



# Sound it out

**Director:** Jeanie Finlay  
**Country:** UK  
**Date:** 2011

An interview with Jeanie Finlay from the *SilverDocs* documentary festival  
(<http://silverdocs.tumblr.com/post/6532881634/q-a-with-sound-it-out-filmmaker-jeanie-finlay>)

**Silverdocs:** Introduce yourself.

**Jeanie Finlay:** As an artist and filmmaker living in Nottingham, England, I'm interested in making intimate, moving and funny films about outsiders, fans, pretenders, and people who change how they look in order to feel differently about themselves. I'm obsessed with music and it runs through all my work like letters through Brighton rock. My previous films include feature documentary GOTH CRUISE for IFC (USA, 75 min) and — the most downloaded title ever on IFC — the critically acclaimed TEENLAND (BBC4 60 min) and recently NOTTINGHAM LACE for BBC World. I'm currently in co-production on two feature documentaries, THE GREAT HIP HOP HOAX with Met Film for BBC Scotland and BBC Storyville and ORION: THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING.

**Silverdocs:** What inspired this film? How did you find your subjects?

**Jeanie Finlay:** I grew up in the North East, 3 miles from the shop and went to school with Tom, who runs the shop. For years I've been going in and threatening him "I'm going to make a film about your shop one of these days." I'd just married and sold most our record collection to finance our wedding. Tom was mortified when I explained, "I don't need to keep the records, I want new memories." His extreme reaction confirmed for me that vinyl holds emotion for some people. It's more than just music. His shop, Sound It Out Records, seemed the perfect microcosm to make a film about men, music and the northeast. Teesside has changed a lot in the last few years with the decline of the steel industry, shipbuilding has gone, ICI shut down. The analog vinyl seemed like a perfect symbol of this gone and lamented industry. The area has a very strong regional identity and accent; it's really its own distinct place. I spent weeks in the shop filming and listening before I chose the people who you see in the film. I was interested in focusing on shy people with small but compelling stories.

**Silverdocs:** What were some of the biggest challenges/surprises?

**Jeanie Finlay:** Challenges: Raising the budget through crowd funding on Indiegogo. 270 people contributed to the budget with single donations varying from \$5 to \$2000; Clearing 29 pieces of music on a micro budget; Shooting observationally and shooting on my own in a tiny, cramped shop. Before SOUND IT OUT, I'd always worked with a crew, usually at least a cameraman and sound recordist. It was both scary and incredibly liberating to shoot on my own; Persuading the staff and customers at Sound It Out records to let me film for days on end with NO music playing in the shop; and cutting the whole film in just 6 weeks. Surprises: The amazing support I have received throughout the production, from the very talented people who worked on the film to the way that the community at Sound It Out Records welcomed me in. I also discovered that almost everyone who now works at a record label started off in a record shop. The way the film has been received internationally has been overwhelming and amazing. It seems to have really struck a chord. Most surprising, becoming the official film of Record Store Day 2011. It's all been a very positive experience.

**Silverdocs:** What was your very first film?

**Jeanie Finlay:** An interactive documentary artwork called HOME-MAKER, which showed portraits of seven older people in Derbyshire and Tokyo who lived alone and never left their homes.

**Silverdocs:** What is your proudest professional moment?

**Jeanie Finlay:** There's nothing like the feeling when the lights go down in a sold out cinema on the other side of the world and the audience really connects and engages with your film. It's the best feeling in the world. The world premiere at SXSW was pretty special.

**Silverdocs:** What other projects are in the pipeline?

**Jeanie Finlay:** I'm currently in co-production with Met Film on two feature documentaries: THE GREAT HIP HOP HOAX for BBC Scotland and BBC Storyville. It's the story of two Scottish rappers who pretended to be from California, secured a massive record deal and kept up the lie for five years. It's a film about lying. ORION: THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING is the intriguing tale of a masked singer that hundreds of thousands of people believed was Elvis back from the grave.

**Silverdocs:** Why did you become a filmmaker?

**Jeanie Finlay:** I made large-scale video work and interactive documentary artworks for galleries and the web for years before making my first film. I used to talk to people a lot while I was taking their photograph, I realized after a while that these conversations were "the work" and I should film them. With my first film for broadcast, TEENLAND (2005), I was completely thrown in at the deep end (directing a 60 minute film for BBC4) and haven't looked back. I felt I had found the thing I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I'm a shy person in an extrovert's job. I get to ask all the questions that polite society or my own reservations wouldn't let me.

**Silverdocs:** What are some of your creative influences?

**Jeanie Finlay:** So, so many. Here are a few: Diane Arbus, This American Life, The Archers, John Waters, David Lynch, John Peel, Powell and Pressburger, Lucienne Day, Werner Herzog, Adam and Joe, American Movie, John Hughes, Errol Morris – First person, The Shangri Las, The Smiths and Belle and Sebastian.

**Silverdocs:** Did you go to film school?

**Jeanie Finlay:** No, I went to art school and studied contemporary art and music.

**Silverdocs:** What do you shoot on?

**Jeanie Finlay:** Sony Z1, EX3 and Canon 7d.

**Silverdocs:** What has been the most unexpected thing to happen since taking the film on the festival circuit?

**Jeanie Finlay:** I've been overwhelmed in the way that the film has been embraced and received by audiences and in the press. Tom, who runs the shop, has also become a mini celebrity. He broke his foot on Record Store Day and it was reported in The Guardian.

**Silverdocs:** Why did you want to screen your film at Silverdocs?

**Jeanie Finlay:** Silverdocs has such an amazing reputation internationally. The program is always fantastic and everyone I know who has shown there has had a really wonderful time. I'm incredibly happy and thrilled that SOUND IT OUT will have it's East Coast premiere at Silverdocs.

**Silverdocs:** How old are you in your head?

**Jeanie Finlay:** About 26 on a good day, about 105 with jetlag

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