



THE DON HAIG FUND

Press Release

For Immediate Release

HOT DOCS AND DON HAIG AWARD COMMITTEE COMBINE TO SUPPORT UP-AND-COMING DIRECTORS; FILMS TRANSIT TO SUPPORT SPECIAL JURY AWARD

Toronto, February 6, 2006 - Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival and the Don Haig Award Committee are pleased to announce that Hot Docs is the new home for the Don Haig Award, as the two organizations work collectively towards furthering the award's growth and profile. The third annual Don Haig Award will be presented at the upcoming Hot Docs Festival (April 28 - May 7). Keeping in the spirit of its namesake, Don Haig (1933-2002), the award will be given to an emerging filmmaker whose body of work includes both documentary and fiction films. Joan Schafer, Chairperson for the Don Haig Fund says, "I know Don is smiling down at his new home in Hot Docs. In his heart he was a documentarian."

Hot Docs and the Don Haig Award Committee are working together to develop and administer a long-term fundraising and promotion strategy and selection procedure, which will continue the heartfelt help that Don Haig gave to those starting out in the film industry. "Hot Docs is honoured to have this opportunity to be associated with the significant legacy of Don Haig," says Sean Farnel, Hot Docs' Director of Programming. "We look forward to developing the Don Haig Award into a major source of support for Canada's most promising filmmakers."

The winner of the Don Haig Award will receive a \$10,000 cash prize to be used for whatever the filmmaker needs toward his/her craft, whether it is to fill a production gap, complete a film, or to buy some creative time. Based on his gentle nature and often pure gut instinct, these awards continue the work which Don Haig did during his life, giving generously both his knowledge and funds to filmmakers he found promising. "He was a genuine talent supporter. He knew who had it and who didn't and he supported those (who did) with everything he had," Schafer says.

Additionally, Films Transit, one of the world's leading international distributors of documentaries, will be providing a \$5000 special Jury Prize for this inaugural year. "Almost the minute I arrived in Canada in 1979 I got to know Don Haig, and have always seen him as a monumental example of kindness and generosity toward young and emerging filmmakers," says Jan Rofekamp, President and CEO of Films Transit. "I am tremendously honoured to be able to contribute to this award in his name and to contribute to keep his legacy alive."

"The Don Haig Award was founded in 2002 by a group of very dedicated colleagues and friends in the film industry in order to perpetuate Don's legacy in assisting emerging independent filmmakers," says Bill Schultz, part of the Award Steering Committee and Don Haig's life partner. As such, the award will be presented to an up-and-coming Canadian filmmaker who is nominated based on their work in a documentary or a combination of fictional and documentary format. "Don's first love has

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always been documentary," Schultz states, "However, as an executive producer he supported filmmakers in both documentary and fiction genres, thus bridging the documentary and fiction filmmaking worlds."

Don Haig's interest in film started at an early age, leaving school to work in MGM's Winnipeg office. He later joined the editing staff at CBC Television in Toronto, receiving several awards for his work. Haig's list of activities broadened during the 1970s to include co-producing and executive producing many different projects. *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* (1987), which was screened at the Cannes Film Festival, Gemini Award-winning documentaries *Track Stars* (1979) and *Anatomy of a Writer: Timothy Findley* (1992) and Academy Award winning documentary *Artie Shaw: Time is All You've Got* (1985) are among the feature films which Haig helped produce.

Don Haig joined the National Film Board in 1992, and by the time he left in 1998 he had overseen the production of 135 films from across Canada. Upon his return to Toronto, Haig resumed his role as executive producer in the independent film community, giving generously to emerging filmmakers. In addition to being recognized with many awards and honours, he is now affectionately known as the 'Godfather of Canadian Film'. "He was a true mentor. His fans are everywhere in the industry - young and old, up and coming, and those who are still working," Schafer affirmed. "It's been a great honour to serve as Chairperson for the Don Haig Fund, a fund that continues in his tradition of supporting talent everywhere."

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Hot Docs, North America's largest documentary festival, will present its 13th annual edition from April 28 to May 7, 2006. An outstanding selection of 100+ documentaries from Canada and around the world will be presented to Toronto audiences and international delegates from over 25 countries. Hot Docs will also mount a full roster of professional development and market events for documentary practitioners, including the renowned Toronto Documentary Forum, running May 3 & 4, 2006.

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