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John Sayles and Maggie Renzi have been creative partners, in their life and in their art, since the early '70s. They met as students at Williams College in Massachusetts. John was a member of the class of 1972 and Maggie was member of the class of 1973. In the years immediately after graduation, Maggie worked as a bookstore clerk, a pediatric receptionist, a substitute teacher, a casting agent and a talent agent, while John took jobs like nursing home orderly and meat packer. In the late '70s they moved to California for a few years. John worked for Roger Corman's New World Pictures, and Maggie worked as a salad chef.

In 1979 they released their first film: *The Return of the Secaucus Seven*. John wrote the screenplay, and directed and edited the film. He also played the supporting role of "Howie," a townie who has three kids before his 30th birthday. Maggie starred as "Kate," the high school English teacher who invites all her college buddies up to her New Hampshire home for their annual reunion. She also served as Unit Manager and Assistant Editor. *The Return of the Secaucus Seven* became an art house and campus hit, winning the Los Angeles Film Critics' Award for Best Screenplay, and launching Sayles and Renzi on their way as independent filmmakers.

Beginning with their second film, *Lianna*, Maggie assumed the role of Producer. While she continued to act, her producing responsibilities grew on each subsequent film, and she finally decided to focus just on producing after *Passion Fish* was released in 1992. She worked as part of a team of producers on the early films, but on the two most recent films *Limbo* and *Sunshine State*, she is credited as sole producer.

In 2000, Maggie was one of the producers of *Girlfight*, the award-winning first feature made by Karyn Kusama (who began her film career on Sayles/Renzi production teams). However, Maggie says she is not planning to produce other non-Sayles films. In an interview in Chicago last month, Maggie told me: "I have my dream job. When you look close, you'll see that a lot of important directors have sustaining relationships with a single producer. They're not picking up a new producer each time. People like the Coen Brothers and Merchant and Ivory, they're working together as a team."

At the end of our interview, I asked Maggie what she wanted me to tell the world about Maggie Renzi. "I am very proud of our shared body of work." That seemed like such a simple answer until I realized the impact. You never hear anyone talk about "the new Joel Coen movie." You never hear anyone talk about "the new James Ivory film." Why should the Sayles/Renzi partnership be any different?

How will John Sayles himself feel about seeing his films described in future as "Sayles/Renzi films"?

John Sayles is a god-damn legend. He can handle it!

Written By: [Jan Lisa Huttner](#)

Jan Lisa Huttner is the creative force behind FILMS FOR TWO: The Online Guide for Busy Couples. You can read the rest of her interview with Maggie Renzi at [Films42.com](#)

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