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JESSICA JONES SEASON TWO: EMPOWERING FEMALE DIRECTORS

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Season two of Marvel's television series *Jessica Jones* will be directed entirely by women and could pave a long awaited path for more female directors in the film industry. The announcement was made October 22nd at the Transform Hollywood Symposium by the show's executive producer and showrunner Melissa Rosenberg. A crew of all women

directors not only embodies the essence of *Jessica Jones*, showing that a woman can make it in a man's world, but also promotes female representation in a male-dominated industry.

The show features a superheroine named Jessica Jones who becomes a private investigator after her superhero career comes to a tragic end. In an effort to put her life back together and embrace her inner heroine, Jones begins dealing with cases involving people with unique abilities and attempts to hunt down a vicious villain who continues to haunt her. "Many people were excited about *Jessica Jones* because it was going to have a female protagonist, not to be just part of an ensemble that focused solely on a male superhero." said Linda Beail, a PLNU professor of Political Science and Director of Women's Studies. "So to put female directors in charge just makes a ton of sense. It shows this team knows something about the actual substance of their show and whose story it's telling."

Beail is passionate about female representation in the film industry and has even partnered with author Lilly J. Goren to publish her books, *Mad Men and Politics*, as well as, *You've Come A Long Way Baby: Women, Politics and Popular Culture*. Beail and Goren focus heavily on women representation in film and pop culture, recognizing the success of women like Shonda Rhimes who made a name for herself in entertainment and was the driving force behind hit television successes like *Grey's Anatomy*. "There's women who can do these jobs and who have really interesting and creative ideas and experiences to bring to the table" said Beail. "We should be celebrating that and embracing that, along with making space for it." Rosenberg is no exception. *Jessica Jones* celebrates the endurance and ambition of women and its latest announcement of having all female directors may open the gates to more female directors in Hollywood.

According to PLNU communications professor, Alan Hueth, the film position of the director has been a "men's club" for a long time. "In the last ten years, it's been a more heated discussion about women getting involved in higher positions in the film industry," said Hueth. "There's been a bunch of women producers going back to the 70s, but the role of director has always been dominated by men." According to Hueth and Rick Moncauskas, Point TV's Studio Manager, the film business is very much dependent upon trust and "who you know." With men commanding most of the director roles, more men, rather than women, are likely to be recruited into the position. "You get trust through people that you know," said Hueth. "Since most of the people that work in the directing business are men, you therefore have more men doing the work and more men getting the experience that will get them the positions they want." Moncauskas added, "It's the same reason there aren't a lot of female CEOs around. It's easier for the male CEOs to hire people they know and most of the time the people they know are people who are the same gender as them."

While male directors continue to hire their more well-known and trusted male counterparts, women struggle to find ways to break this tightly sealed cycle. “More women tend to be drawn towards the role of producing rather than directing,” said Hueth. “The role of director is very hands on and in charge but the producer role is totally relational. It’s about communication with people and women tend to thrive in that environment. Guys, for the most part, are not like that.” In addition, Beail addresses Hollywood’s idea that while men won’t go to women’s films, both men and women will go to men’s films. “While a man may not go to see a chick-flick, both men and women will go to see Star Wars,” said Beail. “Women weren’t seen as being able to tell stories that everyone can enjoy.” With women dominating the role of producer and men claiming the role of director, the long-established stereotype is a hard one to break. But the women directors of *Jessica Jones* may be the very people who break the seal.

“The more that women get involved and the more opportunities they have to prove themselves, the better chance they have to break the cycle,” said Hueth. “Once women get into positions of power where they can hire the people they want to hire and they want to hire women, then you’ll get more diversity and see more equality in the industry.” Moncauskas added, “There’s no reason a woman can’t be the equal of a man in directing but it’s not going to happen overnight, it’ll happen in increments and steps. This is one of those step in that direction to having more female directors in the film industry.”

Media communications and production majors Madison Parker and Riley McQuown both produce and direct for PLNU’s television studio and hope that this latest *Jessica Jones* announcement inspires young aspiring female directors and producers like themselves. “I hope that this announcement will encourage more women to be confident in their work and drive them to continue to pressure their goals,” said Parker. “The film industry is a hard one to break into and it takes persistence but hopefully more women will keep up the hard work and maybe someday they will be directing or producing a television show of their own.” McQuown added, “I want to see a female at the same level as Steven Spielberg, Clint Eastwood or Tim Burton. For aspiring female producers and directors this announcement will show them that they can get there and they can make it happen.”