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## **2008 SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES AWARDS**

**FROZEN RIVER, KING OF PING PONG, MAN ON WIRE and TROUBLE THE WATER  
Earn Top Jury Prizes;  
Audience Favorites Feature CAPTAIN ABU RAED, FIELDS OF FUEL, MAN ON WIRE  
and THE WACKNESS**

**Park City, UT**—The jury and audience award-winners of the 2008 Sundance Film Festival were announced tonight at the Festival's closing Awards Ceremony hosted by William H. Macy in Park City, Utah. Films receiving jury awards were selected from the four feature-length Documentary and Dramatic competition categories by distinguished jurors. Films in these categories were also eligible for the 2008 Sundance Film Festival Audience Awards as selected by Film Festival audiences. Highlights from the Awards Ceremony can be seen on the Sundance Channel, the Official Television Network of the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, beginning Sunday, January 27 as well as on the Festival website, [www.sundance.org/festival](http://www.sundance.org/festival).

In addition to awards for feature-length films, the Shorts Jury awarded Jury Prizes in Short Filmmaking to American and international short-form films. Other awards recognized at the ceremony included the Alfred P. Sloan Prize, awarded to a film which excels in addressing compelling topics in science or technology, and the Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Award, created to honor and support emerging filmmakers with their next screenplays.

"The Festival has been incredibly fortunate this year to have esteemed, diverse jurors committed to advancing independent film, filmmakers willing to take risks with their work and audiences in search of yet-to-be-discovered voices," said Geoffrey Gilmore, Director, Sundance Film Festival. "This year's award recipients, including eleven first-time feature filmmakers, have taken on the world through a personal lens and audiences have responded."

"When we programmed the Festival in November, we knew we would be working with an amazing group of directors, writers and cinematographers," said John Cooper, Director of Programming, Sundance Film Festival. "It is always an incredible experience to watch audiences discover new talent and connect with filmmakers in unexpected ways. We are thrilled by the jury and audience response and excited to see these films out in the world."

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**The 2008 Sundance Film Festival Juries** consisted of: **Dramatic Competition:** Marcia Gay Harden, Mary Harron, Diego Luna, Sandra Oh and Quentin Tarantino; **Documentary Competition:** Michelle Byrd, Heidi Ewing, Eugene Jarecki, Steven Okazaki and Annie Sundberg; **World Dramatic Competition:** Shunji Iwai (Japan), Lucrecia Martel (Argentina) and Jan Schütte (Germany); **World Documentary Competition:** Amir Bar-Lev (US), Leena Pasanen (Finland/Denmark) and Ilda Santiago (Brazil); **American and International Shorts:** Jon Bloom, Melonie Diaz and Jason Reitman; and **The Alfred P. Sloan Prize:** Alan Alda, Michael Polish, Evan Schwartz, Benedict Schwegler and John Underkoffler.

### **The 2008 Sundance Film Festival Awards Winners:**

The **Grand Jury Prize: Documentary** was presented to **TROUBLE THE WATER**, directed by Tia Lessin and Carl Deal. An aspiring rap artist and her streetwise husband, armed with a video camera, show what survival means when they are trapped in New Orleans by deadly floodwaters, and seize a chance for a new beginning.

The **Grand Jury Prize: Dramatic** was presented to **FROZEN RIVER**, directed by Courtney Hunt, about a desperate trailer mom and a Mohawk Indian girl who team up to smuggle illegal immigrants into the United States from Canada.

**The World Cinema Jury Prize: Documentary** was presented to **MAN ON WIRE**/United Kingdom, directed by James Marsh. The film chronicles French artist Philippe Petit's daring dance on a wire suspended between New York's Twin Towers and his subsequent arrest for what would become known as "the artistic crime of the century."

**The World Cinema Jury Prize: Dramatic** was presented to **KING OF PING PONG (PING PONGKINGEN)**/Sweden, directed by Jens Jonsson. An ostracized and bullied teenager who excels only in ping pong descends into an acrimonious struggle with his younger, more popular brother when the truth about their family history and their father surfaces over the course of their spring break.

The **Audience Awards** are presented to both a dramatic and documentary film in four Competition categories as voted by Sundance Film Festival audiences. The 2008 Sundance Film Festival Audience Awards are presented by Volkswagen of America, Inc.

The **Audience Award: Documentary** was presented to **FIELDS OF FUEL**, directed by Josh Tickell. A look at America's addiction to oil, Tickell is a man with a plan and a Veggie Van, who is taking on big oil, big government, and big soy to find solutions in places few people have looked.

The **Audience Award: Dramatic** was presented to **THE WACKNESS**, directed by Jonathan Levine. During a sweltering New York summer, a troubled teenage drug dealer trades pot for therapy sessions with a drug-addled psychiatrist, and in the process falls for the doctor's daughter.

**The World Cinema Audience Award: Documentary** was presented to **MAN ON WIRE**/United Kingdom, directed by James Marsh. The film chronicles French artist Philippe Petit's daring dance on a wire suspended between New York's Twin Towers and subsequent arrest for what would become known as "the artistic crime of the century."

**The World Cinema Audience Award: Dramatic** was presented to **CAPTAIN ABU RAED**/Jordan, by director Amin Matalqa. The first feature film to come out of Jordan in 50 years, **CAPTAIN ABU RAED** tells

the story of an aging airport janitor who is mistaken for an airline pilot by a group of poor neighborhood children and whose fantastical stories offer hope for a sad, sometimes unchangeable, reality.

The **Directing Awards** recognize excellence in directing for dramatic and documentary features.

The **Directing Award: Documentary** was presented to Nanette Burstein for her film **AMERICAN TEEN**, an irreverent cinema vérité which chronicles four seniors at an Indiana high school and yields a surprising snapshot of Midwestern life.

The **Directing Award: Dramatic** was presented to Lance Hammer for **BALLAST**, a riveting, lyrical portrait of an emotionally frayed family whose lives are torn asunder by a tragic act in a small Mississippi Delta town.

The **World Cinema Directing Award: Documentary** was presented to Nino Kirtadze, director of **DURAKOVO: VILLAGE OF FOOLS (DURAKOVO: LE VILLAGE DES FOUS)**/ France. The film portrays life in a castle outside Moscow, where Mikhail Morozov rules autonomously over young initiates, laying the groundwork for a rapidly growing right-wing movement.

The **World Cinema Directing Award: Dramatic** was presented to Anna Melikyan for **MERMAID (RUSALKA)**/ Russia. The fanciful tale of an introverted little girl who grows up believing she has the power to make wishes come true. She must reconcile this belief with reality when, as a young woman, she journeys to Moscow and grapples with love, modernity and materialism.

The **Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award** for outstanding achievement in writing was presented to Alex Rivera and David Riker for their screenplay for **SLEEP DEALER**. Set in a near-future, militarized world marked by closed borders, virtual labor and a global digital network that joins minds and experiences, three strangers risk their lives to connect with each other and break the barriers of technology.

The **World Cinema Screenwriting Award** was presented to Samuel Benchetrit for his screenplay of **I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A GANGSTER (J'AI TOUJOURS RÊVÉ D'ÊTRE UN GANGSTER)**/ France. Told in four vignettes, this existential comedy relates the exploits of four aspiring criminals who hope to improve their lot, but find that they might not have what it takes for a life of crime.

The **Documentary Editing Award** was presented to Joe Bini for his work on the film **ROMAN POLANSKI: WANTED AND DESIRED**. The documentary examines the public scandal and private tragedy which led to legendary director Roman Polanski's sudden flight from the United States.

The **World Cinema Documentary Editing Award** was presented to Irena Dol for her work on **THE ART STAR AND THE SUDANESE TWINS**/New Zealand. The film profiles artist Vanessa Beecroft and how her obsession to adopt Sudanese twin orphans drives her marriage to a breaking point and fuels her controversial art.

The **Excellence in Cinematography Awards** honor exceptional cinematography in both dramatic and documentary categories. This year's recipients are:

The **Excellence in Cinematography Award: Documentary** was presented to Phillip Hunt and Steven Sebring for their work on the film **PATTI SMITH: DREAM OF LIFE**, an intimate portrait of the poet, painter, musician and singer that mirrors the essence of the artist herself.

The **Excellence in Cinematography Award: Dramatic** was presented to Lol Crawley for **BALLAST**, a riveting, lyrical portrait of an emotionally frayed family whose lives are torn asunder by a tragic act in a small Mississippi Delta town.

The **World Cinema Cinematography Award: Documentary** was presented to al Massad for his work on **RECYCLE** /Jordan. A Jordanian family man living in the hometown of Muslim leader Abu Musa Al Zarqawi struggles to support his family and define his identity in a tense political climate.

The **World Cinema Cinematography Award: Dramatic** was presented to Askild Vik Edvardsen for **KING OF PING PONG (PING PONGKINGEN)** / Sweden. An ostracized and bullied teenager who excels only in ping pong descends into an acrimonious struggle with his younger, more popular brother when the truth about their family history and their father surfaces over the course of their spring break.

A **World Cinema Special Jury Prize: Dramatic** was presented to Ernesto Contreras, director of **BLUE EYELIDS (PÁRPADOS AZULES)** / Mexico. When Marina wins a beach getaway trip for two, her desperate search for someone to take with her leads to a complicated relationship and the revelation that she might be better off on her own.

A **Special Jury Prize: Documentary** was presented to Lisa F. Jackson, director of **GREATEST SILENCE: RAPE IN THE CONGO**, for her piercing, intimate look into the struggle of the lives of rape survivors.

A **Special Jury Prize: Dramatic, The Spirit of Independence** was presented to director Chusy Haney-Jardine for **ANYWHERE, USA**, a wildly original look at American manners, prejudices, and family dynamics.

A **Special Jury Prize: Dramatic, Work by an Ensemble Cast** was presented to the cast of **CHOKER**. An adaptation of Chuck Palahniuk's novel, **CHOKER** is the sardonic story about mother and son relationship, fear of aging, sexual addiction, and the dark side of historical theme parks. Cast: *Sam Rockwell, Anjelica Huston, Kelly MacDonald, Brad Henke*.

The **2008 Jury Prize in Short Filmmaking** was awarded to two films: **MY OLYMPIC SUMMER**, directed by Daniel Robin, and **SIKUMI (On the Ice)**, directed by Andrew Okpeaha MacLean. The jury also presented the **International Jury Prize in International Short Filmmaking** to **SOFT**, directed by Simon Ellis. **Honorable Mentions in Short Filmmaking** were presented to: **AQUARIUM**, directed by Rob Meyer; **AUGUST 15th**, directed by Xuan Jiang; **LA CORONA (THE CROWN)**, directed by Amanda Micheli and Isabel Vega; **OIRAN LYRICS**, directed by Ryosuke Ogawa; **SPIDER**, directed by Nash Edgerton; **SUSPENSION**, directed by Nicolas Provost, and **W.**, directed by The Vikings. The 2008 Sundance Film Festival Short Film Awards were presented by Adobe Systems Incorporated.

**SLEEP DEALER**, directed by Alex Rivera, is the recipient of this year's **Alfred P. Sloan Prize**. The Prize, which carries a \$20,000 cash award to the filmmaker provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, is presented to an outstanding feature film focusing on science or technology as a theme, or depicting a scientist, engineer or mathematician as a major character.

Sundance Institute and NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) on Thursday announced the winners of the 2008 **Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Awards**. Now in its twelfth year, the Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Award was created to honor and support emerging filmmakers—one each from the United States, Japan, Europe and Latin America—who possess the originality, talent and vision to be celebrated as we look to the future of international cinema. The winning filmmakers and projects for 2008

are Alejandro Fernandez Almendras from Chile with **HUACHO**; Braden King from the United States, with **HERE**; Aiko Nagatsu from Japan, with **APOPTOSIS**; and Radu Jude from Romania, with **THE HAPPIEST GIRL IN THE WORLD**.

For the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, 125 feature-length films were selected including 87 world premieres, 14 North American premieres, and 11 U.S. premieres representing 34 countries with 53 first-time feature filmmakers, including 32 in competition. These films were selected from 3,624 feature film submissions composed of 2,021 U.S. and 1,603 international feature-length films. These numbers represent an increase from last year when 1,852 U.S. and 1,435 international feature-length films were considered.

## 2008 Sundance Film Festival Sponsors

The 2008 Sundance Film Festival Sponsors help sustain Sundance Institute's year-round programs to support independent artists, inspire risk-taking, and encourage diversity in the arts. This year's Festival Sponsors include: Presenting Sponsors - *Entertainment Weekly*, Volkswagen of America, Inc., HP, and Adobe Systems Incorporated; Leadership Sponsors - American Express, Delta Air Lines, DIRECTV, and Microsoft Corporation; Sustaining Sponsors - 360 Vodka, Blockbuster Inc., ChaCha, L'Oréal Paris, *The New York Times*, Ray-Ban, Sony Electronics, Inc., Stella Artois®, Turning Leaf Vineyards, Utah Film Commission, and ZonePerfect® Nutrition Bars. Sundance Channel is the Official Television Network of the 2008 Sundance Film Festival.

## Sundance Film Festival

Sundance Film Festival is the premier showcase for U.S. and international independent film. Held each January in Park City, Salt Lake City, Ogden, and Sundance, Utah, the Festival is a core program of Sundance Institute, a nonprofit cultural organization founded by Robert Redford in 1981. Presenting dramatic and documentary feature-length films in nine distinct categories and approximately 80 short films each year, the Sundance Film Festival has introduced American audiences to some of the most innovative films of the past two decades. Since 1984, the Festival program has evolved to include music, art, and dialogue. Beyond the streets of Park City, the official website of the Sundance Film Festival, <http://www.sundance.org/festival> shares the Festival experience with a global audience with short films, filmmaker interviews, videos, podcasts, photos, news stories, and more.

## Sundance Institute

Dedicated year-round to the development of artists of independent vision and to the exhibition of their new work, Sundance Institute celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2006. Founded by Robert Redford in 1981, the Institute has grown into an internationally recognized resource for thousands of independent artists through its Film Festival and artistic development programs for filmmakers, screenwriters, composers, playwrights, and theatre artists. The original values of independence, creative risk-taking, and discovery continue to define and guide the work of Sundance Institute, both with U.S. artists and, increasingly, with artists from other regions of the world.

For images, please visit: <ftp://ftp.sundance.org>; Login ID: press; password: SFF08! (all caps)

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