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LOOKING FOR MEANING IN A BOLT OF LIGHTNING: "ACT OF GOD" BOWS ON ZEITGEIST DVD

New York (November 17, 2009) — Is being hit by lightning a random natural occurrence or a predestined event? Following her penetrating meditation on the photography of Edward Burtynsky in the acclaimed ***Manufactured Landscapes***, Jennifer Baichwal tackles the metaphysical effects of being struck by lightning with her captivating new documentary ***ACT OF GOD***. Selected for the Opening Night Gala of the 2009 Hot Docs Film Festival and currently enjoying a national theatrical rollout, ***ACT OF GOD* will be released on DVD on January 26, 2010.**

At the fore of Baichwal's investigation of lightning bolts is the paradox of being singled out by an act of randomness. To explore these profound questions of chance, fate and the human compulsion to attribute meaning to tragedy, Baichwal sought out riveting personal stories around the world—from a French storm chaser and **spiritualist Dannion Brinkley** (pronounced dead for 28 minutes), to **writer Paul Auster** and **improvisational musician Fred Frith**. The philosophical anchor of the film, Auster witnessed his friend get struck dead as a teenager, and has been wrestling with its import on destiny ever since. In a neurological experiment, Frith improvises with his guitar to demonstrate the ubiquity of electricity in our bodies and the universe. Visually dazzling and aurally seductive, ***ACT OF GOD*** singularly captures the harsh beauty of the skies and the lives of those who have been forever touched by their fury.

Also included on Zeitgeist's DVD is the **rare Peter Greenaway short "Lightning: Act of God,"** which was made for British television in 1980. With his distinctive breed of eccentric fascinations, list-making, and rigorous framing, Greenaway's approach is markedly different from Baichwal's, and yet they are both plagued by the same questions of randomness and meaning as they interview subjects who have been hit by lightning. Zeitgeist is thrilled to make this addition to our rich library of Greenaway titles, including his shorts of the same era available on the two-disc box set *Greenaway: The Early Films*.

Zeitgeist's DVD release of ***ACT OF GOD*** boasts a vivid anamorphic transfer created from Hi-Def elements and enhanced for widescreen televisions. In addition to Peter Greenaway's 27-minute "Lightning: Act of God," the supplemental materials include a **video interview with Jennifer Baichwal**; **four readings by Paul Auster** of excerpts from his books, including *City of Glass* and *The Invention of Solitude*; a **new interview with Peter Greenaway and performance footage** of *The Tulse Luper Suitcases*; a **video interview with Fred Frith and extended concert footage**; theatrical trailers, English closed captioning for the deaf and hearing impaired, and a **director's note** by Baichwal.

ACT OF GOD Film/DVD info: 2009 • 75 minutes • Canada • Color • In English, Spanish, Yoruba and French with English subtitles • 1.85:1 theatrical aspect ratio • Stereo • Not Rated

Note: Zeitgeist's DVD release of Act of God is available in the U.S. only.

Celebrating its 20th Anniversary as one of America's preeminent independent distributors, New York-based Zeitgeist Films has built an impressively diverse catalogue of foreign, documentary and arthouse titles by such renowned directors as Todd Haynes, Jan Svankmajer, Peter Greenaway, Abbas Kiarostami, Guy Maddin, Kirby Dick, Atom Egoyan, Agnès Varda, François Ozon, Derek Jarman, Yvonne Rainer, Olivier Assayas, Philippe Garrel, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Carlos Saura and the Quay Brothers. Recent releases include Oscar winner ***Nowhere in Africa***; blockbuster doc ***The Corporation***; dance doc hit ***Ballets Russes***; Oscar nominee ***Sophie Scholl—The Final Days***; Oscar nominee ***My Country, My Country***; Sundance winner ***Into Great Silence***; and 2008 Oscar nominee ***Trouble the Water***. Launched in 2001, Zeitgeist Video has released dozens of highly praised DVDs, including the remastered Two-Disc Edition of Quay Brothers shorts, entitled ***PHANTOM MUSEUMS***; a Four-Disc Box Set of Derek Jarman masterworks entitled ***GLITTERBOX***, with Oscar winner Tilda Swinton; an Essential Edition of Olivier Assayas' cult fave ***Irma Vep*** starring Maggie Cheung; and a brand-new "Repressed & Remastered" Edition of Guy Maddin's 1992 mountain film classic ***Careful***.



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CRITICAL ACCLAIM FOR *ACT OF GOD*

"A thrillingly strange journey through the wide and beautiful world of lightning—from its **spectacular visual majesty** to its honored place in myth to its puzzling physical reality."
—*New York Magazine*

"★★★★! Baichwal is going after Big Themes via abstractions and impressions, tackling **notions of destiny, divinity and how these random occurrences can cause either destruction or creation**.... The force of such ambient explorations hits you, surprisingly like a bolt out of the blue." —David Fear, *Time Out New York*

"An undeniably **provocative** head-trip, laced with **the most spectacular lightning-storm footage** I've ever seen." —Andrew O'Hehir, *Salon*

"Solid and offbeat.... The film has no narrator, perhaps in recognition of lightning's intrinsic eloquence.... **All talking heads should be so articulate.**" —Mark Feeney, *Boston Globe*

"Some of the most impressive lightning footage captured on film.... **Jaw dropping!**"
—Kurt Halfyard, *Twitch*

"Scary and **surprisingly philosophical**.... 'It changed my way of looking at the world,' says one of the survivors. That's not a bad description of the movie itself."
—John Hartl, *Seattle Times*

"Has a **shivery, eerie feel** for lightning—its jagged otherworldliness and its **soul-splitting** might." —Kyle Smith, *New York Post*

"Fascinating.... **Wondrous** segments featuring Auster and O'Reilly.... [Possesses] a palpable sense of **visual and aural majesty.**" —Nathan Southern, *AllMovie Guide*

"★★★★! Thematically adventurous and **visually ravishing.**" —*Eye Weekly*, Toronto

"Lightning makes for **spectacular** images and a **seductive** metaphor in this new doc.... **Eloquent** testimony to our ever-present vulnerability." —*The Globe and Mail*, Toronto

"★★★★! A **highly entertaining** dash through the landscape of human meaning."
—*Vancouver Sun*

"Deeply ponders the human need to impose meaning on something that may have no meaning whatsoever." —*Toronto Star*