



NEWS RELEASE

PERSPECTIVES FILM FESTIVAL BEGINS JULY 24

UNIQUE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL TO TAKE PLACE AT THE ARCLIGHT CINEMAS IN HOLLYWOOD

Actors William H. Macy and Joe Mantegna Among Participants

Los Angeles, July 9, 2003 – The American Film Institute (AFI) and Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center have joined forces to present *PERSPECTIVES, An International Film Festival and Forum Promoting Understanding and Inclusion of People with Developmental Disabilities*. Open to everyone and subtitled *When you look at me, what do you see?*, the four-day event will take place July 24-27, 2003.

The festival will present domestic and international narrative features, documentaries, and short films that depict the lives of people with developmental disabilities. *PERSPECTIVES* is designed to challenge perceptions, expand awareness and create a body of common experience. Each screening will be followed by a moderated discussion in the form of a "town hall" style meeting, a panel discussion or a lively conversation with an expert. The festival will also include two special screenings specifically for adults with developmental disabilities and siblings of individuals with developmental disabilities.

The Festival's closing night event, held on July 27, will be a media forum including among its panelists Joe Mantegna. Immediately following the Media Forum will be the first-ever presentation of the *PERSPECTIVES Media Award*. The recipient of this award will be actor William H. Macy.

"Film has always been an avenue for opening eyes to experiences that enrich us and make us able to understand life from another point of view," says Christian Gaines, Director of Festivals at AFI. "AFI is delighted to be partnering with the Lanterman Regional Center on this event because it brings together people who will be able to not only share their stories, but also do something about the images we see."

"Despite all the progress we have made in terms of improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families, the one thing they tell us they value the most and find the least is social acceptance and inclusion," explains Diane Anand, Executive Director of Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center. "*PERSPECTIVES* is the beginning of an ongoing educational effort to change that."

"As an actor, I know first-hand the transforming power of getting inside another person's skin. And as the father of a daughter with autism, I am especially sensitive

to the need for accurate portrayals of disabilities. This festival is a wonderful opportunity to share the experience of individuals with developmental disabilities, and in that way deepen our understanding," says *PERSPECTIVES* Council of Advisors member Joe Mantegna.

Over 2,500 people are expected to attend *PERSPECTIVES* in its inaugural year. Tickets will go on sale July 10, 2003, at ArcLight Cinema's box office 323-464-1465 or online at www.arclightcinemas.com. The ArcLight Cinemas are located at 6360 Sunset Boulevard (at Ivar), Hollywood, California.

Films featured at *PERSPECTIVES* will include:

THURSDAY, JULY 24 AT 7:00 P.M.

Opening Night

Reception to Follow

MY LEFT FOOT

IRELAND/UK, 1989, 98 MIN, 35 MM

DIR: Jim Sheridan SCR: Christy Brown, Shane Connaughton, Jim Sheridan PROD: Noel Pearson EXEC PROD: Paul M. Heller, Steve Morrison MUS: Elmer Bernstein DP: Jack Conroy ED: J. Patrick Duffner

CAST: Daniel Day-Lewis, Brenda Fricker, Alison Whelan, Kirsten Sheridan, Declan Croghan, Eanna MacLiam, Marie Conmee, Hugh O'Connor

Artist Christy Brown, played by Academy Award winner Daniel Day-Lewis, is born with severe cerebral palsy into a large, poor Irish family. His mother, Mrs. Brown, recognizes the intelligence and humanity in the lad everyone else largely ignores. Eventually, Christy matures into a cantankerous writer who uses his only functional limb, his left foot, to write. In this true story told through flashbacks, Christy Brown, who is only able to control movement in his left foot and to speak in guttural sounds, is mistakenly believed to have an intellectual disability for the first 10 years of his life. Later, through the help of his strong-willed mother, a dedicated teacher, and his own courage and determination, Christy not only learns to grapple with life's simple physical tasks and complex psychological pains, but also develops into a brilliant painter, poet and author.

Special Guest: Director Jim Sheridan.

FRIDAY, JULY 25 AT 2:00 P.M.

***** Special Screening *****

WAITING FOR RONALD

USA, 2003, 20 MIN, VIDEO

SCR/DIR: Ellen Gerstein PROD: Ellen Gerstein, Kimberley Browning, Christopher Horvath, DP: Jay Holben, ED Bernard Gribble, MUS Penka Kouneva

A 34-year-old man with intellectual challenges finally leaves the institution in which he has spent most of his years. He is an everyday hero who takes his suitcase, fears, anxiety and humor to meet his best friend Edgar, and start a new life.

Following the screening will be a discussion with representatives from Media Access, LA Goal, Performing Arts Studio West and working actors with developmental disabilities for people interested in becoming actors or working in film. This screening is being sponsored by Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center and admission is free to all.

Special Guests: Director Ellen Gerstein and actors from the film.

FRIDAY, JULY 25 AT 7:00 P.M.

MY FLESH AND BLOOD

USA, 2003, 83 MIN, VIDEO

DIR: Jonathan Karsh PROD: Jennifer Chaiken DP: Amanda Micheli ED: Eli Olson

MUS: Hector H. Perez, B. Quincy Griffin

Winner of Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Sundance Film Festival 2003, MY FLESH AND BLOOD is a documentary following Susan Tom of Fairfield, CA, and her 11 adopted special needs children. While a daughter who has no legs dates the most popular boy in school, and a child with severe burns becomes the top student in her class, one of Susan's children plans to destroy their happy family. Joe Tom, 15, battles with both Cystic Fibrosis and Bipolar Disorder. After a devastating reunion with his biological parents, Joe turns his rage against the siblings he regards as "freaky," threatening to kill one of them. And when one child unexpectedly dies, MY FLESH AND BLOOD reveals how the Tom family draws strength from their struggles in what turns out to be the most tumultuous year of their lives.

Composed with an eye for visual metaphors and edited to heighten moments of emotional complexity, Karsh's remarkable film brings us inside an experience we might otherwise never know. Not only does he humanize these extraordinary children, but also he shows how they humanize everyone around them. As Tom says, "It's life and you just have to live it."

Special Guests: Director Jonathan Karsh, Producer Jen Chaiken.

FRIDAY, JULY 25 AT 9:15 P.M.

I AM SAM

USA, 2001 132 MIN, 35 MM

DIR: Jessie Nelson SCR: Kristine Johnson, Jessie Nelson PROD: Jessie Nelson, Richard Solomon, Marshall Herskovitz, Edward Zwick EXEC PROD: Claire Rudnick Polstein, Michael De Luca, David Scott Rubin DP: Elliot Davis ED: Richard Chew MUS John Powell CAST: Sean Penn, Michelle Pfeiffer, Dakota Fanning, Dianne Wiest, Loretta Devine, Laura Dern, Richard Schiff

Raising a child is never easy, but like everyone Sam Dawson (Academy Award nominee Sean Penn) has learned to adapt. Sam, a mentally challenged father, is raising his daughter Lucy (Dakota Fanning) with the help of an extraordinary group of friends. Though Lucy's life has never been what anyone would ever call "normal," it has always been animated with humor and love. As Lucy turns seven and begins to intellectually surpass her father, their close bond is threatened when their unique

family comes under the scrutiny of a social worker. Sam Dawson is a man who must now fight for custody of his seven-year-old daughter, and in the process exposes a recluse (Dianne Wiest) and a lawyer (Michelle Pfeiffer) to the bonds of family. With the help of a local organization, L.A. Goal, where Penn observed and studied the people who face the kinds of challenges that the character of Sam encounters in the story, Penn was able to embody the role of Sam Dawson. Many of the actors playing Penn's friends are long-time members of L.A. Goal.

Special Guests: Writer Kristine Johnson and actors from the film.

SATURDAY, JULY 26 AT NOON

***** Special Screening *****

TRU CONFESSIONS

USA, 2002, 83 MIN, VIDEO

DIR: Paul Hoen PROD: Kevin May CO-PROD: Stu Kreiger EXEC. PROD: Jana Sue Memel

Siblings – particularly school age children and adolescents – of individuals with developmental disabilities are being invited to see TRU CONFESSIONS. Originally aired on the Disney Channel in April, the film focuses on “Tru,” a twelve-year-old girl struggling with growing up and feeling responsible for her twin brother Eddie (played by Shia LeBeouf, recently seen in Disney's *Holes*), a boy with intellectual challenges.

Special Guests: Director Paul Hoen, Executive Producer Jana Sue Memel and Actress Clara Bryant (Tru).

SATURDAY, JULY 26 AT 2:00 P.M.

THE COLLECTOR OF BEDFORD STREET

USA, 2002, 34 MIN, VIDEO

DIR: Alice Elliott and Cynthia Wade PROD: Alice Elliott CO-PROD: Vickie Kenny ED: Melissa Hacker MUS: Joel Goodman

Nominated for an Academy Award in the short documentary category in 2002, THE COLLECTOR OF BEDFORD STREET is the story of director Alice Elliott's 60-year-old neighbor Larry Selman. Larry is a community activist and fundraiser with developmental disabilities. Larry raises thousands of dollars for charity every year while living at the poverty level. Because of Larry's 20 years of service to his neighborhood, the community created a supplemental need adult trust fund for him. This is the first time that a group—rather than an individual's family—has done this. The film humanizes the story behind the abstract statistics of mental retardation, revealing how a community builds tolerance and understanding.

Special Guest: Director Alice Elliott.

SATURDAY, JULY 26 AT 2:00 P.M.

REFRIGERATOR MOTHERS

USA, 2002, 53 MIN, VIDEO

DIR: David E. Simpson PROD: J.J. Hanley and Gordon Quinn

www.fanlight.com

From the 1950s through the 1970s, children with autism were widely thought to be victims of inadequate parenting. Influenced by psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, mental health and medical professionals claimed that autism was the product of mothers who were cold, distant, and rejecting—unable to "bond properly." They were labeled "refrigerator mothers." Though this disastrous theory began to be seriously challenged in the mid-1960s, its effects lingered for decades. As recently as 1996, producer J.J. Hanley was told that her son's odd behaviors were the result of overanxious and overbearing mothering. Her family wasted many critical early intervention months before her son was finally diagnosed with autism.

In REFRIGERATOR MOTHERS, seven women share their poignant stories. All but one were told by psychologists or physicians that they were to blame for their child's autism. The only exception, an African-American woman, was told that her son could not be autistic because they did not fit the usual pattern—middle class, highly educated and white. She was told, instead, that her son must be emotionally disturbed. Yet these courageous women refused to be crushed by the burden of blame. Today, they have strong, supportive relationships with their now adult sons and daughters and, in a variety of ways, have helped them to find their place in the world. Offering fascinating insights into the history of our understanding of mental illness and developmental disabilities, this captivating and disturbing film raises questions that are of profound relevance today.

Special Guest: Director David Simpson.

SATURDAY, JULY 26 AT 4:30 P.M.

GRADUATING PETER

USA, 2001, 75 MIN, VIDEO

DIR: Gerardine Wurzburg

www.graduatingpeter.com

GRADUATING PETER is a feature-length documentary film and the sequel to the 1992 Academy Award®-winning EDUCATING PETER. GRADUATING PETER follows a teenager with Down Syndrome from sixth grade through high school as he navigates school, friendships and building a future. The film shows the journey of a student with severe disabilities and his family through middle school and high school and culminates at the important point in Peter's life when he will be leaving the support of the school system for the often difficult worlds of adult life and adult disability services. GRADUATING PETER is the story of a family's struggle to build the best future for their son.

Special Guest: to be announced.

SATURDAY, JULY 26 AT 6:30 P.M.

HOW'S YOUR NEWS

USA, 1996, 82 MIN, VIDEO

DIR: Arthur Bradford EXEC PROD: John Pierson, Trey Parker, Matt Stone PROD: Doug Stone, Arthur Bradford ED: Mike Lahaie DP: P.H. O'Brien MUS: Chad Urmston THE REPORTERS: Robert Bird, Sean Costello, Susan Harrington, Larry Perry, Ronnie Simonsen

www.howsyournews.com

HOW'S YOUR NEWS? is a documentary film which features a team of five news reporters with mental and physical disabilities. According to the director, Arthur Bradford, "We all met at a summer camp in Massachusetts. To make HOW'S YOUR NEWS? we drove across America in a hand-painted RV, interviewing the people we met along the way. HOW'S YOUR NEWS? was an idea which started way back in 1993 at Camp Jabberwocky, a summer camp for adults with mental and physical disabilities in Massachusetts. I had never worked with people with disabilities before and had very little idea what to expect when I first started working there. A friend of mine who had worked there for a few years told me that it would be "a lot of fun," which isn't necessarily the first thought that might pop into most people's minds. Earlier that year some friends and I had put together a public access TV series STREET TV and I thought it would be a good idea to teach a video class while at the camp. So that summer I brought along a simple S-VHS camera and an inexpensive microphone so that the campers could try to make their own videos."

From this kernel of an idea, comes a tremendous documentary celebrating the subjects and pushing the viewers to reexamine what they see when they look at these "disabled" reporters.

Special Guest: Director Arthur Bradford.

SATURDAY, JULY 26 AT 9:00 P.M.

DANCE ME TO MY SONG

Australia, 1997, 102 MIN, 35 MM

SCR/DIR/PROD: Rolf de Heer SCR: Heather Rose SCR: Frederick Stahl PROD: Giuseppe Pedersoli, Domenico Procacci CAST: Heather Rose, Joey Kennedy, John Brumpton, Rena Owen

www.vertigoproductions.com.au

The standing ovation that DANCE ME TO MY SONG received at its world premiere in official competition at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival was recognition of the courage it took to gaze unflinchingly at severe disability and uncover humor, warmth, dignity and passion.

Julia (played with fiery defiance by the film's writer Heather Rose) has cerebral palsy and cannot speak or care for herself. She communicates through an electronic touch-pad voice box. Everyday, her surly caregiver, Madelaine (Joey Kennedy) comes to bathe and feed her. Madelaine frets she will never find "Mr. Right" as long as this "drooling nuisance" Julia is in her care. Julia's only relief comes from rowdy outings with her friend Rix (played with bawdy cheerfulness by Rena Owen). Enter Eddie

(John Brumpton from ROMPER STOMPER and ANGEL BABY), a mysterious and charming loner who instantly takes to the deadpan Julia. Madelaine has other plans for him. A love triangle like nothing you have ever seen begins to develop.

Director Rolf de Heer's love of challenge comes through in THE QUIET ROOM about the painful life of a young girl who refuses to speak. Recently de Heer has stunned audiences with THE TRACKER (2002) and most recently ALEXANDRA'S PROJECT (2003). In DANCE ME TO MY SONG, de Heer tackles a difficult subject with remarkable patience, emerging with raw honesty, dark humor and deep sensitivity.

Special Guests: Director/Writer Rolf de Heer and Actress Rena Owen.

SUNDAY, JULY 27 AT NOON
ON THE ROAD WITH TEMPLE
USA, 2002, 25 MIN, VIDEO
DIR: Karen Lefcourt

ON THE ROAD WITH TEMPLE follows Dr. Temple Grandin as she travels around the country. Temple has autism and is a leading designer of cattle slaughter facilities.

Special Guest: Karen Lefcourt.

SUNDAY, JULY 27 AT NOON
PATTERNS
IRELAND, 2002, 20 MIN,
SCR/DIR/ED: Kirsten Sheridan, PROD: Miriam Cahill, DP: Robbie Ryan, MUS:
Neil Horner CAST: Ben Engel, Joshua Gregory McCarthy, Jayne Snow, Martin
Maguire

Jimmy and Tommy are brothers, but Tommy is obviously different from Jimmy and Jimmy's friends. Tommy's condition is unnamed but his behavior is classically autistic. He is aloof and unresponsive, and is sent soaring into the private world of his own mind when stimulated by audio or visual patterns. Jimmy seems to be the only one who understands his brother and can coax him back into the real world, however Jimmy cannot put his own life forever on hold for the sake of his brother.

Special Guest: Director Kirsten Sheridan

SUNDAY, JULY 27 AT NOON
BEHIND THE GLASS DOOR: HANNAH'S STORY
CANADA, 1998, 52 MIN, VIDEO
DIR: Karen Pascal PROD: Windborne Productions
www.fanlight.com

Following the struggle of the Shepard family over a period of five years, this powerful and evocative film documents the slow, painful process of reaching one child with autism. It offers tremendous insight into the stress families and educators face as they

tackle this mysterious disorder, while giving hope and inspiration to those who are determined to bring their children out from behind the glass door of autism.

When Hannah Shepard was two, specialists predicted that she would probably never speak. Instead of accepting their verdict, her parents made the difficult decision to pursue a controversial treatment program involving intrusive one-on-one therapy for 36 hours a week. This began their journey to pull Hannah into the real world.

The program clearly articulates the enormous impact of an autistic child on the family. BEHIND THE GLASS DOOR: HANNAH'S STORY provides not only an education but hope that some autistic children can be reached.

Special Guest: Director Karen Pascal.

SUNDAY, JULY 27 AT 2:00 P.M.

THE EIGHTH DAY

LE HUITIÈME JOUR

FRANCE/BELGIUM/UK, 1996, 118 MIN, 35 MM

DIR/SCR: Jaco van Dormael EXEC PROD: Dominique Josset, Eric Rommeluere PROD: Philippe Godeau MUS: Pierre van Dormael DP: Walther van den Ende ED: Susana Rossberg CAST: Daniel Auteuil, Pascal Duquenne, Miou-Miou, Henri Garcin, Isabelle Sadoyan

Winner of a Special Acting Award at the Cannes Film Festival for both leading actors, THE EIGHTH DAY tells the story of Georges, who has Down Syndrome and lives in an institution, and Harry, a busy businessman who gives lectures for young aspiring salesmen. He is successful in his career, but his social life is a disaster since his wife left him and took their two children with her.

On this particular weekend, his children came by train to meet him, but Harry, working as always, forgets to pick them up. Neither his wife nor his children want to see him again and he drives to the seaside to try to convince them to give him another chance. Anguished and angry, Harry is driving on foggy country roads and almost runs over Georges, on the run from the institution. Harry tries to get rid of Georges but he won't leave his new friend. Eventually a special friendship forms between the two men. What makes this film so extraordinary is the depiction of the magical world of Georges and its effect on Harry. The chemistry between these two actors is palpable and forces us to confront our own perceptions of society and friendship.

Special Guest: Director/Writer Jaco van Dormael and Actor Pascal Duquenne

SUNDAY, JULY 27 AT 4:30 P.M.

WHAT'S EATING GILBERT GRAPE

USA, 1993, MIN 35 MM

DIR: Lasse Hallström SCR: Peter Hedges EXEC PROD: Alan C. Blomquist, Lasse Hallström PROD: David Matalon, Bertil Ohlsson, Meir Teper MUS: Björn Isfält, Alan Parker DP: Sven Nykvist ED: Andrew Mondshein CAST: Johnny Depp, Leonardo DiCaprio, Juliette Lewis, Mary Steenburgen, Darlene Cates, Laura Harrington, Mary Kate Schellhardt, Kevin Tighe, John C. Reilly, Crispin Glover

Gilbert Grape (Johnny Depp) lives in Endora, a place where nothing much happens. The only times the police have something to do is when Gilbert's brother Arnie (Leonardo DiCaprio), who has an intellectual disability, tries to climb up on the water tower nearby. Taking care of Arnie is mostly Gilbert's task, a task that is pretty demanding, particularly given Gilbert's job responsibilities at the local grocery store. Then one day car troubles cause Becky (Juliette Lewis) and her grandmother to stop in Endora. Gilbert falls in love with Becky, but problems occur when he tries to find time for his own private life.

Special guests to be announced.

SUNDAY, JULY 27 AT 7:30P.M.
MEDIA FORUM with Reception to Follow

The centerpiece of PERSPECTIVES will be a forum for members of the media community. Open to writers, directors, producers, actors, editors and studio executives, the forum will be an opportunity for members of the media and members of the developmental disabilities community to initiate an ongoing creative dialogue that will help inform and deepen the depictions of people with developmental disabilities, while encouraging participants and audience members to be advocates for change.

Moderator: Film Critic Peter Rainer (New York Magazine, Film Week on KPCC)

Panelists:

Producer Janet Grillo (SPANKING THE MONKEY, SEARCHING FOR PARADISE)

Producer Barbara Boyle (PHENOMENON, BOTTLE ROCKET, EIGHT MEN OUT)

Actor Joe Mantegna (SEARCHING FOR BOBBY FISCHER, GODFATHER TRILOGY)

Director Jim Sheridan (MY LEFT FOOT, THE BOXER, IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER)

Director Rolf de Heer (DANCE ME TO MY SONG, THE TRACKER, ALEXANDRA'S PROJECT)

Documentarian Jonathan Karsh (MY FLESH AND BLOOD)

Actress Andrea Fay Friedman (LIFE GOES ON, TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL)

Following the forum, Lanterman Regional Center will honor actor William H. Macy with its first *PERSPECTIVES Media Award*. This award is given to an individual in the media who has advanced the cause of understanding and social acceptance by creating sensitive and accurate images of people with developmental disabilities.

An Oscar® and Emmy nominee and SAG Award winner, Macy is one of the most distinguished talents of his generation. He most recently received outstanding critical acclaim and won the SAG Award for his role as Bill Porter in TNT's *DOOR TO DOOR*. The movie, which Macy also co-wrote, tells the true story of the life of Porter, an award-winning door-to-door salesman with cerebral palsy. The movie aired to

unprecedented ratings, and to date has received a Peabody Award, an AFI Award, a Critic's Choice Award, a Golden Satellite Award, a Writer's Guild nomination and an American Cinema Editors nomination. Macy won the SAG award for Best Actor in a Television Movie and the Best Actor Award from the Golden Satellite Awards, and was nominated for a Golden Globe. Macy's work in DOOR TO DOOR led to the non-acting role of Ambassador for United Cerebral Palsy Associations, Inc. Widely hailed for his sensitive and moving performance as Bill Porter, William H. Macy personifies the positive influence media portrayals can have on understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities.

AFI

AFI is the preeminent organization dedicated to advancing and preserving the art of film, television and other forms of the moving image. AFI trains the next generation of filmmakers at its world-renowned Conservatory, provides film preservation leadership and explores new digital technologies in moviemaking. AFI's New Media Ventures programs bring together the creative and digital communities, as it also seeks to develop a literacy program for the 21st century, helping young people learn to read and write screens of all sizes – cinema, television, computer and the Internet.

With AFI ON SCREEN, the institute is the largest nonprofit exhibitor in the US, with programs at the AFI Los Angeles International Film Festival (AFI FEST); the AFI National Film Theater at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC; and the AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center in Silver Spring, Maryland. A 49,000 square foot complex with three theatres—one historic, two new state-of-the-art stadium-style theatres—the AFI Silver exhibits film and video generally unavailable elsewhere in the region. AFI's annual almanac for the 21st century, AFI AWARDS, honors the most outstanding motion pictures and television programs of the year. **AFI's 100 Years . . . 100 Movies, 100 Stars , 100 Laughs, 100 Thrills, 100 Passions** and **100 Heroes & Villains** have ignited extraordinary public interest in classic American movies. During the past 31 years, AFI's Life Achievement Award has become the highest honor for a career in film. More information about AFI can be found by visiting its Web site, located at www.AFI.com.

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center is a leader and innovator in community services for people with developmental disabilities and their families. It is one of the oldest of a unique group of agencies that have transformed the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Together, the 21 regional centers serve nearly 200,000 people. Each center is a private, non-profit corporation that operates under contract with the state, serves a specific geographic area, and is governed by a community-based board of directors.

For more information go to www.perspectives-iff.org.

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