



Contact: Roberta Grossman
323.424.4210
rgrossman@katahdinproductions.com
www.katahdin.org

“FRIENDS” CO-CREATOR MARTA KAUFFMAN TO PRODUCE “HAVA NAGILA” DOCUMENTARY

EMMY AWARD-WINNING PRODUCER RETEAMS WITH
“BLESSED IS THE MATCH” FILMMAKERS TO EXPLORE THE HISTORY,
MYSTERY AND MEANING OF THE ICONIC JEWISH SONG

Hollywood, CA (January 27, 2011) – Emmy Award-winning producer Marta Kauffman is reteaming with her partners on the documentary *Blessed Is the Match* to bring the story of the iconic song “Hava Nagila” to the screen. Funny, deep and unexpected, **Hava Nagila: What Is It?** will celebrate 100 years of Jewish history and culture through the journey of a song, and reveal the power of music to bridge cultural divides and bring us together as human beings.

“We are thrilled to be working with Marta again,” says director Roberta Grossman, whose film *Blessed Is the Match*, about Holocaust heroine Hannah Senesh, was shortlisted for an Academy Award, won the audience award at 13 film festivals, was broadcast on PBS in 2010, and nominated for a Primetime Emmy. “Marta is someone who elevates every project she touches, and her experience and guidance will only make the film better.”

Kauffman was the co-creator and executive producer of the hit TV series *Friends*. Prior to her work on *Friends*, Kauffman co-created and co-executive produced the critically acclaimed series *Dream On*. She co-created the series *The Powers That Be*, for Norman Lear, and co-created and served as executive producer on the comedy series *Family Album* and *Veronica’s Closet*. Kauffman executive produced *Blessed Is the Match*, working closely with Grossman, producer Lisa Thomas and writer Sophie Sartain.

“*Hava Nagila* has a fascinating history,” says Kauffman. “You can trace the journey of where Jews have been and where we are going through the twists and turns of this song. It is also a springboard for asking the ‘big questions’: As *Hava Nagila* has crossed over into pop culture and become more secular, has it lost some of its meaning? By extension, are we, as modern Jews, in danger of losing meaning in our lives? Are there messages embedded in this song that we can rediscover?”

Hava Nagila originated in the Ukraine as a wordless Hasidic melody. It traveled with Hasidic immigrants to Jerusalem at the turn of the 20th century and acquired Hebrew lyrics and a circle dance based on the Romanian hora. From there, *Hava Nagila* journeyed to America, where it sped up, lost its connotations as a song of Palestine and exploded in popularity. Today, it is, arguably, the most recognizable Jewish thing around the world – adored by some, reviled by others and understood as musical shorthand for “Jewishness” by all.

Hava Nagila, What Is It? will follow the song from the *shtetls* of Eastern Europe to the *cul-de-sacs* of America. It will be a weave of interviews, original footage,

archival footage and photographs. Celebrities will appear on camera to provide their own takes on the song. A ten-minute fundraising clip of the film, featuring Harry Belafonte and Leonard Nimoy, has already become an Internet sensation, amassing more than half a million views worldwide. It is available at www.havanagilamovie.com.

Hava Nagila: What Is It? is currently in production. Post-production will begin in Summer 2011, with an eye toward finishing the film in 2012.

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Founded by Lisa Thomas, the co-founder and former CEO of Clif Bar, Inc., Katahdin Productions is a not-for-profit, 501 (c) (3) corporation based in Berkeley, California. Katahdin's mission is to tell compelling stories often ignored by the mainstream media – stories that inform, enlighten, entertain and inspire. Katahdin is dedicated to creating high quality documentary films, ancillary educational materials and media projects that open minds, provoke dialogue and encourage positive social change – outstanding works that touch the soul as they sound a call to action.