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## FEMALE FILMMAKERS IN THE PIPELINE

New York, NY- (March 6, 2007)

New York University's fourth annual FUSION FILM FESTIVAL concluded on Saturday night after three days of screenings and events. The FUSION FILM FESTIVAL promotes the talents of female filmmakers and supports their continued success in the industry while working to strengthen the relationship between male and female filmmakers.

In their senior year at the Tisch School of the Arts, Gina Abatemarco and Emma Heald founded the festival "to break down any barriers and misconceptions based on gender and to instead build a community that looks at a filmmaker in terms of their individual creative talents." This year the festival was co-directed by seniors Jennifer Orta and Michelle Malley-Campos and Tisch alumna Andrea Wong. The Directors, coming from diverse disciplines including Cinema Studies, Film/TV and Drama, strived to expand its focus to include a cross section of cinematic disciplines in the hopes of fostering collaboration, not only between the sexes, but also between the various departments within the Tisch School of the Arts. "We want to emphasize the importance of collaboration to our Tisch student body and the NYU community, and offer this festival not only as a place to showcase the many talents within the school, but as a networking opportunity for them."

The festival opened with a screening of ***Shut Up and Sing*** a documentary on the **Dixie Chicks**, whose lead singer made a comment against President George W. Bush during a London concert. Director and Producer of the film, **Barbara Kopple, two-time Academy Award winning documentarian**, participated in a discussion after the screening, stating, "This is a human film. It's about a woman's bond, women as moms, women who are wives and phenomenal musicians. It's about transformation, believing what you say, and sticking to your guns."

After the Q & A, moderated by music journalist Robert Christgau and movie critic Georgia Christgau, Kopple turned to the audience of young filmmakers to ask them what projects they had in the works. Several filmmakers shared their ideas and dreams in what felt like an open and nurturing conversation on the craft of documentary filmmaking. Kopple ended the evening saying, "As a documentarian to see you guys interested in this makes me very proud to be here, so don't let me down!"

The second festival day introduced the Documentary Pitch Competition, where the student winners pitched their ideas to industry panelists, including **Jackie Glover** from **HBO**, **Chris White** from **POV** and **Milton Tabbot** from the **Independent Feature Project**, who were so impressed with the projects in the works that they asked to be invited back for next year's festival.



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Later on in the day, **Nantucket Film Festival Artistic Director Mystelle Brabbée's** first film, *Highway Courtesans*, was screened. "Nine years in the making and timeless in observation," The New York Times described the film, "an intimate look at some of the youngest practitioners of the world's oldest profession. With a camera attuned to the languid rhythms of the girls' lives, Ms. Brabbée reveals the tangle of a culture where sex and economics are inextricably intertwined and Bollywood movies perpetuate images that glamorize prostitution." Brabbée joined the event to discuss the span of her project, explaining, "A documentary, a good one, doesn't happen in one year."

The final festival day highlighted female animators **Candy Kugel** (*A Warm Reception in LA, Fast Food Matador*), **Jennifer Oxley** (*Little Bill and Wonder Pets!*), **Debra Solomon** (*The Lizzie McGuire Movie, Private Eye Princess*) and **Academy Award winner Peggy Stern** (*The Moon and the Son: An Imagined Conversation*). The celebrated animators showed some of their work and offered intimate glimpses into the beginning of their career and their process. Stern advised the students in the audience, "You have to have confidence in yourself. My first film was ten minutes. Put your heart in believing that short films are valuable." Kugel adds, "You don't have to spend a ton of money to make a movie. We never broken even but that's not why we do film. Find your voice, make some movies."

The closing event embraced the piece of advice from Stern, showcasing six short films from the Nantucket Film Festival, including **Gwyneth Paltrow's directorial debut film, Dealbreaker**, proving how valuable short films are to filmmakers embarking on a career in the industry. Director Sophie Barthes and Cinematographer Andrij Parekh (*Happiness*) and Kellen Hertz (*Why Don't You Dance?*) joined after the screening for a conversation, moderated by FUSION's faculty advisor, Susan Sandler, about the journey of their short films with **Sharon Badal, Tribeca Film Festival Short Film Programmer**.

The festival's award ceremony honored Jennifer Tippins Best Undergraduate Director for her short animated film, *Bai Ri Meng* about a mother and her daughter who dream of spending the day together when the demands of life as a working parent keep them apart. Dee Rees was awarded Best Graduate Director for *Pariah*, a film about a Bronx teen who unsuccessfully juggles multiple identities to avoid rejection from her friends and family. Rees also received the first FUSION Audience Award and an all access pass to the Tribeca Film Festival this May.

For a complete list of the winners of the film and screenplay competition, and for more information about the festival events, visit [www.fusionfilmfestival.com](http://www.fusionfilmfestival.com) or contact:

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