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BOSTON FILM FESTIVAL UNFURLS STRIKING LINEUP OF DIVERSE AND HOPEFUL FEATURE FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES AS 34TH ANNUAL EDITION LAUNCHES SEPTEMBER 20-23

Scope of Cinema Showcase Includes East Coast Premiere of James Keach's "Turning Point," World Premiere of "The Passing Parade," U.S. Premiere locally shot Feature "Grace" and East Coast of True Story Film "Ride," and a special screening of the new NBC TV drama "New Amsterdam." Luminaries to Attend Include Keach, Thora Birch, Sasha Alexander, Katie Cassidy, Debby Ryan, Tate Donovan, Matthew Lillard, Hal Ozsan, Graham Sibley, Jocko Sims, Anupam Kher, and Tyler Labine.

BOSTON – September 6, 2018 – Bolstering its inspirational legacy of showcasing a spectrum of moving and eventful films, the 34th annual Boston Film Festival (September 20-23) will highlight: the East Coast premiere of "Turning Point," James Keach's ("Glen Campbell: I'll Be Me") latest documentary; the world premiere of "The Passing Parade"; the United States debut of the film "Grace" (shot around Boston) and the charming feature "The Etruscan Smile."

In addition, the festival will offer the many themes of diversity and empowerment, as seen in the East Coast premieres of "Ride," starring actor/rapper Ludacris ("The Fast and Furious" films) and Sasha Alexander ("Rizzoli & Isles") -- based on a true story -- and "A Boy Called Sailboat," starring Oscar winner J.K. Simmons ("Whiplash"), Jake Busey ("Deserted"). Also spotlighted are the documentary "Satan & Adam" by Kennedy/Marshall, a special screening of the new NBC medical drama "New Amsterdam," and a variety of creative film shorts.

The weekend screenings will be held at the Paramount Theater in the Bright Screening Room with the opening (September 20) and closing nights (September 23) being held at the Showplace Icon Seaport, a vibrant new locale in Boston's waterfront district.

Each of the long-form films will be followed by a question-and-answer session that will include actors and creative artists. Some of those expected to attend and participate are: Thora Birch ("American Beauty") from "The Etruscan Smile"; Katie Cassidy ("Arrow"), Debby Ryan ("Insatiable") and Tate Donovan ("The Man in the High Castle"), Matthew Lillard ("Scooby Doo") from "Grace," Jake Busey ("Stranger Things") Miranda Skirman ("Drunk") from "A Boy Called Sailboat," "Sasha Alexander from "Ride," plus cast members Jocko Sims, Anupam Kher, and Tyler Labine from "New Amsterdam," and Hal Ozsan ("Jessica Jones") and Graham Sibley ("Sully") from "The Passing Parade."

Keach's new documentary addresses the fast-rising incidences of Alzheimer's Disease. Keach has become an advocate for Alzheimer's disease since his first-hand experience while chronicling Glen Campbell's final tour following his tragic diagnosis. This is the third concurrent documentary that Keach has directed about menacing health maladies confronting the population. Keach will be recognized with the festival's prestigious Mass Impact Award on September 22 following the screening.

This year's sponsors are AETN, The Hollywood Reporter, NBC Universal, Arts Emerson, Boston Showplace Icon, Godfrey Hotel, NBC Boston, Biogen, Bright Focus, NineZero, and Dream Alley. Party Locations will be listed on the web site and released on social media.

On September 20, the opening night will be anchored by the stylistic film “The Passing Parade.” In the feature, laced with romance, comedy and drama, a playwright’s life is turned upside-down when she is forced to look at the life choices she has made. After Errol Larson (Tessa Ferrer, “Grey’s Anatomy,” “Extant”) wrote the best play of the last 10 years, she is unable to recapture the magic and romance of her previous work, so she dives into the past in the hope of saving her flagging career. Fantasy and reality, the past and present, all combine to show her that our lives are just a story that we tell ourselves – and the story may not be true. In addition to Ferrer, Ozsan and Sibley also star as John Hindman is the writer/director.

The event’s second night on September 21 will commence with the scripted film “The Etruscan Smile,” which stars Emmy Award winner Brian Cox (“Nuremberg”) as a rugged old Scotsman who reluctantly leaves his Hebridean island and journeys to San Francisco to seek medical treatment. When he moves in with his estranged son and wife (JJ Feild, Thora Birch), the aging Scot sees his life transformed through a newly found bond with his baby grandson. The feature is directed by Oded Binnun and Mihal Brezis, and also stars Rosanna Arquette, Treat Williams, Tim Matheson and Peter Coyote.

The East Coast premiere of “A Boy Called Sailboat” screens later that night with the story of a Hispanic family that finds hope in their extraordinary son named Sailboat when a personal gesture awakens a global desire. Accompanied by his “little guitar,” Sailboat leads the audience into the miraculous story of the greatest story never told. Cameron Nugent directs a cast paced by Simmons, Busey, Noel Gugliemi, Julian Atocani Sanchez, Elizabeth De Razzo and Miranda Skirman.

The weekend will commence with a program of film shorts from talented filmmakers and auteurs in the making as the artist’s illuminate and provide their insight on the human condition in the 21st century. Saturday’s shorts presentation is followed by “Satan & Adam,” a documentary that chronicles the unlikely pairing of the legendary one-man band Sterling “Mr. Satan” Magee and harmonica master Adam Gussow. Shot over 20 years, the film depicts one of the greatest blues duos most people never have had a chance to see. Magee and Gussow met on the streets of Harlem in the 1980s – a time when race relations in New York City were at an all-time low. Despite their different backgrounds, the two musicians forged a lifelong relationship that demonstrates the unifying power of music. The cast includes Gussow, Harry Shearer (“The Simpsons”) and the Rev. Al Sharpton as themselves. Scott Balcersek and V. Scott Balerek are the directors, Frank Marshall, Ryan Suffern and J.R. Mitchell are the producers.

Continuing the night is a special screening of the new NBC medical drama “New Amsterdam,” directed by Peter Horton (“Grey’s Anatomy”) and Kate Dennis. Inspired by Bellevue – the nation’s oldest public hospital – the series follows the brilliant and charming Dr. Max Goodwin, the institution’s new medical director as he sets out to tear up the bureaucracy and provide exceptional medical care. The determined Dr. Goodwin disrupts the status quo and will stop at nothing to breathe new life into the understaffed and underfunded hospital, which is the only one in the world capable of treating Ebola patients, Rikers Island inmates and the President of the United States. Cast members include Ryan Eggold, Freema Agyeman, Janet Montgomery, Jocko Sims, Anupam Kher and Tyler Labine. “New Amsterdam” is inspired by Dr. Eric Manheimer’s memoir “Twelve Patients: Life and Death at Bellevue Hospital,” which is based on his 15 years as medical director of the hospital. David Schulner and Dr. Eric Manheimer (who will be part of the Question & Answer panel) are the producers.

Rounding out the day’s cinematic fare is the East Coast debut of “Ride,” based on the true saga of BMX champion John Bultjens. In the story, a violent incident at 8 years of age sees John McCord, a troubled youth from a white supremacist family, soon dispatched to a juvenile detention center by the courts. After he spends the most of his years locked up, potential foster parents are found for John: Eldridge and Marianna Bultjens. A hopeful John soon discovers that his new foster parents are African-American, and faced with the alternative of detention, he agrees to go home with them. Eldridge is bent on getting through to a resistant John, and he sees a path when he learns of the youth’s fascination with BMX competition. Eldridge teaches John how to ride a bicycle and the unlikely pair form a bond that leads John to future BMX glory. The director is Alex Ranarivelo; Ludacris, Alexander and Shane Graham star.

In its much-anticipated East Coast premiere on September 22, “Turning Point” (7:30 p.m.) from director Keach, confronts one of the most-feared maladies – Alzheimer’s disease – in a gripping new documentary. The film strips

bare the dreaded affliction that has no cure or means of slowing its insidious progression. But after decades of perseverance in the lab, researchers finally can chase hope in taking the first step in making Alzheimer's a distant memory. Keach takes his audience inside the quest for the first medication that could treat the underlying process more than a century after it was identified as a destroyer of memory and cognitive skills. The scientists who conduct the experiments are profiled as they are driven by personal convictions as well as professional innovation.

The final day of the Boston Film Festival is climaxed by the U.S. premiere of "Grace" (7 p.m.) at the Showplace Icon Theatre. In the quirky drama -- perhaps akin to "Ladybird" meets "Good Will Hunting" -- Dawn is a girl from the wrong side of the tracks who goes to work as an assistant and personal housekeeper for Charlie, an eccentric recluse. While she hopes that the older man, who is a renowned writer, might become her mentor, she realizes that his life is spiraling out of control, and he has lost the ability to write. Dawn is outraged by his spoiled-child behavior and privilege, and their vitriolic fights lead to her waking Charlie up to a larger world as she helps him face down his demons. She too must confront her past and a larger question emerges: can she mature or will she destroy her biggest chance to change her life? Devin Adair directs as Donovan, Cassidy, Ryan. Matthew Lillard, Missi Pyle and Walley Walker star.

The day begins with more film shorts beginning at 12 noon.

Filmgoers can access www.bostonfilmfestival.org for more details and to purchase tickets. Facebook: Boston Film Festival; Twitter: @Bostonfilmfest.

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