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HOT DOCS AWARDS CAD 75,000 IN CASH AND PRIZES TO CANADIAN AND INTERNATIONAL FILMMAKERS

Toronto, ON— Hot Docs is proud to announce the winning documentaries from this year’s official competition, along with recognizing outstanding Canadian and international filmmakers through additional awards. These awards were revealed at the Hot Docs 2024 Awards Presentation, held at the Centre for Social Innovation – Annex and hosted by arts journalist and co-founder of Media Girlfriends, Garvia Bailey. A total of 15 awards were handed out, including 11 awards for Festival films in competition—of which 9 were won by female filmmakers—and CAD 75,000 in cash and prizes were awarded. Screening in cinemas across Toronto, the 2024 Hot Docs Festival will close on Sunday, May 5. The Rogers Audience Award for Best Canadian documentary will be announced on the last day of the Festival at a special encore screening at 7:00 pm at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. The top Canadian feature in the audience poll will receive a \$50,000 cash prize, courtesy of Rogers. The overall Audience Award winner will be announced after the Festival.

The Betty Youson Award for Best Canadian Short Documentary was presented to *Am I the Skinniest Person You’ve Ever Seen?* (D: Eisha Marjara | Canada | 22 min), in which the filmmaker revisits her childhood pact with her sister and her struggle with anorexia as a Punjabi Canadian kid growing up in a small town in Quebec. The Award includes a \$3,000 cash prize courtesy of John and Betty Youson. Jury statement: “*Am I the Skinniest Person You’ve Ever Seen?* is a deeply moving film that delves into the complexities of body image, conformity, and familial challenges through the lens of poetic storytelling. The filmmaker’s poignant internal struggles with an eating disorder are made even more impactful by archival footage showcasing her vulnerability. This intimate film prompts viewers to reflect not only on the personal toll of such struggles but also on broader issues of Western beauty standards, mental health and self-acceptance.”

In the Best Canadian Short Documentary category, the jury also acknowledged *The Sparkle* (D: Isabelle Grignon-Francke | Canada | 17 min), in which the subject, Kim, navigates the camaraderie of a close-knit crew over a summer with a travelling carnival.

Jury statement: “*The Sparkle*, directed by Isabelle Grignon-Francke, is a film that celebrates ordinary moments of life in beautiful and contemplative shots. Through the simple story of a young adult experiencing a kind of disenchantment and wishing to accomplish his dreams, the filmmaker takes us on a cinematic and poetic journey.”

The **Best International Short Documentary Award**, sponsored by CNN Collection, was presented to *Autism Plays Itself* (D: Janet Harbord | UK | 19 min), in which three autistic respondents watch a film shot in 1957 at the Maudsley Hospital, London, that captures children under observation for

atypical behaviour, offering new and insightful interpretations of the children's actions. The Award includes a \$3,000 cash prize.

Jury statement: "In this deeply interrogative portrait of perception, the filmmaker meticulously re-appropriates and recontextualizes archival materials to dismantle anachronistic misconceptions, and then swiftly integrates a myriad of voices that challenge and defy the established narrative. The film establishes an active relationship with images and sound, using simple tools to create an encounter filled with discovery and amusement, all stemming from a place of love, tenderness, and generosity. The Award goes to *Autism Plays Itself*."

In the Best International Short Documentary category, the jury also acknowledged ***Christmas, Every Day*** (D: Faye Tsakas | USA | 14 min), in which pre-teen influencers Peyton and Lyla Wesson perform for their online fans and market fashion and beauty products to their followers, all under their mother's watchful guidance.

Jury statement: "This film intricately explores both performance and its artifice, demonstrating stylistic rigor and thematic importance while skillfully offering a profound critique of corporate influence on the minds of both children and adults. The special mention goes to *Christmas, Every Day*."

Hot Docs is an Academy Award qualifying festival for short documentaries and, as winners of the Best International Short Documentary Award and the Betty Youson Award for Best Canadian Short Documentary Award respectively, ***Autism Plays Itself*** and ***Am I the Skinniest Person You've Ever Seen*** will qualify for consideration in the Documentary Short Subject category of the annual Academy Awards® without the standard theatrical run, provided they comply with Academy rules.

Canadian producer **Alison Duke**, producer of ***A Mother Apart*** (D: Laurie Townshend | P: Alison Duke, Ngardy Conteh George, Justine Pimlott | Canada | 2024 | 89 min), an emotional tale of healing and forgiveness that follows powerhouse Jamaican American poet and LGBTQ+ activist Staceyann Chin as she embarks on an international journey to re-imagine the art of mothering, received the **Don Haig Award**, announced at the beginning of the Festival. The Award is given to an outstanding independent Canadian producer with a film in the Festival in recognition of their creative vision, entrepreneurship and track record for nurturing emerging talent and comes with a \$5,000 cash prize, courtesy of the Don Haig Foundation.

The award for **Best Mid-Length Documentary** was presented to ***Silence of Reason*** (D: Kumjana Novakova | P: Kumjana Novakova | Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina | 2023 | 63 min), an essential investigation of the Foča rape camps during the mid-90s war in Bosnia and Herzegovina that combines victim testimony and archival footage to produce profound disturbance and intense resolve. The Award includes a \$3,000 cash prize.

Jury statement: "Our winning film addresses an urgent issue for our time—brutality against women at times of war—and delivers its shocking message with a huge punch. Making a brave decision to strip back all comfort for the viewer to unfold the real-life testimony of rape victims enslaved by Serbs in the Bosnian war aged from 12 to grandmothers, *Silence of Reason* is a difficult watch. But the careful reconstruction of memory with distorted sound and visuals makes a powerful impact and statement."

In the Best Mid-Length Documentary category, the jury also acknowledged ***The New Man*** (D: Carlos Yuri Ceuninck | P: Aurélien Bodinaux, Natasha Craveiro, Paulo de Carvalho, Gudula Meinzolt, Alyaa Musa | Cape Verde, Belgium, Germany, Sudan | 2023 | 64 min), which tells the story of Quirino, the sole inhabitant of Ribeira Funda, isolated by his village's superstitious legacy and living beneath the very real threat of the unstable cliffside that borders it.

Jury Statement: "Honourable mention goes to a breathtaking, cinematic film that closely observes the last days of the last man to live in a remote and ghost-ridden village on an island in Cape Verde. *The New Man* captures the symbiotic relationship between man and nature raising important questions about the implications of climate breakdown."

The **Lindalee Tracey Award**, which honours an emerging Canadian filmmaker with a passionate point of view, a strong sense of social justice and a sense of humour, was presented to **Meysam Motazed**. The winner will be awarded \$5,000 from the Lindalee Tracey Fund, a \$5,000 in kind voucher from Picture Shop for equipment rentals and services, and a beautiful hand-blown glass sculpture by Andrew Kuntz.

Visionary Haitian filmmaker **Raoul Peck** received the **2024 Outstanding Achievement Award**. The Festival featured a handpicked selection of films curated by Peck, showcasing both a personal favorite and a work that has influenced him.

The **Scotiabank Docs for Schools Student Choice Award** went to ***The Strike*** (D: JoeBill Muñoz, Lucas Guilkey | P: JoeBill Muñoz, Lucas Guilkey | USA | 2024 | 86 min), which follows the psychological and emotional journeys of California prisoners as they organize the largest hunger strike in US history. This award recognizes the documentary that receives the highest rating in the student audience poll. The winner will receive a \$5,000 cash prize courtesy of Scotiabank.

The **Earl A. Glick Emerging Canadian Filmmaker Award** is given to a Canadian filmmaker whose film in competition is their first or second feature-length film. The Award, which includes a \$3,000 cash prize courtesy of the Earl A. Glick Family, was presented to **Laurence Lévesque**, the director of ***Okurimono*** (D: Laurence Lévesque | P: Rosalie Chicoine-Perreault, Catherine Boily | Canada | 2024 | 96 min), a poetic observation on the process of letting go as a Japanese Canadian woman returns to empty her childhood home.

Jury Statement: "After a 20-year absence, Noriko from Montreal returns to Nagasaki to clear out her mother's home. The careful observational camerawork in this film delivers intimacy with patience and reveals its narrative with subtle mastery. Almost 80 years after the bombing of Nagasaki, the intergenerational trauma remains. In her first film, director Laurence Levesque delivers a quiet but intense film about memory and remembrance, family and mortality with care and sincerity."

The **Bill Nemtin Award for Best Social Impact Documentary**, which recognizes the producers of a film in the International Spectrum program that has the greatest potential to create social impact, went to Erin Lau and Amber Espinosa-Jones of ***Standing Above the Clouds*** (D: Jalena Keane-Lee | P: Erin Lau, Amber Espinosa-Jones | USA | 2024 | 85 min), chronicling the journey of three Native Hawaiian families as they risk it all to defend their sacred mountain where the Thirty Meter Telescope is set to be built on Mauna Kea. The \$10,000 cash prize accompanying the Award will help enable the winning film team to optimize

the impact of the documentary through outreach and marketing activities.

Jury Statement: “A devastating inside look at a powerful grassroots protest led by women and elders to protect our nature and future from commercialisation and the damning indifference of bystanders. This film is a fight for Indigenous peoples. One that may make you uncomfortable by pointing out your complicity in mother nature’s destruction by sheer inaction. The International Feature Competition Jury is proud to confer Jalena Keane-Lee, a worthy firebrand, the Bill Nemtin Award for her film, *Standing Above the Clouds*. We applaud her courage to bring a marginalised, Indigenous community and their resounding call for environmental justice to the foreground.”

In the Best Social Impact Documentary category, the jury also acknowledged ***Devi*** (D: Subina Shrestha | P: Ashmita Chaudhary Khadka, Rosie Garthwaite, Heejung Oh | Nepal | 2024 | 80 min), capturing mother, rebel warrior, and sexual violence survivor, Devi, as she battles personal demons in her campaign against rape’s erasure from the narrative of Nepal’s civil war.

Jury Statement: “For a film that is brave, respectful and urgent, the International Feature Competition Jury wishes to give a special mention to Subina Shrestha’s gut-wrenching portrayal of a woman’s endless fight for the voiceless and disregarded victims of wartime sexual violence in her uncompromising film, *Devi*.”

The new **Land|Sky|Sea Award**, which recognizes an exceptional feature-length documentary in the Land|Sky|Sea Competition program, went to ***The Battle for Laikipia*** (D: Daphne Matziaraki, Peter Murimi | P: Toni Kamau, Daphne Matziaraki | Kenya, USA, Greece | 2024 | 94 min), capturing a high-stakes conflict between Indigenous pastoralists and white landowners in a Kenyan wildlife conservation haven.

Jury Statement: “A film that has extraordinary access to both sides of a post-colonial country where climate change is pushing people to become the worst versions of themselves. *The Battle for Laikipia* is an unflinching, transparent lens on Kenya’s ongoing struggle for Indigenous land rights which is exasperated by apocalyptic drought. This film is uncomfortable but essential viewing and is a warning for us all of battles to come.”

In the Land|Sky|Sea category, the jury also acknowledged ***Yintah*** (D: Jennifer Wickham, Brenda Michell, Michael Toledano | P: Jennifer Wickham, Brenda Michell, Michael Toledano, Bob Moore | Canada | 2024 | 125 min), which shares the story of the Wet’suwet’en people resisting the construction of multiple pipelines across their territory.

Jury Statement: “*Yintah* is a beautifully crafted, epic film that represents the ultimate in resilience with the power of women whose voices will not be silenced.”

The **DGC Special Jury Prize – Canadian Feature Documentary**, sponsored by the Directors Guild of Canada and DGC Ontario, was presented to ***Any Other Way: The Jackie Shane Story*** (D: Michael Mabbott, Lucah Rosenberg-Lee | P: Amanda Burt, Sam Dunn, Scot McFayden, Michael Mabbott, Justine Pimlott | Canada | 2024 | 99 min), sharing the life of one of music’s first Black trans performers who vanished from the spotlight at the height of her fame. The Award, supported by DGC National, comes with a \$5,000 cash prize.

Jury Statement: “Once you’ve heard Jackie Shane sing, you will never forget it. Yet, after shattering barriers as one of pop music’s first Black trans performers, this trail blazing icon vanished from the spotlight at the height of her fame. Seductive, naughty, humorous—this hybrid documentary seamlessly blends animation, archival footage from Toronto and Nashville in the 60s and contemporary testimony. We appreciated both this courageous and generous artist we get to encounter and a film that invites us into her story, while giving enough room to showcase Jackie’s empowering music. “We just wouldn’t have it any other way.””

The **Best Canadian Feature Documentary Award**, supported by Telefilm Canada, was presented to ***The Soldier’s Lagoon*** (D: Pablo Álvarez-Mesa | P: Pablo Álvarez-Mesa | Canada | 2024 | 76 min), exploring the misty Páramo region to offer an elusive living archive that navigates the dense fog separating Simón Bolívar’s past and Colombia’s present. The winner will receive a \$10,000 cash prize.

Jury Statement: “*The Soldier’s Lagoon* retraces Simon Bolivar’s journey across the Colombian marshlands while searching for glimpses of his ghost still present in this historically contested land. Melding a myriad of issues from post-colonial legacies including environmental, land and military destruction, this complexity is mirrored in the film’s strong artistic vision—a commitment to astonishing cinematography, to 16mm film, to an evocative and meditative sonic world. Pablo Álvarez-Mesa is a director, producer, editor, composer in charge of his material. Sometimes we need artists to follow their hearts and guide us out of the fog.”

The **Best International Feature Documentary Award** was given to ***Farming the Revolution*** (D: Nishta Jain | P: Nishta Jain, Valérie Montmartin | India, Norway | 2024 | 100 min), capturing the protests of half a million of India’s farmers as they rise up on an unprecedented scale against unjust new laws. Hot Docs is pleased to present the winner with a \$10,000 cash prize.

Jury Statement: “For its slow study on the poetics of labour organizing, its regal treatment of atmosphere, and intimate embeddedness in a legendary encampment (that has recently begun again this past February due to unfulfilled promises by the reigning government), the International Feature Competition Jury awards Best International Feature Documentary to Nishtha Jain’s *Farming the Revolution*, co-directed by Akash Basumatari. With endurance, clarity, and purpose, Jain and Basumatari take audiences inside the full dynamic range of India’s over one-year-long farmers’ protest between 2020 and 2021. Today, as encampments spring up on university campuses around the world, including here in Toronto, the jury commends the filmmakers’ commitments to providing a grounded perspective on the communities of care that encampment produce. *Farming the Revolution* spotlights the power of ordinary people with an enduring cinematic sophistication and an indomitable lyrical presence.”

The **Emerging International Filmmaker Award**, given to an international filmmaker whose film in competition is their first or second feature-length film, was given to **Fan Wu**, director of ***XiXi*** (D: Fan Wu | P: Venice De Castro Atienza, Fan Wu, Sona Jo, Yoonsoo Her | Taiwan, Philippines, South Korea | 2024), exploring themes of womanhood, autonomy and self-reinvention through video diaries and personal archive. The Award, supported by the Donner Canadian Foundation, includes a \$3,000 cash prize.

Jury statement: “We are proud to award the international feature film *XiXi* and director Fan Wu with the Best Emerging Director Award. The jury conjures words to describe this film as bold, unflinching, and dynamic. While watching this film, we felt that at no point we knew which direction we were going.

Where did it start? Where will it end? That alone was wildly exciting and also, maybe, we didn't need to know. This is the revelation to XiXi's story as a daughter, mother, artist and free spirit and she makes it clear that she is determined to write her own narrative while balancing everything at stake. Her story is about courage independence, and nonconformity. Its director, Fan Wu, has crafted a genuine, innovative and transformative film that invites us up close and personal into XiXi's world. We are witnessing greatness both in front and behind the camera. Bravo."

In the Emerging International Filmmaker category, the jury also acknowledged **Ismael Vásquez Bernabé**, director of *The Weavers' Songs* (D: Ismael Vásquez Bernabé | P: Emiliano Altuna, Abril Schmucler | Mexico | 2024), exploring life in San Pedro Amuzgos, Oaxaca, where weaving transcends mere livelihood to become a vital economic backbone.

Jury statement: "As honourable mention, we recognize the international feature film *The Weavers' Songs*. This film approaches the story in a humble and pure way, gentle in its authenticity for emerging director Ismael Vásquez Bernabé. Quietly capturing this less known community at risk is gentle in stature."

Hot Docs is an Academy Award qualifying festival for feature documentaries and, as the winner of the Best International Feature Documentary Award, *Farming the Revolution* will qualify for consideration in the Best Documentary Feature category of the annual Academy Awards® without the standard theatrical run, provided they comply with Academy rules.

The **Special Jury Prize – International Feature Documentary**, sponsored by A&E, was given to *Death of a Saint* (D: Patricia Bbaale Bandak | P: Victor Rocha da Cunh | Denmark | 2024 | 91 min), in which the filmmaker—having given birth on the same day her mother was killed by two gunmen in their Ugandan home decades earlier—returns to her birthplace to reclaim what was stolen from her. Hot Docs is pleased to present the winner with a \$5,000 cash prize.

Jury statement: "A fragile film that feels handmade by a steady, assured artisan who has a natural command of rhythm, montage, sound and visual language. She soulfully balances vulnerability and strength, emotion and humour, to excavate a deeply buried mystery in her family that meditates on justice, parenthood, and the dangerous realities of refugees that still persist in many parts of the world today. The International Feature Competition Jury is honoured to award Patricia Bbaale Bandak the Special Jury Prize for *Death of a Saint*, a poetic exploration of intergenerational trauma with maturity, perseverance and deftness that signal the arrival of a unique talent to watch."

The 2024 awards for films in competition were determined by five juries.

The Canadian Feature Documentary Jury:

Zaynê Akyol - Canadian filmmaker (*Rojek*, 2022)

Shanida Scotland - Head of Film at Doc Society

Jutta Brendemühl - International film curator and arts writer

The International Feature Documentary Jury:

Jeremy Chua - General Manager of the Singapore International Film Festival

Dr. Nataleah Hunter-Young - writer, film curator, and Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at Western University in London, Ontario, Canada
John Seongho Choi - Canadian Korean Filmmaker

The Land|Sky|Sea Jury:

Chloe Walters-Wallace - Director of Regional Initiatives at Firelight Media
Jane Mote - experienced producer and director who supports and trains emerging documentary makers across the world to develop their stories
Paulina Portela – documentary producer, Founder of Compañía de Cine, an international distribution company, and sales agency based in Buenos Aires and Montevideo focused on avant-garde and auteur cinema

The Mid-Length Documentary Jury:

Lauren Howes - Managing Director of the Doc Institute
Jane Mote - experienced producer and director who supports and trains emerging documentary makers across the world to develop their stories
Paulina Portela – documentary producer, Founder of Compañía de Cine, an international distribution company, and sales agency based in Buenos Aires and Montevideo focused on avant-garde and auteur cinema

The Short Documentary Jury:

Jacqueline Glover - Executive Director of Harvard’s Black Film Project
Milton Guillén - visual artist, filmmaker, and the Senior Programmer for the Camden International Film Festival/Points North Institute
Justine Harbonnier – documentary filmmaker (*Caiti Blues*, 2023)

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Hot Docs (www.hotdocs.ca), North America’s largest documentary festival, conference and market, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing and celebrating the art of documentary and to creating production opportunities for documentary filmmakers. Hot Docs will present its 31st annual edition from April 25 to May 5, 2024, in cinemas across Toronto. Hot Docs will also mount a dynamic series of knowledge sessions, networking opportunities and market programs for documentary practitioners and industry delegates, including the renowned Hot Docs Forum and Hot Docs Deal Maker. Year-round, Hot Docs supports the Canadian and international industry with professional development programs and a multi-million-dollar film fund portfolio, and fosters education through documentaries with its popular free program Docs For Schools. Hot Docs owns and programs the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, a century-old landmark located in Toronto’s Annex neighbourhood and the world’s first and largest documentary cinema.

Tickets and ticket packages can be purchased and/or redeemed online at www.hotdocs.ca or in person at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema Box Office, located at 506 Bloor Street West (hours vary daily in

accordance with cinema screenings). Single tickets are \$20 to regular Festival screenings and \$23 to Special Presentations screenings (\$18-\$20 members). Special events vary in price. A Festival 12-Pack is \$209 and a Festival 20-Pack is \$299. Hot Docs offers free tickets for all screenings before 5:00 p.m. to seniors and students with valid photo I.D., available online the day of the screening, subject to availability. Free screenings for students courtesy of CBC and CBC Gem.

Hot Docs is proud to include Scotia Wealth Management as its Presenting Platinum Partner; Rogers as its Founding Partner; CBC as its Signature Partner; Netflix as its Presenting Partner; and Telefilm Canada, the Government of Ontario, and the Canada Media Fund as its Major Supporters.

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Media Contact:

Juan M. Gonzalez-Calcano
Senior Media Relations Manager, Hot Docs
jgonzalezcalcano@hotdocs.ca