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SUNDANCE INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES 12 PROJECTS FOR 2009 JUNE DIRECTORS AND SCREENWRITERS LABS

Ranging from Satirical Comedy to Magical Realism, to Vérité Drama, Selected Projects Tell Deeply Human Stories on a Global Scale with Authentic Voice and Singular Vision

Los Angeles, CA — Sundance Institute today announced the 12 projects selected for its annual June Directors and Screenwriters Labs, taking place at the Sundance Resort in Utah from June 2-26, 2009. Under the leadership of Michelle Satter, Director of the Sundance Feature Film Program, and the artistic direction of Gyula Gazdag, the projects selected for this year's program include emerging filmmakers from the United States, China, India, Morocco, Latin America, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. The core of the Feature Film Program, these Labs provide an opportunity for filmmakers to develop distinctive new work under the guidance of accomplished Creative Advisors in an environment that encourages innovation, collaboration, and risk-taking.

The projects and participants selected for the **Directors Lab** from June 2-20 are:

- **All Fall Down**/Jonathan Wysocki (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- **Beasts of the Southern Wild**/Benh Zeitlin (co-writer/director) and Lucy Alibar (co-writer), *U.S.A.*
- **Goodnight Moon**/Elgin James (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- **My Brother the Devil**/Sally El Hosaini (writer/director), *U.K./Egypt*
- **Porfirio**/Alejandro Landes (writer/director), *Brazil/Ecuador*
- **The Narrow Frame of Midnight**/Tala Hadid (writer/director), *Morocco/U.S.A.*
- **On the Ice**/Andrew Okpeaha MacLean (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- **The Story of Ram**/Ritesh Batra (writer/director), *U.S.A./India*

These Fellows will be joined at the **Screenwriters Lab** from June 21-26 by the following projects and participants:

- **The American People**/Keith Davis (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- **Hello, I Must Be Going**/Sarah Koskoff (writer) and Todd Louiso (director), *U.S.A.*
- **Land**/Jan-Willem van Ewijk (co-writer/director) and Abdelhadi Samih (co-writer), *Netherlands/Morocco*
- **Little Wings**/Emily Tang (co-writer/director) and Chow Keung (co-writer), *China*

"We're thrilled to be supporting such an exciting and inspired group of emerging independent artists," said Satter. "Their work explores the richness of the human condition in an increasingly global community, telling specific, personal stories with humor, audacity, and grace. We're confident they will each flourish in the creative and challenging atmosphere of the June Lab, where they will have the opportunity to push the boundaries of their craft and do the deep exploration needed to realize the full potential of their material."

Over the course of the Directors Lab, the Fellows work with an accomplished group of Creative Advisors and professional production crews, shooting and editing key scenes from their scripts. Through this intense, hands-on process, the Fellows workshop text, collaborate with actors, and find a visual language for their film in an atmosphere where experimentation is encouraged. Directors Lab Fellows also join in the week-long Screenwriters Lab with four additional projects to participate in individualized story sessions under the guidance of established screenwriters.

Gyula Gazdag returns for his 13th year as Artistic Director of the Directors Lab. This year's Creative Advisors include: Robert Redford, Michael Almereyda, John August, Ronan Bennett, Walter Bernstein, Joan Darling, Caleb Deschanel, Lisa Fruchtman, John Gatins, Michael Goldenberg, Keith Gordon, Susannah Grant, Randa Haines, Catherine Hardwicke, Ed Harris, Etgar Keret, Michael Lehmann, Peter Medak, Walter Mosley, Jeremy Pikser, Howard Rodman, Susan Shilliday, Stewart Stern, Wesley Strick, Joan Tewkesbury, Tyger Williams, Alfre Woodard, and Doug Wright.

The participants and project selected for the 2009 Directors Lab are:

***All Fall Down*/Jonathan Wysocki** (writer/director), *U.S.A.*: When a nine-year-old suburban boy makes the ill-fated decision to dress up as Osama bin Laden on Halloween 2001, the fragile underpinnings of his dysfunctional family are exposed.

After starting his career in theatre, Southern California native **Jonathan Wysocki** went on to obtain an MFA in Film Production at UCLA, where he wrote, directed and edited four short narratives, including the award-winning films *The Way Station* and *The Vessel Pitches*. He currently teaches Film Studies at Chapman University and is a feature programmer for the Los Angeles Film Festival.

***Beasts of the Southern Wild*/Benh Zeitlin** (co-writer/director) and **Lucy Alibar** (co-writer), *U.S.A.*: In this epic tale, a ferocious ten-year-old girl refuses to evacuate her home in the Louisiana Delta without her dying father as the Southern Apocalypse descends upon them.

Raised by two folklorists in Queens, New York, **Benh Zeitlin** is a director, animator, and composer for the Court 13 coterie. Director of award-winning shorts *Egg*, *Origins of Electricity*, *I Get Wet* and *Glory at Sea*, he currently resides in New Orleans, where he is developing two feature films and transforming *Glory at Sea's* ship, the U.S.S Jimmy Lee, into a rolling, popcorn making movie projector cum Mardi-Gras float in preparation for carnival 2010.

Lucy Alibar was raised in north Florida and south Georgia. Her plays have been performed at Williamstown Theatre Festival, the Cherry Lane, and Dixon Place, as well as theaters in Avignon, Montreal, and Johannesburg. She is a playwright in residence at Ensemble Studio Theatre and an Affiliated Artist of New Georges.

***Goodnight Moon*/Elgin James** (writer/director), *U.S.A.*: Amidst the stark landscape of the Salton Sea, two 14-year-old girls test the limits of their friendship when one follows the other in an escape to Los Angeles, only to discover that the boredom of home may be better than learning to survive in the big city.

As a homeless teenager, **Elgin James** founded a national street gang that robbed drug dealers to give money to charity. After a life spent torn between violence and altruism, James crawled out of the criminal lifestyle and settled in Los Angeles. The following year, he shot a short film version of *Goodnight Moon*, which ultimately sold to THINKFilm.

***My Brother the Devil*/Sally El Hosaini** (writer/director), *United Kingdom/Egypt*. Two teenage brothers must face their prejudices head on if they are to survive the perils of being young, Arab, British and Muslim on the streets of gangland London, post 9/11.

Sally El Hosaini is an Egyptian-Welsh writer/director based in London. After making award-winning documentaries in Belgium, Yemen, and post-Saddam Iraq, she turned to writing and directing narrative

short films. Her short film *The Fifth Bowl* won a regional BAFTA Award, and her latest short, *Henna Night*, will play the Cannes Film Festival next month.

Porfirio/Alejandro Landes (writer/director), *Brazil/Ecuador*: After years of waiting for his pension, a Colombian man confined to a wheelchair hijacks a plane with his unwitting teenage son in an effort to draw the attention of the President to his plight.

Alejandro Landes was born in Sao Paulo, and holds Colombian, Ecuadorian and Brazilian citizenship. After graduating from Brown University in 2003 and working in the television, newspaper, and film development worlds, Landes made the feature documentary *Cocalero*, which premiered at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival. The film went on to screen at 50 international film festivals and enjoyed theatrical distribution in more than 10 countries. Landes was a Cannes Cinefondation resident in 2009.

The Narrow Frame of Midnight/Tala Hadid (writer/director), *Morocco/U.S.A.*: From North Africa to the bleak winter landscapes of Northern France and beyond, two refugees struggle to find their place in a world without borders.

Born in London, **Tala Hadid** splits her time between New York and Morocco. In 2000 she was awarded a fellowship to study film at the graduate film department at Columbia University. Her thesis film, *Tes Cheveux Noirs Ihsan*, won the 2005 Cinecolor/Kodak Prize and received a Student Academy Award. It has screened and won prizes at numerous film festivals around the world, including the Panorama Best Short Film Award at the Berlin Film Festival. Hadid's work has screened at the MOMA, the National Museum of Women in the Arts in D.C, L'Institut du monde Arabe and the Cinémathèque Française in Paris and the Photographer's Gallery in London.

On the Ice/Andrew MacLean (writer/director), *U.S.A.*: On the snow-covered arctic tundra, at the top of the world in Barrow, Alaska, two Inuit teenagers try to get away with murder.

Andrew Okpeaha MacLean is an Inupiaq filmmaker born and raised in Alaska. As a short film, *Sikumi (On the Ice)* premiered at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival where it won the Jury Prize in Short Filmmaking and went on to many other awards at festivals around the world. He is a recipient of a United States Artists Rasmuson Fellowship, the John H. Johnson Film Award, and the 2007-2008 Riese Award, among other honors. MacLean holds his MFA in film directing from NYU.

The Story of Ram/Ritesh Batra (writer/director), *U.S.A./India*: A chance encounter over the radio waves leads to an extraordinary friendship between the Prime Minister of India and an ordinary tea vendor, which ends up transforming a nation.

Born and raised in Bombay, India, **Ritesh Joginder Batra** is based in New York and attends the MBA/MFA dual degree program at the Tisch School of the Arts and Stern School of Business at NYU. In 2006, he was selected for the MAISHA Film Lab, and in 2007 completed the award-winning short film *The Morning Ritual*. Batra recently worked on a feature screenplay for director Santosh Sivan.

The participants and projects joining the directors at the 2008 June Screenwriters Lab are:

The American People/Keith Davis (writer/director), *U.S.A.*: Deep in the heart of Alabama wiregrass country, a woman haunted by visions of the future struggles to find hope when a shattering loss fractures her family.

A native of Ozark, Alabama, **Keith Davis** received his MFA in acting from the Yale School of Drama and is an MFA candidate at NYU's Graduate Film Program. As a writer/director, his short *Surface of Things* screened at several festivals including Chicago International, AFI/Dallas and Palm Springs International ShortFest. As an actor he has performed in film and television as well as on Broadway in *Julius Caesar* with Denzel Washington. As an editor he has recently completed three short projects with Spike Lee.

Hello, I Must Be Going/Sarah Koskoff (writer) and **Todd Louiso** (director), *U.S.A.*: Divorced, childless, and demoralized, Amy Minsky's prospects look bleak when she is condemned to move back in with her parents at the age of 40—until the unexpected attention of a bold teenage boy changes everything.

Sarah Koskoff is a writer living in Los Angeles. She has also worked as an actor in film, television and theater. *Hello, I Must Be Going* is her first screenplay.

Todd Louiso is an actor and director. His directorial credits include *Love, Liza* with Philip Seymour Hoffman and Kathy Bates, and *The Marc Pease Experience* with Jason Schwartzman and Ben Stiller.

Land/Jan Williem van-Ewijk (co-writer/director) and **Abdelhadi Samih** (co-writer), *Netherlands/Morocco*: Lost between the contrasting worlds of visiting European tourists in the summer and the emptiness of his fishing village in the winter, a Moroccan windsurfer sets out on an ocean voyage towards Europe in an effort to make sense of his life.

Dutch filmmaker **Jan-Willem van Ewijk** has a Masters Degree in Aircraft Design and worked as an investment banker before writing, directing, producing, editing and starring in his debut feature film *Nu. (Now)*, which he shot entirely with friends and family. *Nu.* screened at festivals around the world, including Montreal, Seattle and Paris, where it received the Grand Jury Prize at the European Independent Film Festival.

Abdelhadi Samih, a Moroccan poet and playwright, has written and directed several plays for his Safi-based theatre group WHASHM. His award winning work includes *The Symphony of Masks* and *Verses of Madness*. Abdelhadi is president of the Safi Theatre Alliance.

Little Wings/Emily Tang (co-writer/director) and **Chow Keung** (co-writer), *China*: The murder of a teenage prostitute, recently emigrated from China to Hong Kong, shakes the lives of her previously indifferent family members across the border.

Born in Sichuan Province and raised in Beijing, **Emily Tang** received her Master of Arts in Drama in the Chinese National Institute of the Arts and attended the directing program at the Central Academy of Drama, which paved the way for her career as a director. In 2001, she directed her debut film *Conjugation*, which had its world premiere at the Locarno International Film Festival. That same year, she emigrated to Hong Kong, where she now resides.

Born in Hong Kong, **Chow Keung** studied anthropology, sociology and media studies in Hong Kong and New York. Upon returning to Hong Kong, he worked for the Hong Kong Arts Centre and Hong Kong Film Critics Society before devoting himself full time to filmmaking. In 2003, he co-founded Xstream Pictures with Jia Zhangke and Yu Lik-wai. He has produced 17 independent Chinese feature films, including *Still Life* (winner, Golden Lion Award, 2006 Venice International Film Festival), *Useless* (winner, Diao Yinan's *Uniform* award, 2003 Vancouver International Film Festival) and *Perfect Life* (winner, Dragons and Tigers Award, 2008 Vancouver International Film Festival).

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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, Creative Producing Summit, ongoing creative and strategic advice, significant production and postproduction 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 Fellowship, a year-long program for emerging independent producers, which includes the Feature Film Creative Producing Lab, industry mentorship and financial support.

Over its 28 year history, the program has supported an extensive list of leading independent filmmakers and films including Cary Fukunaga's ***Sin Nombre***, Sophie Barthes' ***Cold Souls***, So Yong Kim's ***Treeless Mountain***, Cherien Dabis' ***Amreeka***, Cruz Angeles and Maria Topete's ***Don't Let Me Drown***, Alex Rivera's ***Sleep Dealer***, Fernando Eimbcke's ***Lake Tahoe***, Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden's ***Half Nelson***, Miranda July's ***Me and You and Everyone We Know***, Hany Abu-Assad's ***Paradise Now***, Debra Granik's ***Down to the Bone***, Josh Marston's ***Maria Full of Grace***, Peter Sollett's ***Raising Victor Vargas***, John Cameron Mitchell's ***Hedwig and the Angry Inch***, Darren Aronofsky's ***Requiem for a Dream***, Kimberly Peirce's ***Boys Don't Cry***, Tony Bui's ***Three Seasons***, Walter Salles' ***Central Station***, Chris Eyre and Sherman Alexie's ***Smoke Signals***, Paul Thomas Anderson's ***Hard Eight***, Tamara Jenkins' ***Slums of Beverly Hills***, and Quentin Tarantino's ***Reservoir Dogs***.

Sundance Institute

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***, ***Sin Nombre*** and ***Born into Brothels***.
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