

JO-JO AT THE GATE OF LIONS

U.S.A., 1992, 96 min., black & white
Director/Producer/Screenwriter: Britta Sjogren
Assistant Director: Caveh Zahedi
Production Company: Nana Films
Cinematographer: Greg Watkins
Art Director: Adam Braff
Music: Jonathan Sampson
Postproduction Sound: Rory Kelly
Sound Rerecording: Tony Cummings
Principal Cast: Lorie Marino, Chris Shearer, David Schultz, Rosanna

Jo-Jo is a young woman haunted by a voice. Like a modern-day Joan of Arc, her life is guided by a mystical voice toward a spiritual sublimation. When Jo-Jo meets and falls in love with a young astronomer, Jon, it is the strange voice which persuades her to accept a different fate — one where she must sacrifice her happiness with Jon for a greater good. She is slowly drawn into the orbit of Luke, a shadowy phone-sex entrepreneur who relentlessly pursues her and oddly entices her with promises of good pay and flexible hours. However, with her unfulfilled desire for Jon in conflict with her mystical destiny, which is leading her toward Luke, Jo-Jo withdraws from the real world.

Jo-Jo at the Gate of Lions is an enigmatic, poetically charged, feature-film debut by Los Angeles filmmaker Britta Sjogren. At once intensely personal and allegorical, *Jo-Jo at the Gate of Lions* subtly modulates its visual tone from Cassavetes-inspired fictional vérité to the emotional transfixion of Carl Dreyer as it follows Jo-Jo's complex and transcendental life. Likewise the film varies its mood from sullen to darkly offbeat. Sjogren's cast contributes refreshing and captivating performances, especially Lorie Marino in the pivotal role of the young woman trapped between a scratchy netherworld voice and the two men in her life. As the murky Luke, David Schultz is simultaneously charming, insipid and frightening, developing the role beyond caricature while retaining its self-mockery. A new voice on the independent scene, Britta Sjogren arrives with a totally invigorating and engaging film.