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FOCUS ON FRENCH CINEMA 2009 FACTS SHEET

The 5th Anniversary of FOCUS ON FRENCH CINEMA was held the weekend of **April 3-5 2009**, at the Performing Arts Center at Purchase College, NY.

The festival was a great success with the screening of 10 critically acclaimed US and NY premieres. We had a "full house" for many of our films with an increase of more than 30% in audience attendance, based on a shorter program (*10 movies versus 13 in 2008*).

The Selection of films: This year, the selection of 10 films included 3 US premieres, and 6 premieres in the New York area (except for Laurent Cantet's "The Class" selected for our student audience). Three of the movies and guests received a standing ovation!

- Entre les murs, *The Class*, by Laurent Cantet and winner of the Palme d'Or, Cannes 2008 attracted a large audience of high school students and parents.
- Lol (Laughing Out Loud) by Lisa Azuelos, US Premiere. A "laughing out loud" "sold out" audience gave Sophie Marceau a standing ovation for this very funny and touching movie.
- Passe passe, *Off and Running* by Tonie Marshall, East Coast Premiere
- Le crime est notre affaire, *Partners in Crime*, US Premiere by Pascal Thomas
- Les Femmes de l'ombre, *Female Agents*, East Coast Premiere by Jean-Paul Salome. A "full house", many moved to tears, again rose to their feet in a standing ovation honoring the extraordinary performance of Sophie Marceau in this riveting WWII drama.
- Les liens du sang, *Rivals*, by Jacques Maillot East Coast Premiere
- Magique, *Magic*, by Philippe Muyl, a NY premiere, enchanted the young and old with magic, music and the magnificent landscapes of Quebec.
- Eldorado, an edgy comedy/drama with lots of unexpected humor by Bouli Lanners was a NY Premiere from Belgium. The film was preceded by a short animated film by Remi Durin from the renowned l'Ecole de La Cambre in Belgium
- Musée haut, musée bas, *A day at the museum*, by Jean-Michel Ribes, NY Premiere. This highly entertaining look at the "museum within the museum" had everyone laughing. Jean-Michel Ribes received a standing ovation following the Q&A.
- La tres tres grande entreprise, *The Very, Very Big Company*, by Pierre Jolivet :US Premiere

The Opening Night Movie and US Premiere "*Lol*" had everyone literally "laughing out loud", enchanted by the performance of internationally acclaimed French actress and director, **Sophie Marceau**. The Q & A following the film actively engaged the "sold out" crowd with our guest of honor for the Opening Night festivities. Sophie Marceau was also on hand for "*Les Femmes de l'ombre*" where the

audience, visibly moved by the "gut wrenching" WWII drama, had another opportunity to interact with the actress.

The Gala Buffet Dinner : Following the Opening Night movie The Performing Arts Center was at "full capacity" for the now much anticipated Gala Buffet Dinner, presented this year by "Les Maitres Cuisiniers de France", Moët & Chandon, and Le Wine Shop, with a selection of Belgian delicacies.

Guests and Panel discussion:

Every year, the festival welcomes actors and directors who come to share their passion for their work in the Q & A sessions following each film and during the annual Meet the Actors and Directors Breakfast on Saturday morning. This year we were privileged to have with us:

- **Sophie Marceau:** Talented and beautiful French actress, also a director and author, who delighted us with her charm, her simplicity and her insight by answering questions posed by the audience. A true Ambassador of French cinema.
- **Jean-Michel Ribes:** One of the most prominent and provocative French directors in French cinema and theater who riveted the audience with his intellectual responses.
- **Christophe Lambert:** Actor – His candor and personal perspective on the opportunities for "escape" within a film were insightful.
- **Christian Bujau:** stage actor and director, brought a counterpoint on managing actors in the theater.

This year, the "Breakfast with Actors and Directors" was filled to capacity. The animated discussion with our special guests, in the presence of Patrick Gimenez, producer, and selected cinema professors at Purchase College, was masterfully moderated by Professor Ronnie Scharfman, providing an opportunity for Cinema fans to meet the movies "doers" in a fascinating question and answers session.

Sponsors: The major sponsors of the event are this year: LVMH, American Airlines, Altour, Adspace Digital Mall Network, TV5 Monde, JCDecaux, The Raymond Debbane Family Foundation, The William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Flora Family Foundation, The Society of Friends of Belgium in America, and Les Maîtres Cuisiniers de France.

Press Coverage: The event was very well covered : 20 websites, 7 newspapers, 5 magazines, 2 Radio shows (including one live radio show with Sophie Marceau and Christophe Lambert). The presence in the malls was covered by Adspace Digital screens in 10 local malls and JCDecaux posters in 2 very busy local malls. The event was filmed by a team of Conservatory Film students from Purchase College.

Organizers: The festival is produced by the Alliance Francaise of Greenwich, CT, in partnership with French Feeling Films and Purchase College, NY, and in collaboration with the Quebec Government Office in NY, the Society of Friends of Belgium in America, The Avon Theater, the Westchester Accueil and the Greenwich Arts Council.

April 14, 2009

