

# it's a **happening** thing

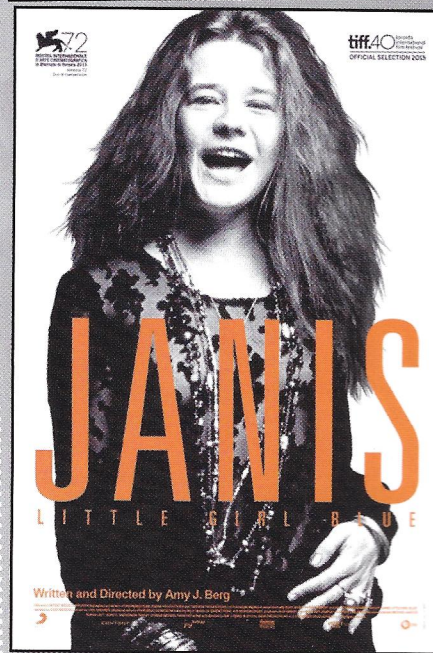
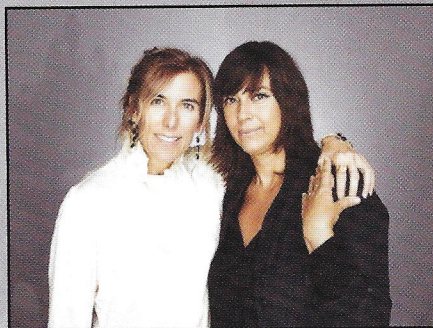
## Baby Blue

Writer and director Amy Berg sympathetically documents the tragically brief life of **JANIS JOPLIN** in new documentary, *Janis: Little Girl Blue*. **ROSS HANNAN** cracks open the Southern Comfort

**“Younger brother Michael describes a family visit to San Francisco in 1967, when Janis was desperate to have her parents see her perform”**

The story unfolds through Janis's own words from letters written to her family in Texas; letters which are elegantly read by narrator Chan Marshall (Cat Power) and which show a few downs – but many enthusiastic ups – in respect of Janis' life and career.

Berg takes a chronological approach to the documentary. Viewers are treated to an insight into Janis' early years spent rebelling against anything and everything in her hometown of Port Arthur, Texas, her beatnik years with the pre-1966 visits to San Francisco, and her performances with future Jefferson Airplane guitarist Jorma Kaukonen and Powell St John. The 30 months she spent with Big Brother & The Holding Company, during which time she established herself as a pioneer who changed the landscape for white female blues singers, are addressed in some detail through interviews and anecdotes from family, friends and peers including David Getz, Peter Albin, Sam Andrew, Joe McDonald, Bob Weir and Powell St John. The film also zooms in on The Monterey International Pop Festival, where Janis – along with Hendrix, The Who and Otis Redding – stole the show from the hometown LA contingent. Berg tells a compassionate story for what was a real roller-coaster ride from December '68 when Janis sought the greener grass, the heartache of The Full Tilt Boogie Band and the difficulties of '70, with the love of David Niehaus found and then lost, drugs again taking a hold and her premature death in Hollywood.



A number of the anecdotes reveal a fragility about Janis – other talking heads share memories that could so easily have become lost. Getz recounts the band seeing a spellbinding Otis Redding at The Fillmore in December '66 and the influence that performance had on Janis. Younger brother Michael describes a family visit to San Francisco the following year, when Janis was desperate to have her parents see her perform. With no shows booked they nonetheless made their way to The Avalon Ballroom on August 13th where Big Brother & The Holding Company played three or four songs using Moby Grape's equipment – you couldn't make this stuff up.

There's plenty of good quality and previously unseen archival footage of Big Brother, The Kozmic Blues Band and The Full Tilt Boogie Band alongside previously unused clips from DA Pennebaker and the extraordinary *Festival Express* film. Additionally we're treated to some previously unheard audio material from throughout Janis' career.

It's a story that Berg tells well and should stand the test of time, primarily because it remains factually accurate, warm-hearted and doesn't attempt to glamorise the subject or take the moral high ground.



**Janis: Little Girl Blue is now showing at an indie cinema near you. Visit [janismovie.com](http://janismovie.com) for details**

