



SPIKE LEE LAUNCHES 2nd EDITION OF THE BABELGUM ONLINE FILM FESTIVAL

The Academy Award Nominated Director Returns as Jury Chairman of the Web TV Service's Movie Contest

TORONTO, CANADA (September 5th, 2008) – In response to the overwhelming success of its inaugural edition, **Babelgum**, the free, independent Web TV platform, is pleased to announce the launch of the second edition of its **Babelgum Online Film Festival**. The announcement will be made today by Spike Lee during a press conference at the Toronto International Film Festival, where Babelgum will also be premiering the trailer of its first original film production “Downstream”, focusing on the controversy over the development of Alberta’s oil sands. The Babelgum Online Film Festival celebrates and rewards the very best in international independent short filmmaking. **Spike Lee** will be returning for the second year as the Honorary Judge of the Festival Jury. The winners of the Online Film Festival will be announced in early 2009. Details about the Award ceremony will be announced in due course.

Spike Lee said, “The results from the 1st Babelgum Online Film Festival proved that audiences from all over the world are eager for new content and that independent filmmakers are excited to have found a new place to showcase their work. I feel privileged to be part of the Babelgum Online Film Festival and excited that it has the potential to reach more audiences than any other film festival in the world because of the Internet’s global reach.”

Further proof of the visibility and impact of the first Babelgum Online Film Festival is the news that Richard Recco, winner of the Short Film category, has recently signed with the management and production company Hughes Capital Entertainment and it is anticipated that a high profile development deal to turn his short in to a feature-length film will be announced shortly.

Ethan Podell, President of the US division of Babelgum, stated, “The 1st edition of the Babelgum Online Film Festival had an impressive debut with filmmakers, the entertainment community, and audience members around the world. We received over 1,000 entries from 86 countries around the world and engaged 1.5 million audience members in the voting process, hitting a home run for Babelgum. We are very excited to be launching the 2nd edition of the festival and are honored that Spike Lee has demonstrated his commitment to Babelgum and our independent film venture by again agreeing to serve as the head of the Jury.”

Spike Lee chairs a jury of industry experts drawn from around the world. Other jurors include **Joe Bateman**, Festival director of the Rushes Soho Shorts Festival (UK); **Tiziana Loschi**,

Managing Director of the Annecy International Animated Film Festival (France); **Carl Spence**, Artistic Director of the Seattle International Film Festival (US).

The 2nd Edition of the Babelgum Online Film Festival will be open to all short and medium-form content produced professionally or by enrolled film school students.

Babelgum has decided to narrow the number of categories down from seven to four including:

- **The Babelgum Short Film Award** – Shorts from comedy to horror which present a clear, concise and original vision through the use of the short film genre. (20 minutes max.)
- **The Babelgum Animation Award** – Stories told through the craft of animation in all its forms: animated films made in any animation technique, frame by frame or computer-made. (5 minutes max.).
- **The Babelgum Mini Masterpiece Award** – For gifted newcomers or professionals who have flair for telling bizarre, funny, surprising, provocative, shocking, experimental stories, including viral videos (5 minutes max.). This category is open to students, professionals, and those on a shoestring budget.
- **The Babelgum Documentary Award** – True stories and inspiring films (30 minutes max.) that engage, inform or entertain the viewer using any of the documentary styles (e.g. cinema vérité, observational, presenter-led, narrated, personal, authored storytelling).

The Babelgum Online Film Festival will award three types of prizes:

- The **Spike Lee Award** will be given to the top films in each of the four categories, as chosen by Spike Lee and the Babelgum audience. The audience will select a shortlist of the top 10 entries in each of the four categories, and then Spike Lee will choose the four winning films. The winners will receive a cash prize of € 20,000 and a trophy.
- The **Looking for Genius Award** will be given by Spike Lee and the industry jury to a new or emerging filmmaker who displays clear and outstanding achievement through direction, animation, writing and/or camera work in low-budget films for his/her film in competition in any of the 4 categories. The winner will receive a cash prize of € 20,000 and a trophy.
- The **Professional Jury Award** will be given to the top films in each of the four categories, as chosen by members of the industry jury and the Babelgum audience. The audience will select the top 10 entries in each of the four categories, and then a member of the jury will select the winning film in each category. The prizes for this category are to be determined.

Submissions of films will be accepted from September 6th to December 31st, providing an ample amount of time for filmmakers who want to develop and produce an original film to submit it to the Online Festival. The Babelgum audience will be allowed to start voting in

January 2009. Further information about the submission specifications and regulations, including deadlines to submit, screen and vote, are available on the [Babelgum](#) website.

About Babelgum

A free internet TV platform supported by advertising, Babelgum combines the full-screen video quality of traditional television with the interactive capabilities of the internet, offering professionally produced programming on-demand to a global audience.

Babelgum's editorial focus is on independent film and festivals, the environment, global travel, music and adventure sports, supported by the launch of a series of thematic communities in those areas.

As the name suggests, Babelgum's goal is to act as an international 'social glue', bringing a huge range of content to a global audience – like a modern-day Tower of Babel. The bubble logo is a fun visual pun on the company name, but also reflects Babelgum's commitment to a green, global future.

Using proprietary software, the Babelgum player provides content owners with a secure platform on which to distribute their programming worldwide and a unique business model that allows them to monetise their assets.

Babelgum's content partners include the Associated Press, Reuters, PBS, BBC, 3DD, Shine Limited, Gong Anime, IMG, Off the Fence and international film festivals such as Seattle, DC Independent and Encounters. The list of advertisers includes globally renowned brands such as Vodafone and Benetton Group.

Founded in 2005, Babelgum is an independent and privately held company with offices in the U.K., Ireland, France, Italy and the US. www.babelgum.com

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