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For Immediate Release
January 28, 2010

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2010 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 2010 Sundance / NHK International Filmmakers Awards. The four winners were selected from 12 finalists by members of an International Jury which included: Violeta Bava, John Carney, Michael Lehmann, Rebecca Miller, Jose Rivera, Elena Soarez, Pablo Stoll and Wesley Strick; and a Japanese Jury that included Masato Harada, Shin-ichi Kobayashi and Bong-Ou Lee.

Originally created to celebrate 100 years of Cinema, the annual award recognizes and supports four visionary filmmakers from Europe, Latin America, the United States, and Japan on their next films. Each winner receives approximately \$100,000 (\$10,000 as a cash award and a guarantee from NHK to purchase the Japanese television broadcast rights). In addition, Sundance Institute staff works closely with the winners throughout the year, providing creative and strategic support through the development, financing and production of their films. The awards are presented at the Sundance Film Festival Awards Ceremony on Saturday, January 30, 2010.

The winning filmmakers and projects are: **Amat Escalante, *Heli*** from Mexico; **Andrey Zvyagintsev, *Elena*** from Russia; **Daisuke Yamaoka, *The Wonderful Lives at Asahigaoka*** (written with Yugo Eto) from Japan; and **Benh Zeitlin, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*** (written with Lucy Alibar) from the United States.

"This year's winners unsettle, delight and move audiences with their innovative and inspiring work. We celebrate each of their distinct styles and the unique lens through which they view the world", 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 Cienega* (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 2009 recipients were: Diego Lerman, *Ciencias Morales (Moral Sciences)* (Argentina); David Riker, *The Girl* (USA); Kenji Qurata, *Speed Girl* (Japan); and Lucile Hadzihalilovic, *Evolution* (France).

The Winners of the 2010 Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Award are:

LATIN AMERICA:

Amat Escalante / *Heli* (Mexico) In a small Mexican town, where most citizens work for an automobile assembly plant or the local drug cartel, Heli is confronted with police corruption, drug trafficking, sexual exploitation, love, guilt and revenge in the search for his father who has mysteriously disappeared.

Born in 1979, Amat Escalante is a self-taught filmmaker from Guanajuato, Mexico. At age 15, he began to devote himself completely to cinema. His first feature *Sangre* premiered in Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival 2005, where it received the *Fipresci* Prize. His second feature film *Los Bastardos* also premiered in the Official Selection Un Certain Regard Cannes in 2008 and won numerous awards including Best Film at the Morelia, Sitges and Mar del Plata film festivals. It has been distributed worldwide, including Mexico, USA, France and Canada.

EUROPE:

Andrey Zvyagintsev / *Elena* (Russia) An elderly woman who has lived with her rich husband in a large, comfortable home tries to rescue her alcoholic son from poverty and give his family the opportunity for a better life that she alone could not provide.

Andrey Zvyagintsev graduated from The Russian Academy of Theatre Arts (GITIS) where he was trained as an actor, then worked on independent theatre projects and acted in TV series and films. In 2000 Andrei made his first short TV fiction films as a director. His first motion picture *The Return* was nominated for the Golden Globe after winning the Golden Lion and the Lion of the Future for the best director's debut at the Venice Film Festival. His second feature film *BANISHMENT* premiered at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival where Konstantin Lavronenko won the award for Best Leading Actor Award, the first ever for a Russian actor.

UNITED STATES:

Benh Zeitlin / *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (USA) (written with Lucy Alibar) In the Louisiana Delta, a ferocious ten-year-old girl refuses to evacuate her home without her dying father as the Southern Apocalypse descends upon them.

Raised by two folklorists in Queens, NY, Benh Zeitlin is a director, animator, and composer for the Court 13 coterie. Director of award-winning shorts *Eggs*, *Origins of Electricity*, *I Get Wet* and *Glory at Sea*, Filmmaker Magazine recently named him one of the "25 New Faces of Independent Film." Zeitlin participated in the 2009 June Screenwriters and Directors Lab and is the recipient of a Sundance grant from the Annenberg Foundation. 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, pop-corn making, movie projector cum Mardi-Gras float in preparation for Carnival 2010.

JAPAN:

Daisuke Yamaoka / *The Wonderful Lives at Asahigaoka* (Japan) (written with Yugo Eto) A young woman's suicide attempt leaves her in a coma but stirs up the lives of the people around her in the sleepy riverside town of Asahigaoka.

Daisuke Yamaoka worked for production companies before completing *Lost Girl* in 2007. *Lost Girl* was released in 2009 and exhibited in Shibuya's Eurospace Theater and screened at the Dresden International Film Festival in Germany. *Mika and Seijun* screened at the Philadelphia International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, Austin International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival and won the Toru Murakami Award at the Yamagata International Movie Festival. His film *Death: The Only Cure for Idiots* from Kanagawa University was a runner-up in the Kanagawa Film Concours Grand Prize.

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.

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, Film Composers Lab, Creative Producing Summit, Creative Producing Lab, 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.

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*, *Born into Brothels* and *Trouble the Water*.
www.sundance.org.

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