrienne Becker, Christy Spitzer Thornton, Quiet and Meadow Fund are executive producers with Whitewater Films' Nancy Stephens & Rick Rosenthal and XTR's Tony Hsieh.

“We are beyond thrilled to be partnering with [Discovery+](#) to bring the forgotten story of the joyous rebellion of the Immaculate Heart Sisters to a global audience,” said Kos, an Emmy-winning editor making his second feature-length documentary after 2017's *Bending the Arc*. “Even though *Rebel Hearts* is mostly set in the 1960s we have always felt this David-versus-Goliath story will very much resonate today. We're excited for the world to meet these inspiring women and experience the awakening where they found their voices and became unlikely vanguards of change.”

The deal is the latest in the ramp-up of the [Discovery](#) streaming platform's original slate. After [Discovery+](#)'s launch January 4, it made a splashy acquisition in Evgeny Afineevsky's documentary *Francesco*, an exploration of the pope's ministry and leadership. That will bow March 28, the start of Holy Week, which leads up to Easter on April 4. Also on the [Discovery+](#) doc slate is *My Beautiful Stutter* and *Miracle Fishing: Kidnapped Abroad*.

“*Rebel Hearts* truly stood out for us at this year's jam-packed [Sundance Film Festival](#),” said Igal Svet, VP Documentaries at [Discovery+](#). “From the first frame to the last, Pedro Kos' stylish approach grips the audiences with masterful storytelling highlighting the forward-thinking voices from the Immaculate Heart Sisters. These women are true game changers, challenging the status quo around patriarchy, gender politics and social justice while always working towards bettering themselves and those around them. It is the perfect fit for [Discovery+](#) where we aspire to spotlight inspiring stories that promote diversity, inclusion and women's empowerment.”

Submarine's Josh Braun and Matt Burke negotiated the deal on behalf of the filmmakers.

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