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SUNDANCE INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES TWELVE FEATURE FILM PROJECTS FOR JANUARY SCREENWRITERS LAB

*Selected Projects Cross Genres and Include Animated and Transmedia Projects,
Offering Wide Diversity and Singular Vision*

Los Angeles, CA—Sundance Institute has selected twelve projects for the annual January Screenwriters Lab, to be held January 15-20, 2010 at the Sundance Resort in Utah. This year's group includes filmmakers from regions throughout the world, including the United States, China, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. The Lab selections embrace a wide variety of subject matter, genre, and narrative forms, all from innovative storytellers from many different backgrounds and experiences. The common thread amongst the projects is that each one represents the inimitable, personal vision of its creator in a way that will challenge and engage audiences.

The Screenwriters Lab is a five-day writers' workshop that gives independent screenwriters the opportunity to work intensely on their feature film scripts with the support of established writers in an environment that encourages innovation and creative risk-taking. Through one-on-one story sessions, fellows engage in an artistically rigorous process that offers them indispensable lessons in craft, as well as the means to do the deep exploration needed to fully realize their material.

The projects selected for the **2010 January Screenwriters Lab** are:

- ***Bluebird*** / Lance Edmands (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- ***Canary*** / Craig Zobel (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- ***Drunktown's Finest*** / Sydney Freeland (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- ***40 Days of Silence*** / Saodat Ismailova (writer/director), *Uzbekistan*
- ***HiM*** / Lance Weiler (co-writer/director) and Chuck Wendig (co-writer), *U.S.A.*
- ***How Many Trainings Must I Take Before I Can Be as Hard as Steel?*** / Cao Baoping (writer/director), *China*
- ***Martha Marcy May Marlene*** / Sean Durkin (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- ***May in the Summer*** / Cherien Dabis (writer/director), *U.S.A., Jordan*
- ***My Favorite Nightmare*** / Myna Joseph (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- ***Postcards from the Zoo*** / Edwin (co-writer/director) and Daud Sumolang (co-writer), *Indonesia*
- ***Slobs and Nags*** / Dash Shaw (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- ***Unicorn Store*** / Samantha McIntyre (writer), *U.S.A.*

"The projects selected for the Lab celebrate the breadth of independent filmmaking with screenplays that boast originality, innovation, and deeply personal voices," said Michelle Satter, Director of the Feature Film Program. "For the first time, the Lab will support a transmedia project, which expands the narrative possibilities of a feature film by creating a storyworld that embraces film, gaming and technology to reach audiences across multiple screens in new and engaging ways."

The fellows will work with a distinguished group of creative advisors, including Lab Artistic Director Scott Frank, Sebastian Cordero, Naomi Foner, Rodrigo Garcia, Nelson George, Michael Goldenberg, Deena Goldstone, John Lee Hancock, Erik Jendresen, Richard LaGravenese, Jessie Nelson, Tom Rickman, Susan Shilliday, Zach Sklar, Dana Stevens and Tyger Williams.

Seven films supported by the Feature Film Program will screen at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival. They include the Dramatic Competition selections *Howl*, co-written and co-directed by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman; *Night Catches Us*, written and directed by Tanya Hamilton, and *Three Backyards*, written and directed by Eric Mendelsohn; the World Cinema Competition selections *Boy*, written and directed by Taika Waititi, and *Son of Babylon*, co-written by Mohamed Al-Daradji, Jennifer Norridge and Mithal Ghazi and directed by Mohamed Al-Daradji; the Spotlight selection *Women Without Men*, co-written and co-directed by Shirin Neshat and Shoja Azari and the NEXT selection *The Tacqwacores*, written by Michael Muhammad Knight and directed by Eyad Zahra. In addition, Feature Film Program films *Sin Nombre*, written and directed by Cary Fukunaga; *Amreeka*, written and directed by Cherien Dabis; *Cold Souls*, written and directed by Sophie Barthes; and *Treeless Mountain*, written and directed by So Yong Kim, all recently received multiple Independent Spirit Award nominations.

2010 January Screenwriters Lab Fellows and Projects:

Lance Edmands (writer/director) / *Bluebird* (U.S.A.): In the frozen woods of an isolated Maine logging town, one woman's tragic mistake leads to unexpected consequences.

Born and raised in the state of Maine, **Lance Edmands** is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. His award-winning short film *Vacationland* has screened in dozens of film festivals worldwide, including the Student Academy Awards. Edmands also works as a film editor, recently completing the feature documentaries *Wild Combination: A Portrait of Arthur Russell* and *Brock Enright: Good Times Will Never Be The Same*, as well as several national commercial campaigns.

Craig Zobel (writer/director) / *Canary* (U.S.A.): The residents of a small West Virginia coal mining town intersect and affect one another in surprising, often humorous ways, as their lives are inextricably shaped by their surroundings.

Raised in Atlanta, **Craig Zobel** is a graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts, School of Filmmaking. In 2008, he won the Gotham Award for Breakthrough Director for *Great World of Sound*, his debut feature as a writer/director, which was distributed by Magnolia Entertainment. The film was selected as one of the Top Ten Independent Films of the Year by The National Board of Review, and was nominated for Best First Film, and Best Supporting Actor at the 2008 Independent Spirit Awards.

Sydney Freeland (writer/director) / *Drunktown's Finest* (U.S.A.): Three Native Americans—a rebellious father-to-be, a devout Christian, and a promiscuous transsexual—find their self-images challenged, and ultimately strengthened, as they come of age on an Indian reservation.

Sydney Freeland was born and raised in Gallup, New Mexico. She is a 2009 Sundance/Ford Foundation fellowship recipient, a 2008 Disney Fellowship semi-finalist, and a 2007 Disney Scholarship recipient. Freeland has an MFA in Film and a BFA in Computer Animation. She also received a Fulbright scholarship in 2004 for a field study of indigenous peoples in Ecuador. Freeland currently splits her time between Los Angeles and New Mexico.

Saodat Ismailova (writer/director) / ***40 Days of Silence*** (Uzbekistan): Four generations of women under one roof look to each other for comfort while resisting the strictly proscribed life for women in Uzbek culture.

Saodat Ismailova was born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, where she graduated from the Tashkent State Art Institute, Cinema Department. She was invited to Fabbrica, Benetton's communication research centre in Italy. In 2005, she was a part of the Artists-in-Berlin program of the DAAD. Since 2004, Ismailova has been in charge of documentary films on the music of Central Asia for Smithsonian Folkways, the non-profit record label of the Smithsonian Institute. She has made three short films which screened in international film festivals, including the award-winning documentary *Aral: Fishing in an Invisible Sea*.

Lance Weiler (co-writer/director) and **Chuck Wendig** (co-writer) / ***HiM*** (U.S.A.): When a mysterious sleep virus begins to affect the adults in a small rural town, those under 18 find themselves cut off from civilization and fighting for their lives. As weeks turn into months, they must struggle against the infected adults, one another, and their own worst instincts.

Lance Weiler is a critically acclaimed writer/director whose credits include the features *The Last Broadcast* and *Head Trauma*. *WIRED* magazine named him "one of 25 people reinventing entertainment." Always interested in experimenting with new ways to tell stories and reach audiences, Weiler developed a cinema ARG (alternate reality game) around *Head Trauma*, which over 2.5 million people experienced via theaters, mobile drive-ins, phones, and online.

Chuck Wendig is a game industry veteran, having contributed to over 85 game-related books and several video game properties as writer, developer and designer. He is also an accomplished author of short and long works of fiction.

Cao Baoping (writer/director) / ***How Many Trainings Must I Take Before I Can Be as Hard as Steel?*** (China): After spending her entire adolescence fighting with her psychologically abusive mother, a young woman is forced to come to terms with the love underlying the hatred she feels.

Cao Baoping is a graduate of the Beijing Film Academy, and has directed for television as well as teaching screenwriting at his alma mater. His first feature, *Trouble Makers*, was censored for six years before finally being released in 2006. It went on to win the Asian New Talent Award at the Shanghai International Film Festival. His second feature, *The Equation of Love and Death* won the Altadis New Director Award at the San Sebastian Film Festival in 2008.

Sean Durkin (writer/director) / ***Martha Marcy May Marlene*** (U.S.A.): Haunted by painful memories and increasing paranoia, a damaged woman struggles to reassimilate with her family after fleeing an abusive cult.

Sean Durkin wrote and directed *Mary Last Seen*, a short film that will premiere at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival. He was a producer on the feature *Afterschool*, for which he received an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best First Feature. *Afterschool* premiered at the Cannes Film Festival and was released theatrically by IFC. Durkin is a graduate of the NYU Film Program and co-founder of Borderline Films. *Martha Marcy May Marlene* will mark his feature directorial debut.

Cherien Dabis (writer/director) / ***May in the Summer*** (U.S.A., Jordan): A Palestinian American woman grapples with culture shock, religion, and her loving but strong-willed family when she reunites with them in Jordan to plan a wedding that no one knows she's called off.

Cherien Dabis made her feature writing and directorial debut with *Amreeka*, which premiered at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, opened MoMA's New Directors/New Films series, and won the FIPRESCI award at the Cannes Film Festival's Directors Fortnight. The film was nominated for a 2009 Gotham Award, 3 Independent Spirit Awards and was recently named one of the Top Ten Independent Films of the year by the National Board of Review. Dabis is also the winner of the 2009 Humanitas Prize as well as the

Adrienne Shelly Excellence in Filmmaking Award. An accomplished television writer and co-producer, Dabis spent three seasons working on Showtime's groundbreaking original series *The L Word*.

Myna Joseph (writer/director) / ***My Favorite Nightmare*** (U.S.A.): A willful teenager, pregnant with her cousin's child and determined to get an abortion, travels to New York, only to discover her unpredictable father has followed her.

Myna Joseph completed her MFA in Film at Columbia University. Her thesis short film *MAN* was an official selection of the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, Directors' Fortnight at Cannes, SXSW, and New Directors/ New Films at Lincoln Center and the Museum of Modern Art. The film received the Grand Jury Prize for Best Short at numerous festivals including Florida Film Festival, Boston Independent Film Festival, Chicago International Film Festival and CineVegas. Joseph has produced numerous award-winning shorts and co-produced *Pressure Cooker*, a documentary feature broadcast on BET.

Edwin (co-writer/director) and **Daud Sumolang** (co-writer) / ***Postcards from the Zoo*** (Indonesia): After being abandoned at a young age at the zoo, a young woman leaves her magical childhood behind to discover the world outside.

Edwin was born in Surabaya, Indonesia and studied film at the Jakarta Institute for the Arts. In 2005, his short *Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon* became the first Indonesian short film selected for Cannes Directors Fortnight. His short film *Trip to the Wound* played at Clermont Ferrand and Berlinale. Edwin's first feature *Blind Pig Who Wants to Fly* won the FIPRESCI Award at the 38th International Film Festival Rotterdam and the Netpac award at the Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival, and has played at over 45 other international film festivals.

Daud Sumolang was born in Jakarta and studied screenwriting at the Jakarta Institute of Arts. He participated in the 2006 Berlin Talent Campus in script workshops for both feature and documentary film. He wrote *Dajang Soembi: Perempoean Jang Dikawini Andjing*, a short film directed by Edwin, which was screened at MoMA in 2009. In addition to co-writing *Postcards from the Zoo*, he is preparing another feature film script with the support of the Ford Foundation.

Dash Shaw (writer/director) / ***Slobs and Nags*** (U.S.A.): Told with hand-drawn animation, a disconnected family is thrown into chaos when the scientist father loses the test subject of his experiment with appearance-altering technology.

Dash Shaw is the cartoonist of *BodyWorld* (2010 Pantheon Books) and *Bottomless Belly Button* (2008 Fantagraphics Books.) He recently created *The Unclothed Man in the 35th Century A.D.*, a series of animated shorts for ifc.com, and a book of the same title collecting his comic short stories. A prolific cartoonist and animator, Shaw was born in Los Angeles, and currently lives in Brooklyn.

Samantha McIntyre (writer) / ***Unicorn Store*** (U.S.A.): A lonely young woman who has never had a boyfriend tries to fix her life by purchasing a unicorn.

Samantha McIntyre is a writer and actress from Dallas, where she received an MFA in acting from Southern Methodist University, and took to the stage many times at Kitchen Dog Theater. As a founding member of the Los Angeles theater company Meadows Basement, McIntyre performed and produced plays for several years before starting to write. For the past three years, she has written for television, most recently on HBO's *Bored to Death*.

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 addition, the FFP offers the Creative Producing Fellowship, a year-long Fellowship program for emerging independent producers, which includes a Creative Producing Lab, industry mentorship, and financial support.

Over its 28 year history, the **Sundance Institute Feature Film Program** has supported an extensive list of award-winning independent films including Cary Fukunaga's *Sin Nombre*, Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer*, Fernando Eimbcke's *Lake Tahoe*, Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden's *Half Nelson*, Andrea Arnold's *Red Road*, Miranda July's *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, Hany Abu-Assad's *Paradise Now*, Debra Granik's *Down to the Bone*, Ira Sachs' *Forty Shades of Blue*, 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*, Allison Anders' *Mi Vida Loca*, Paul Thomas Anderson's *Hard Eight*, Tamara Jenkins' *Slums of Beverly Hills*, and Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*.

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