

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL



For Immediate Release
November 19, 2008

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25TH SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL TO OPEN WITH WORLD PREMIERE OF ADAM ELLIOT'S *MARY AND MAX*

Clay Animation Film Starring Philip Seymour Hoffman and Toni Collette,
Narrated by Barry Humphries to Screen Opening Night, January 15 in Park City

Park City, UT—Sundance Institute announced today that the world premiere of *Mary and Max*, a clay animation feature film from Academy Award-winning short film creators Adam Elliot and producer Melanie Coombs is the Opening Night Film for the 2009 Sundance Film Festival. Starring Philip Seymour Hoffman and Toni Collette and narrated by Barry Humphries, *Mary and Max* is the tale of two unlikely pen pals: Mary, a lonely, eight-year-old girl living in the suburbs of Melbourne, and Max, a forty-four-year old, severely obese man living in New York. The story is based on the director's own pen-friendship that has also lasted over twenty years. Celebrating its 25th anniversary, the Sundance Film Festival runs January 15-25, 2009 in Park City, Salt Lake City, Ogden, and Sundance, Utah.

"This portrait of a global friendship between two marvelously dysfunctional people is an exceptionally moving, funny and thought-provoking work," said Geoffrey Gilmore, Director, Sundance Film Festival. "*Mary and Max* is the first film of its kind to open the Festival and we anticipate audiences will embrace Adam Elliot's feature-length directorial debut for its poignant story, exceptional voice talent and technological creativity."

Mary and Max marks renowned Australian animator Adam Elliot's return to Sundance Film Festival. His short film *Harvie Krumpet*, also produced by Melanie Coombs, screened at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival and went on to win the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film. Elliot has been awarded five Australian Film Institute Awards, for his four previous films. These films, which also include *Uncle*, *Cousin* and *Brother*, have screened in hundreds of film festivals all over the world. "By Opening Night it will have been five years since Melanie and I began working on the film. It has been a whale of a pregnancy and we are so thrilled that the birth will be in Sundance. It is a dream come true to unveil our film in such an honored and nourishing environment." said Elliot.

Written and directed by Elliot, *Mary and Max* tells the tale of an improbable friendship between two very different people: Mary Daisy Dinkle (Collette) a lonely Australian eight-year-old, and Max Jerry Horowitz (Hoffman), a middle-aged New Yorker. Spanning 20 years and two continents, *Mary and Max* is a journey that explores friendship, autism, taxidermy, psychiatry, alcoholism, obesity, kleptomania, sexual difference, religious difference, agoraphobia and more. The film is narrated by Australian legend Barry Humphries and features cameos from Eric Bana, singer Renee Geyer and Australian music icon Ian "Molly" Meldrum along with Julie Forsyth and John Flaus.

Mary and Max was Produced by Melanie Coombs and Executive Produced by Mark Gooder, Paul Hardart, Tom Hardart, Bryce Menzies and Jonathan Page and Co-Executive Produced by Iain Canning, Andrew Mackie and Richard Payten with Associate Producer Pauline Piechota. *Mary and Max* was financed by Screen Australia, Adirondack Pictures and Film Victoria and is being sold internationally by Icon Entertainment International.

"All of us could not think of a better place to launch Adam's labor of love. It is thrilling to have the home of independent filmmaking recognize Adam's enormous talent," said Mark Gooder, CEO of Icon.

The entire 2009 Sundance Film Festival program announcement will be made on Wednesday, December 3 and Thursday, December 4.

2009 Sundance Film Festival Sponsors

The 2009 Sundance Film Festival Sponsors help sustain not only the Festival but also the year-round programs of the non-profit Sundance Institute. Their support is crucial to the Institute's mission of nurturing independent artists, inspiring risk-taking, and encouraging diversity in the arts. This year's Festival Sponsors include: Presenting Sponsors - Entertainment Weekly, HP and Honda; Leadership Sponsors - American Express, Delta Air Lines, DIRECTV, Google, Microsoft Corporation and; Sustaining Sponsors - Blockbuster Inc., FilterForGoodSM, a partnership between Brita® and Nalgene®, got milk?, L'Oréal Paris, The New York Times, Ray-Ban, Sony Electronics, Inc., Stella Artois® and Utah Film Commission. Sundance Channel is the Official Television Network of the 2009 Sundance Film Festival.

Sundance Film Festival

The Sundance Film Festival is the premier showcase for U.S. and international independent film. Held each January in and around Park City, Utah, the Festival is a core program of Sundance Institute, a nonprofit cultural organization founded by Robert Redford in 1981. Presenting 120 dramatic and documentary feature-length films in seven distinct categories, and 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, including *AMERICAN SPLENDOR*, *CLERKS*, *HUSTLE AND FLOW*, *MARIA FULL OF GRACE*, *NAPOLEON DYNAMITE*, *sex, lies and videotape*, *SMOKE SIGNALS*, and *BORN INTO BROTHELS*. Beyond the streets of Park City, the official website of the Sundance Film Festival, www.sundance.org/festival shares the Festival experience with a global audience through the behind-the-scenes access, filmmaker interviews, and current news and box office information.

Sundance Institute

Dedicated year-round to the development of artists of independent vision and to the exhibition of their new work, Sundance 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 US artists and, increasingly, with artists from other regions of the world.

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For images, please visit: <ftp://ftp.sundance.org>; Login ID: press; password: SFF09! (all caps).