

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL



For Immediate Release
January 22, 2009

Media Contact:
Amy McGee, 310.360.1981
Amy_mcgee@sundance.org

2009 SUNDANCE/NHK INTERNATIONAL FILMMAKERS AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Los Angeles, CA (Park City, UT) – Sundance Institute and NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) today announced the winners of the 2009 Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Awards. The four winners were selected from 12 finalists by members of an international jury which included: Ira Sachs, Yesim Ustaoglu, Katherine Dieckmann, Fernando Eimbcke, Sebastian Cordero, and Ronan Bennett; and a Japanese Jury that included Masato Harada, Bong-Ou Lee, and Hiroyuki Takazawa.

These annual awards were created in 1996 by Sundance Institute in partnership with NHK to celebrate 100 years of cinema and to honor and support emerging independent filmmakers. Each year the Award supports winners from four global regions (Europe, Latin America, the United States, and Japan) in realizing their next projects. The four winners are presented with the award at the annual Sundance Film Festival Awards Ceremony on Saturday, January 24.

The winning director from each region will receive a \$10,000 award and a guarantee from NHK to purchase the Japanese television broadcast rights upon completion of their project. NHK is Japan's largest broadcaster with five 24-hour TV and three radio channels. In addition, the Sundance Institute staff will work closely with the award recipients throughout the year, providing ongoing support and assistance in seeking out opportunities to finance and distribute their projects.

The winning filmmakers and projects are: **Diego Lerman, CIENCIAS MORALES (MORAL SCIENCES)** from Argentina; **David Riker, THE GIRL** from the United States; **Qurata Kenji, SPEED GIRL** from Japan; and **Lucile Hadzihalilovic, EVOLUTION** from France.

"We are thrilled by the quality of this year's winning filmmakers, all of whom embody what the award is about. In an extremely competitive year, these projects are exceptionally original and challenging," said Alesia Weston, Associate Director of Sundance's Feature Film Program, International.

"The Sundance/ NHK award is part of the Sundance Institute Feature Film Program's year-round commitment to support singular voices in world cinema," added Michelle Satter, Director, Sundance Institute Feature Film Program. "We expect that the vision and innovative storytelling of this year's four winners will resonate far beyond their countries of origin."

Past recipients of the Sundance/NHK Filmmakers award include: Alex Rivera, **THE SLEEP DEALER** (USA); Miranda July, **ME AND YOU AND EVERYONE WE KNOW** (USA); Andrucha Waddington, **THE HOUSE OF SAND** (Brazil); Lucrecia Martel, **LA CIENAGA** (Argentina); Juan Pablo Rebella and Pablo Stoll, **WHISKY** (Uruguay); Walter Salles, **CENTRAL STATION** (Brazil); György Pálfi, **TAXIDERMIA** (Hungary); Fernando Eimbcke with **LAKE TAHOE** (Mexico); The 2008 recipients were: Alejandro Fernandez Almendras, **HUACHO** (Chile); Braden King, **HERE** (USA); Aiko Nagatsu, **APOPTOSIS** (Japan); and Radu Jude, **THE HAPPIEST GIRL IN THE WORLD** (Romania). Recent winners Kanji Nakajima with **CLONE RETURNS THE HOMELAND** (Japan) and Cruz Angeles with **DON'T LET ME DROWN** (USA) will premiere in competition at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival.

-more-

The Winners of the 2009 Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Award are:

Diego Lerman/CIENCIAS MORALES (MORAL SCIENCES) (Argentina) – During the last years of the military dictatorship, a sexually repressed school monitor in Buenos Aires indulges in a strange compulsion, allowing her dark desires to compromise her role at the school.

Born in Buenos Aires, Lerman's first feature film, TAN DE REPENTE (SUDDENLY) won more than 30 international prizes, including the Silver Leopard at the Locarno International Film Festival, The Jury Special and the Public Awards at the Buenos Aires International Film Festival and Best Film and Best Actress in La Habana International Film Festival. The film premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2006 and was selected for New Directors New Films and Karlovy Vary. His short films include LA PRUEBA (1999) and LA GUERRA DE LOS GIMNASIOS (THE WAR OF THE GYMS) selected for both the Locarno Film Festival and Rotterdam Film Festival. His documentary SERVICIOS PRESTADOS premiered at the Locarno Film Festival in 2008.

Lucile Hadzihalilovic/EVOLUTION (France) – A group of young boys who are isolated from the world act as guinea pigs in a series of bizarre medical procedures intended to trigger a reverse evolutionary step. EVOLUTION depicts the attempts of one young, unruly test subject as he seeks to escape experimentation and recall his clouded past.

Hadzihalilovic studied cinema at La Fémis, the French state film school. In 1990, she founded the production company, Les Cinémas de la Zone with Gaspar Noé, through which she produced the films CARNE and I STAND ALONE, as well as her own short films. In 1996, she produced and directed the short film MIMI, which was shown at the 1997 Sundance Film Festival, Cannes and Toronto. Her first feature INNOCENCE (2004) won numerous awards, including Best First Film at San Sebastian Film Festival, and Best Film and Best Photography at Stockholm Film Festival.

David Riker/THE GIRL (USA) – A young, single mother from South Texas is thrown into an unexpected and life-changing journey when her attempt to smuggle immigrants across the border ends disastrously, leaving her stranded with a young girl from southern Mexico.

Riker is a New York-based filmmaker currently living in Mexico. His debut feature, THE CITY (LA CIUDAD) won awards at the Havana, San Sebastian, and Human Rights Watch International Film Festivals. Riker received the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival as co-writer of the feature film SLEEP DEALER. He attended the 2007 Screenwriters Lab with THE GIRL and is a recipient of the Rockefeller, Guggenheim, and Annenberg Fellowships.

Qurata Kenji/SPEED GIRL (Japan) – Nijiko, a gifted speed skater, runs through the world at full speed, leaving her friend Mitsuo in her wake. When Nijiko mysteriously disappears, Mitsuo learns what it means to look out for someone in love and prayer.

Qurata Kenji started making films in 1992 and established the production company EGT in 1993. Qurata produced commercials, developed projects for late night TV, and was involved in the development and production of various feature films, including SEISHUN DOROBO (YOUTH ROBBER), MYSTERY OFAKANE-CHO, YUREI SHOJYO GAKSHOU DAN (THE GHOST CHOIR GIRLS). He went on to direct promotional and concert videos, as well as establishing Coyote, a cooperative for the development of films.

NHK

NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) is Japan's largest broadcaster. Since 1925, it has continued to offer fair, impartial reporting and high quality programs, earning the viewers' trust as the nation's sole public broadcaster. Through its five 24-hour TV channels (two terrestrial/three satellite) and three radio channels, NHK provides programs of all genres from news and education to sports and entertainment, and serves as the hub of Japanese visual culture. NHK'S arts and entertainment satellite channel, which was introduced in 1989, broadcasts more than 600 high quality international films each year. In order to contribute to the development of film culture and the promotion of cultural exchange, NHK is devoted to

supporting burgeoning filmmakers who have the potential to guide the industry's future development. Along with the "Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Award," NHK also produces the "Asian Film Festival" which offers opportunities to emerging film directors in Asia.

Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Award

The Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Award was first established in 1996 by Sundance Institute in partnership with NHK to celebrate 100 years of cinema and to honor and support emerging independent filmmakers whose originality, talent, and vision we believe will contribute significantly to the future of world cinema.

Since 1981, the **Sundance Institute Feature Film Program** (FFP) has supported more than 450 independent filmmakers whose distinctive, singular work has engaged audiences worldwide. Program staff fully embrace the unique vision of each filmmaker, encouraging a rigorous creative process with a focus on original and deeply personal storytelling. Each year, up to 25 emerging filmmakers from the U.S. and around the world participate in a year-round continuum of support which can include the Screenwriters and Directors Labs, Composers Lab, Independent Producers Conference, ongoing creative and strategic advice, significant production and post-production resources, a rough-cut screening initiative, a Screenplay Reading Series, and direct financial support through project-specific grants and artist fellowships. In many cases, the Institute has helped the Program's fellows attach producers and talent, secure financing, and assemble other significant resources to move their projects toward production and presentation. In 2008 the FFP launched the Creative Producing Initiative, a yearlong Fellowship program for emerging independent producers, which will include a Creative Producing Lab, industry mentorship, and financial support.

The **2009 Sundance Film Festival Sponsors** help sustain not only the Festival but also the year-round programs of the non-profit Sundance Institute. Their support is crucial to the Institute's mission of nurturing independent artists, inspiring risk-taking, and encouraging diversity in the arts. This year's Festival Sponsors include: Presenting Sponsors - Entertainment Weekly, HP and Honda; Leadership Sponsors - American Express, Delta Air Lines, DIRECTV, Google, Microsoft Corporation and; Sustaining Sponsors - Blockbuster Inc., the National Milk Mustache "got milk?"® Campaign, Le Tourment Vert Absinthe Francaise, L'Oréal Paris, The New York Times, Ray-Ban, Sony Electronics, Inc., Stella Artois®, Timberland, and Utah Film Commission. Sundance Channel is the Official Television Network of the 2009 Sundance Film Festival.

The **Sundance Film Festival** is the premier showcase for U.S. and international independent film, held each January in and around Park City, Utah. Presenting 120 dramatic and documentary feature-length films in seven distinct categories, and 80 short films each year, the Sundance Film Festival has introduced American audiences to some of the most ground-breaking films of the past two decades, including *sex, lies, and videotape*, *Maria Full of Grace*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Trouble the Water* and *Central Station*. www.sundance.org/festival

Founded by Robert Redford in 1981, **Sundance Institute** is a not-for-profit organization that fosters the development of original storytelling in film and theatre, and presents the annual Sundance Film Festival. Internationally recognized for its artistic development programs for directors, screenwriters, producers, film composers, playwrights and theatre artists, Sundance Institute has nurtured such projects as *Angels in America*, *Spring Awakening*, *Boys Don't Cry* and *Born into Brothels*. www.sundance.org

###