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The Second Annual Circle Conference Launches in Abu Dhabi

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Fox Filmed Entertainment Chairman Jim Gianopulos Gives Keynote Address

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates, Oct. 6 /PRNewswire/ -- The Circle Conference, a program of the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage, today announced the launch of its second annual international film conference. A strategic initiative aimed at creating new filmmaking opportunities in the Middle East, The Circle will bring together dozens of leaders from the international entertainment community including top producers, financiers, executives and filmmakers on October 6-8, 2008 at the Shangri-La Hotel in Abu Dhabi. The conference will feature a keynote address given by Twentieth Century Fox Filmed Entertainment Chairman Jim Gianopulos and a series of Master Class sessions presented by actor/producer/director Antonio Banderas, director Spike Lee and film and TV producer and director McG, among other programs.

(Photo: [here](#))

(Photo: [here](#))

Mr. Gianopulos, Mr. Banderas, Mr. Lee, and McG join a multitude of well-respected industry professionals at the conference this year, including: Kathleen Kennedy, Producer, The Kennedy/Marshall Company; Walid Al-Awadi, CEO, C Sky Pictures; Omar Amanat, Summit Entertainment, LLC; Ashok Amritraj, Chairman & CEO, Hyde Park Films; Craig Emanuel, Partner & Chair, LA Entertainment Department, Loeb & Loeb, LLP; Kristin Jones, SVP, Domestic Production, International Development & Acquisitions, Miramax Films; Andy Kim, SVP, Finance & Business Development, The Weinstein Company; Hal Sadoff, Head of Independent and International Film, International Creative Management; Mitch Singer, CTO, Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc.; and Graham Taylor, Head of Independent Film, Endeavor Agency, among others.

ADACH Director General H.E. Mohammad Khalaf Al Mazarouie said, "Despite the short time that has passed since Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) founded "The Circle" initiative, we proudly believe that we've succeeded in shedding the light that Abu Dhabi is the place to discover emerging talent, as indicated by the high caliber of international names we have attending our conference."

"We have an outstanding conference planned for this year, with an extremely talented group of participants and speakers. I'm delighted to have renowned entertainment industry executive Jim Gianopulos as our keynote speaker and incredibly honored to have Antonio Banderas, Spike Lee and McG participating in the Master Class Series. The presence and active participation of this prominent and talented group of individuals alongside the Abu Dhabi community underscores the universality and importance of supporting the film industry worldwide," said The Circle Director Adrienne Briggs.

The Circle Conference, as well as a variety of other related programs that take place throughout the year, offer collaborative creative forums for global participants, with the goal of fostering support for filmmakers and the emerging film production opportunities in the Middle East. The Circle also provides industry insiders with innovative investment options and gives filmmakers a unique opportunity to finance their projects.

In addition to the annual Circle Conference, other initiatives include the Cloeween Connection, a program that highlights ten emerging Middle Eastern filmmakers, providing a platform to introduce their work to the public and to industry decision makers to help facilitate project financings. The ten talented emerging directors participating in this year's program include: Hany Abu-Assad (Palestine); Daoud Aoulad-Syad (Morocco); Asghar Farhadi (Iran); Samir Habchi (Lebanon); Ahd Kamel (Saudi Arabi); Nacer Khemir (Tunisia); Nabil Maleh (Syria); Jehane Noujaim (Egypt); Bassam Al Thawadi (Bahrain); and Hisham Zaman (Iraq).

The Circle also facilitates an international screenwriting competition for the Shasha Grant, which includes a \$100,000 award, designed to help identify, develop and launch the careers of outstanding regional filmmakers. The six finalists of this year's program include: "Sambo Do Maazouz" by Hicham Ayouch (Morocco); "Sand" by Alvin Easter (USA); "The Breadwinner" by Robert Heydon (Canada); "Pleonastic" by Samuel Kiehoon Lee (Korea); "Tafahum" by Omar Saleh (Jordan); and "Jose" by Michael Rousselet and Erik Sandoval (USA). These filmmakers will have the opportunity to present their pitch to a juried panel of industry professionals who will award the grant.

Conference panels will include discussions about the Middle East Film Industry, international collaboration and New Media.

For additional information about The Circle Conference, please visit www.thecircle.ae.

SOURCE The Circle Conference, Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage

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