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**BRING FILM TO LIFE**

For immediate release  
December 10, 2008

## **Victoria Film Festival Unveils Unique Program for 2009: 'Springboard' Spotlights 20 Top Canadian Film Makers**

Kathy Kay, Director of the Victoria Film Festival released the names today of 20 top promising Canadian filmmakers who will be highlighted at the 2009 event, January 30 to February 1. This is a first ever program for any Canadian film festival and organizers of the program hope that it will give talented artists a springboard to greater success.

The twenty participants, chosen from a list of over fifty nominees, will have the opportunity to speak of their views on the future of media art, the new delivery systems, or the topic of a film that has emboldened them and to share their big ideas and passions about film. In between the talks, celebrants and delegates will have the opportunity to meet with North American broadcasters and distributors in one-on-one pre-arranged meetings.

Some of the participants have already seen a measure of success, such as Toronto based Sarah Polley (*Away From Her*) and Vancouver's Andrew Currie (*Fido*), while others such as Kevin Drew, lead singer for Broken Social Scene and Cree filmmaker Kevin Lee Burton, are just beginning to taste success in the film industry.

Festival Director Kathy Kay said in unveiling the list "It feels terrific to put the spotlight on these talented Canadians. I feel we struck a good balance that will make for interesting presentations. We felt it was a better approach that people did not have to submit to be on the list, but instead they were hand-picked by the jurors, highly respected individuals in the industry." Kay added "The jurors were amazing, very thoughtful about whom they selected. I'm hoping that the Victoria Film Festival will bring interest to these unique filmmakers."

The nominating jury consisted of producer Michael Donovan (*Shake Hands with the Devil*, *Bowling for Columbine*) and director Bruce McDonald (*Hard Core Logo*, *Love Crimes of Gillian Guess*), joined by notable film critics; Brian D. Johnson from *Maclean's Magazines*, *Canwest News Services* Katherine Monk and Jay Stone, *Toronto Star's* Rob Salem and *Victoria Times Colonist's* Michael D. Reid.

## The Top 20 Selections

**Sarah Polley** (Director) - No introduction required. **Away from Her** was the most remarkable feature debut by a Canadian director in decades. An accomplished actor, Sarah is just beginning her journey behind the camera.

**Simone Urdl / Jennifer Weiss** (Producers) - The co-founders of the production company Film Farm have turned themselves into the go-to company for edgy projects such as Sarah Polley's **Away From Her**, Atom Egoyan's **Adoration** and, most famously, Brian de Palma's Iraq War faux documentary **Redacted**. Their handling of **Away From Her** was a textbook example of shepherding a little film to success: theirs is the exactly kind of company the Canadian industry needs.

**Philippe Falardeau** (Director) - With his last two features, **Congorama** and **C'est pas moi, je le jure!**, this Quebec director has shown he is an original, passionate and provocative storyteller who draws superb performances from his actors. He has great eye for landscape, both physical and cultural.

**Martin Gero** (Director) - One of the marketing geniuses behind **Young People Fucking**, the raunchy romantic comedy that caused such an uproar when the Conservative government introduced Bill C-10 — since withdrawn — to stop funding for just such movies. Gero, the director, showed an accomplished slickness in the movie, which was funny and sometimes insightful and provided a nice departure from the usual Canadian indie cinema (dark musings, usually involving incest.)

**Scott Dewis** (Producer) - A Victoria home-grown digital magician of Race Rocks Digital fame. This guy's a visionary. He has some exciting developments he should be ready to share by festival time. He's all about showing people how to make high calibre computer animated product for a fraction of the cost it would take in Hollywood. \_ **Kevin Drew** (Director/Musician) - Lead singer of Broken Social Scene. His directorial debut came with shooting a short film based on Feist's song **The Water**. He is now planning feature.

**Garfield Lindsay Miller** (Writer/ Director)-Garfield just completed his first feature. He has worked with notable producer/director Camellia Frieberg.

**Rob Merilees** (Producer) - The man who helped Bill Vince found Infinity Features, Merilees has done more than create a west coast production entity with worldwide scope, he's remained an integral member of the filmmaking community.

**Nathan Fielder** (Writer/producer) - An Internet/You Tube filmmaker/comedian who's brought his own quirky brand of comedy to **This Hour Has 22 Minutes**, to much success. He also wrote and directed a television special about the American election that aired on Comedy Network this fall.

**Floyd Kane** (Producer) – Floyd worked his way up from being a junior lawyer at Salter Street Films to being an Executive Producer on one-hour drama series for Vision TV. Smart, talented and worthy of recognition.

**Eli Goree** (Actor) - He has gone from a day player in the CBC series **North South** to having a major recurring role in **Kink in my Hair**, the Canwest series, to being a supporting lead in Vision TV's hour long drama **Soul** all in three years.

**Richie Mehta** (Writer/Director) – **Amal** has won awards at festivals around the world and has performed remarkably well at the box-office for a subtitled film. Mehta has shown real talent. It's not "Canadian" in the traditional sense, except for the fact that Mehta lives in Toronto and the script was written by his brother. But there's a Canadian sensibility at work, and the film is fully formed. Amal feels like the start of a big career.

**Andrew Currie** (Director)-This is a name I wasn't familiar with until 2006, when I saw **Fido**, one of the most creative zombie pictures ever. It's set in the years after the zombie wars, when people found technology that enabled them to turn zombies into household pets/servants. The concept allows Currie, who wrote and directed, to explore the politics of power and culture in a quasi-parody of 1950s suburbia. Currie is a name worth watching.

**Flemish Beauty** (animators) Produced an award winning short, both handsome and beautiful. On their way to world domination\_\_ **David Bezmozgis** (Writer/Director) The aspiring novelist left filmmaking for several years to create the script for **Victoria Day**, a coming of age story that was recently accepted to the 2009 Sundance Film Festival.

**Brett Gaylor** Documentary filmmaker – Gaylor was a teacher at the Galiano Island Film and Television School while he put the pieces together for **RiP: Remix Manifesto** which recently picked up top honours in Europe. Gaylor's independent spirit is obvious in everything he does, whether it's helping the homeless, or riling up the indie spirit with his movie about copyright in the digital age.

**Marie – Helene Cousineau / Madeline Piujuq Ivalu** (Directors). Co-directors of **Before Tomorrow**, which picked up the same First Nations storytelling tradition as Zacharias Kunuck. The film was invited to Sundance, and premiered at TIFF 2008.

**Kevin Lee Burton** (shorts filmmaker) A Cree filmmaker whose short film **Song** (Nikamowin) incorporated First Nations oral tradition with digital tools to revise the relationship with the landscape.

**Michael McGowan** (director) An award winning filmmaker right out of the gate, his latest film **One Week** knocks it out of the park.

**Jacob Tierney** (actor/director) An interesting actor who has just finished shooting a feature in Montreal about Trotsky in high school. His work is creating a buzz.

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