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image+nation, Montréal's international LGBT film festival, reaches full maturity with an electrifying 21st edition from November 20 to 30, 2008!

MONTREAL, Thursday, November 6, 2007 – **image+nation**, Canada's oldest and largest LGBT film festival, will celebrate 21 years of cultural [r_evolution] and vibrant queer cinema when its 21st edition unspools in Montreal from **November 20 to 30**. What a core group of relentlessly devoted LGBT community organizers, artists and academics established a generation ago has grown from a modest if valiant annual happening into an internationally renowned film festival with a strong loyal following and an always impressive lineup. Cinephiles of all stripes will have the chance to explore the vitality of independent cinema at **image+nation**, with a multiplicity of perspectives and realities on full display in arresting local and international works, by both emerging talents and established artists. Over the course of 11 days in November, **image+nation** will serve up edgy, groundbreaking works of fiction, powerful and edifying docs, singular, remarkable shorts and many more that would otherwise not find their way on the big screen. What's more, the festival has always doubled as a stimulating forum for reflection, expression and celebration, and this year promises more of the same with a Masterclass lead by our very own bad boy of queer cinema, **Bruce LaBruce**, as well as countless Q&A discussions moderated by directors and actors in attendance, namely **Charlie David** (Mulligans), **Tom Gustafson** (Were the World Mine), **Ron Oliver** (Ice Blues), **Dan Castle** (Newcastle), **Heather Tobin** (To Each her Own), **Kyle Schickner** (Steam) and **Dominic Goyer** (Une Robe Blanche).

OPENING AND CLOSING FILMS

On Thursday, November 20, the homegrown drama **Mulligans** by director Chip Hale will kick off the festivities at Cinéma Impérial. Written by and starring Canadian Charlie David – a past host for E! Television, NBC and OUTtv whom most will recognize as Toby from the sultry cable series **Dante's Cove** – Mulligans tells the story of college jock Tyler Davidson (Derek Baynham), who takes his best pal Chase (David) to his lakeside country house for the summer holidays. The setting proves conducive to revelations, as Chase's utter disinterest in shacking up with one of many flirtatious females cavorting around him prompts his coming out to Tyler. Although the disclosure creates a few ripples in the lake, a deeper storm is brewing within the picture-perfect, upper middle class Davidson family – a secret that threatens to tear the untarnished family unit apart. When Tyler's mother, Stacey (Queer As Folk's Thea Gill) discovers her husband Nathan (Dan Payne) locking lips with another, the Davidson family's world begins to collapse. Nuanced performances and brilliantly turned subplots allow **Mulligans** to rise above coming-out genre clichés, exploring how confessions of queerness may forever alter relationship dynamics, while not necessarily spelling the end of partnerships.

Fest organizers have determined image+nation's 21st anniversary would be an opportune time to shake things up and expand closing night into a more fitting closing weekend! On Saturday, November 29, American filmmaker Chris Mason Johnson's **The New Twenty** will officially wrap up the festivities after the jury announces image+nation's prize-winners. Director Johnson's debut feature explores the subtle tensions that exist in relationships that appear to have transcended class, race and sexual orientation. The film surveys the intersecting lives of five college pals – some straight and some gay – several years post-graduation. On the cusp of turning 30, this fascinating motley crew of New Yorkers find their personal and professional lives in upheaval. There's Andrew, the cocky investment banker about to tie the knot with Julie, a successful alpha-female number cruncher herself. Then there's her brother Tony, who finds himself rethinking both career and life choices when he falls hard for an HIV+ older man; Tony's sensitive roomie Felix, drug-addled and jumping from one tryst to the next while longing for Julie; and teddy-bearish, computer nerd Ben, who aptly rounds off the cast. A soundtrack lush with alterna-folk angst and indie pop introspection accompanies this ensemble gem of thirty-

some things in turmoil. *A St. Elmo's Fire* for a new generation, could forty *actually* be the new thirty and thirty the new twenty?

On Sunday, November 30, the festival hit musical **Were the World Mine**, winner of 12 Jury Awards and 9 Audience Choice Awards, will cap off 11 days of outstanding cinema with its spirited reworking of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The film, already hailed as a landmark for gay and independent cinema, has demonstrated great crossover appeal and will soon be released theatrically in major markets. This rousing, warm-hearted spectacle centers on the life of struggling teen Timothy (played by newcomer Tanner Cohen). Armed with a magical love potion and empowered by dazzling musical fantasies in his head, he turns his narrow-minded town gay and makes them walk a heartbreaking mile in his musical shoes. With all of the gender confusion and mayhem of Shakespeare's play and more, and informed by a gentle American-flavoured magic realism, this feature-length adaptation of director Tom Gustafson's 2003 short, *Fairies* is chockfull of creative twists to adolescent angst and lustful adoration! Gustafson meets the project's many challenges with understated aplomb, as does the vibrant ensemble cast, which includes Wendy Robie (Twin Peaks) as the quirky drama teacher and Zeld Williams (Robin's daughter) as Timothy's spunky best friend.

Both of these feature film directorial debuts will close the festival on a high note for queer cinema, at a time when the very existence of LGBT film fests in the Western world is continually challenged by those who believe such manifestations only to serve to further ghettoize an already marginalized community. **The New Twenty** and **Were the World Mine** are testaments to the vitality and inventiveness of queer cinema, and of the bold new directions and perspectives being put forth by a younger crop of filmmakers, whose characters have grown up in a world of post identity politics.

VANGUARD DOC SERIES

In a fitting tribute to the inspired artists and activists who've helped mould and define contemporary queer culture, image+nation will present the second edition of its "Vanguard Series", profiling a few of these outstanding mavericks. Keith Haring and his distinctive brand of pop art are the subject of Christina Clausen's **The Universe of Keith Haring** (Italy/France), in which the filmmaker delves into Haring's working-class roots and his trademark graffiti-inspired visual language, complemented with archival footage of Grace Jones, Madonna, Paradise Garage and Andy Warhol, among others.

From her legendary commercial shoots for Rolling Stone and Vanity Fair to her decade-plus relationship with acclaimed theorist Susan Sontag, documentary filmmaker Barbara Leibovitz crafts an intimate portrait of her acclaimed sister in **Annie Leibovitz: Life Through a Lens** (USA). Daryl Wein's **Sex Positive** (USA) delivers a compelling portrait of Richard Berkowitz, a New York City hustler-turned-activist who fought hard to spread the word about safe sex practices with a community that was being divided and decimated by a deadly plague. A punk icon and experimental novelist whose post-feminist works had, in the words of one critic, "something to offend everybody", **Who is Afraid of Kathy Acker?** (Barbara Caspar, Austria) captures the spirit of this outlaw writer and her ever-present influence on the riot grrrl scene. Steven Sebring's **Patti Smith: Dream of Life** (USA) concludes this ready-made queer history lesson with Smith's own musings on the human experience and spirituality, as Sebring follows the cult rocker over 11 years of international travel.

Basic human rights and social justice are also on image+nation's advocacy agenda, as confirmed by the following vital works: **Be Like Others** (Tanaz Eshaghian, Canada/USA), an unflinching look at Iranian gay men who undergo state-funded sex change surgeries; **The Beirut Apt** (Daniele Salaris, UK/Italy), a poetic documentary tribute to Lebanon's suppressed gays and lesbians; **All my life** (Maher Sabry, Egypt), Egypt's first openly gay feature with the notorious "Cairo 52" case at its centre; six French documentary filmmakers travel from Madrid to China, NYC, Berlin and beyond in Jean-Baptiste Erreca's **Gay...et après?** (France), a pulsing investigation of emerging LGBT identity crises in the age of FaceTube; and **L'Ordre des mots** (Cynthia Arra & Melissa Arra, France), a challenge to the psychiatric and medical discourse that still treats transsexuality and intersexuality as illnesses. These films corroborate the necessity to shed light on the drastically dissimilar global LGBT realities to affect change in certain parts of the world.

STELLAR LINEUP CULLED FROM WORLD FESTIVAL CIRCUIT

Staying true to form, image+nation's 21st edition promises to deliver a slew of award-winning works hailing from the four corners of the globe. Among the feature films in competition are **Antarctica** (Yair Hochner, Israel), a light-hearted queer tribute to Michael Winterbottom's

Wonderland that continues the Israeli tradition of delivering raunchy, realistic and stirring sex in a Tel Aviv-set exploration on interpersonal politics amongst a group of friends nearing thirty. Malaysian director Yen Tan's **Ciao** (USA) is a refreshing cinematic reflection on bereavement, friendship and unrequited love, in a romantic queer homage to Louis Malle's *My Dinner with Andre*. The Dogme 95-tinged **Drifting Flowers**, which was criticized for portraying butch-femme stereotypes, is Taiwanese director Zero Chou (image+nation 20's *Spider Lillies*)'s laissez-faire meditation on sexual identity, and perhaps reflects Taiwan's own delicate political transition. **Newcastle** (Dan Castle, Australia) is a gorgeously shot coming-of-age tale of three brothers knee-deep in the world of competitive surfing. **La León** (Argentina) is Santiago Otheguy's prize-winning debut feature, a sumptuous black-and-white romance of the most unlikely kind between Álvaro, a fisherman on a remote island in Northeastern Argentina, and a bigoted, brutal water bus driver. **Altromondo** (Fabiomassimo Lozzi, Italy) and **Saturno contro** (Ferzan Ozpetek, Italy) are cases in point for a simply outstanding year in queer Italian cinema: the former is a refreshing hybrid of doc and drama made up of 43 vignettes, using a bevy of thespians from Rome's renowned Actors Centre in a narrative that moves from complete denial to outright pride. The latter is a fine return to form for director Ozpetek (*Steam: The Turkish Bath*, *Facing Windows*, *Le Fate ignoranti*), whose ensemble piece about a group of friends faced with sudden tragedy, dominated the David di Donatello awards (Italy's highest film honour) and is notable for its moving, sympathetic treatment of same-sex partnerships in an intensely conservative Italy.

On the mockumentary front, look out for Australia's **Razzle Dazzle: A Journey into Dance** (Darren Ashton), a side-splitting send-up of the competitive world of children's dance, replete with stage moms, temperamental trainers and enterprising teeny boppers! For something a little more risqué, image+nation will be screening a newly restored print of **Nights in Black Leather** (Ignatio Rokowski, USA), the film that thrust gay erotic icon Peter Berlin into the international arena, in which he plays a German immigrant wandering around San Francisco, with his trademark swagger, skintight jeans and rock hard bod on full display! And you won't want to miss the world's first gay zombie movie, **Otto; Or, Up With Dead People!** A Sundance and Berlin fave this past year, this part melancholy, part lustful tale of a hapless young lad wandering the streets of Berlin in existential turmoil is the latest from our own porn-punk auteur himself, Bruce LaBruce (Hustler White, Raspberry Reich).

BRUCE LABRUCE MASTER CLASS, GENERATION Q AND JURY

There's a thin line between art and porn – or porn and art – and Canuck photographer, writer and filmmaker **Bruce LaBruce** walks it like a tightrope. His highly charged, erotic films traffic in queer sexual iconoclasm, casting a unique light on a queer sub-culture filled with hustlers, drifters, fetishists, sadomasochists, revolutionaries and now, zombies. LaBruce's uncompromising work is explicit and shocking but always intensely humorous and ironic. For over a decade, this bad-boy of queer cinema has aroused, incensed and ultimately challenged audiences – igniting a fuse from the groin on up to the critical faculties. Coming to image+nation21 with his latest opus, **Otto; Or, Up With Dead People** the “reluctant pornographer” will lead a master class, discussing his influences and motivations, fusing sex, politic and ideology together as a creative practice. (Date & time TBA)

As always, the young'ins will get their queer fix via **Generation Q**, a wide-ranging collection of features and shorts that run the gamut in their representations of young queer life in the 21st century. Some standouts in this year's lineup are **The Lost Coast** (Gabriel Fleming, USA), a low-budget indie gem about three twenty-something high school friends who reconnect for a Halloween night to remember in San Francisco's Castro district. And **Dolls** (Karin Babinskà, Czech Republic) is a darkly comic road movie and an explicit examination of the teenage wasteland, care of the sexual awakening of three 18-year-old gal pals.

The **image+nation 21** jury will face the daunting task of naming the Best Feature, Best Short and Best Documentary, and is composed of **Michaela Pnacekova** (Programmer, Czech Gay & Lesbian Film Festival), **Mathieu Chantelois** (Editor, Famous Quebec and Host, Cover Guy) and **Karina Mariano** (Founder, Montreal Underground Film Festival).

BOX OFFICE AND GENERAL INFORMATION

TICKET PRESALES: Bar Fût-Zion (1441 Amherst)
November 14 and 17 – 4pm-9pm
November 15 and 16 – 2pm-9pm

During the festival, the main box office for image+nation tickets is the Cinéma Impérial (1432 De Bleury), open 30 minutes before the first screening each day. Tickets for a show can be purchased at the screening's venue starting 60 minutes before the showtime, or online at: www.image-nation.org

Prices: Single ticket \$11; movie buff pass 10@\$90, student and senior (65+) ticket \$7.

The 21st edition of image+nation will take place at the following venues: Cinema Impérial (1432 De Bleury), the NFB Theatre (1564 Saint-Denis) and the JA de Sève Theatre (Concordia University, 1400 De Maisonneuve West).

For further information about the festival, complete schedule and to purchase tickets, please visit www.image-nation.org

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