

For immediate release:
January 30, 2007



REEL CANADA Film Festival Rolls into Toronto's High Schools with Canadian Films, Celebrity Directors and Actors from Feb 13 to March 9

Atom Egoyan, Don McKellar, Tara Spencer-Nairn Among Guest Speakers Director Deepa Mehta will present Oscar nominated WATER

TORONTO, ON – Several prominent Canadian film makers and actors have confirmed their participation in the second season of REEL CANADA, an innovative film festival for students that rolls into nine Toronto area high schools between February 13 and March 9 with a diverse list of Canadian films chosen by the students themselves.

Guests will include director **Deepa Mehta**, who will present her Oscar nominated film *WATER* to students at West Toronto C.I. Other guests include director **Atom Egoyan** (*The Sweet Hereafter*), director **Don McKellar** (*Last Night*), director **Paul Gross** (*Men with Brooms*), director **Allan King** and the 'stars' of his recent documentary *EMPz 4 Life*, **Chris "C-Jewlz" Ellis** and **Brian Henry**, director **Peter Lynch** (*Project Grizzly*), director **Peter Raymont** (*Shake Hands with the Devil*), actor **Tara Spencer-Nairn** (*New Waterford Girl*) and Toronto **Mayor David Miller**. More guest confirmations will be announced in the coming weeks.

Academy Award nominated director and REEL CANADA Board member, **Atom Egoyan** presented *The Sweet Hereafter* to students during REEL CANADA's pilot event last year. "It's the dream of any filmmaker to engage in a dialogue with an audience", notes Egoyan. "[The teenage] audience is the most difficult to reach, so the idea of such an intimate response was a career highlight for me."

REEL CANADA's Board of Directors also includes award-winning producer **Gabriella Martinelli**. The initiative is endorsed and supported by an Advisory Committee composed of Canada's most prominent filmmakers including: **Norman Jewison**, **David Cronenberg**, **Don McKellar**, **Sarah Polley**, **Patricia Rozema**, **Deepa Mehta**, and **Gary Burns**. Other distinguished committee members from the film community include **Gordon Pinsent**, **Robert Lantos**, **George Stroumboulopoulos**, **Bryan Gliserman**, **Charlotte Mickie**, **Geoff Pevere**, **Veronica Tennant** and internationally renowned educator **David Booth**. Toronto **Mayor David Miller** is an Honorary Patron and Telefilm Canada is the Founding Sponsor.

Films chosen by students for REELCANADA 2006/2007 are: *Bollywood/Hollywood*, *C.R.A.Z.Y.*, *Double Happiness*, *EMPz 4 Life*, *Highway 61*, *Khaled*, *Kitchen Party*, *Last Night*, *Mambo Italiano*, *Meatballs*, *Men with Brooms*, *New Waterford Girl*, *Project Grizzly*, *The Red Violin*, *The Rocket*, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, *Siblings*, *Strange Brew*, *The Sweet Hereafter* and *Water*. A comprehensive programme of live action and animated shorts is also being presented.

"It's fantastic that our most accomplished filmmakers are willing to take the time to come out to our high schools", said Executive Director Jack Blum. "It allows us to introduce the students to Canadian film in a very exciting way."

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Created by a committee of passionate filmmakers and dedicated educators in 2005, REEL CANADA is designed to foster greater awareness of and pride in Canadian films by bringing the film festival experience directly into high school auditoriums. Students at each school choose their own unique program of six films from a curated selection of feature films, documentaries, animated programs and shorts.

2007 REEL CANADA schedule is as follows:

- Harbord Collegiate** **Tuesday, February 13, 2007**
- **MEDIA DAY** Media invited to speak with Atom Egoyan, Don McKellar (*Last Night*), Tara Spencer-Nairn (*New Waterford Girl*)
- West Toronto Collegiate** **Monday, February 19, 2007**
- With Deepa Mehta (*Water*) and the Smiley Guys (*Odd Job Jack*)
- David & Mary Thompson Collegiate** **Wednesday, February 21, 2007**
- With Paul Gross (*Men with Brooms*), Brian Henry (*EMPz 4 Life*), Chris “C-Jewlz” Ellis (*EMPz 4 Life*) and the Smiley Guys (*Odd Job Jack*)
- Western Tech** **Friday, February 23, 2007**
- With Allan King (*EMPz 4 Life*) and Peter Lynch (*Project Grizzly*)
- Marc Garneau Collegiate** **Monday, February 26, 2007**
- With Mayor David Miller, Brian Henry (*EMPz 4 Life*) and Chris “C-Jewlz” Ellis (*EMPz 4 Life*)
- Northview Heights Secondary** **Wednesday, February 28, 2007**
- Rwandan Genocide survivor Claire Wihogora and the Smiley Guys (*Odd Job Jack*)
- Emery Collegiate** **Tuesday, March 6, 2007**
- With Atom Egoyan, and *EMPz 4 Life* stars Brian Henry & Chris “C-Jewlz” Ellis.
- Earl Haig Secondary** **Wednesday, March 7, 2007**
- With Peter Lynch (*Project Grizzly*), Peter Raymont (*Shake Hands with the Devil*) and the Smiley Guys (*Odd Job Jack*)
- A.Y. Jackson Secondary** **Friday, March 9, 2007**
- With Peter Raymont (*Shake Hands with the Devil*) and the Smiley Guys (*Odd Job Jack*)

REEL CANADA is made possible by the generous support of its sponsors and patrons: *Founding Sponsor* Telefilm Canada, *Lead Trade Sponsor* Directors Guild of Canada/Ontario, and DGC National, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, ACTRA Fraternal Benefit Society, Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC), Writers Guild of Canada, ACTRA, The Harold Greenberg Fund and the City of Toronto.

For more information on REEL CANADA, please visit www.reelcanada.com

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