



BABELGUM ONLINE FILM FESTIVAL:
"YOUNG FILMMAKERS – TURN TO THE INTERNET" (SPIKE LEE)

- Festival opens for public viewing and voting
- Over a thousand entries from 86 countries
- Festival supports emerging talent by generating new film production and shifting focus to the small screen
- The votes of Babelgum users will decide the nominee shortlist, to be judged by director Spike Lee and a professional panel
- €20,000 each to be awarded to winners in seven categories during a gala awards ceremony in Cannes on 20th May

London, 10th March 2008 – Babelgum, the new interactive web TV portal, has released all entries to the Babelgum Online Film Festival onto its platform for public voting. The festival introduces a huge variety of professionally produced short films. Over a thousand entries from 86 countries are available to anyone with broadband, reaching a potential global audience of 360 million.

The Babelgum Online Film Festival is the first of its kind, and provides a unique distribution opportunity for the newest filmmaking talent. A number of entries have been created specifically for the festival, proving that it is also generating new and original content.

Spike Lee confirms that viewers should be impressed with what they find. "The standard of the entries we've received thus far has been outstanding. It just goes to show there is a wealth of talent out there that wouldn't usually get recognition or exposure if it wasn't for festivals such as this. It really does represent a new era in film-making and puts the filmmaker in more control of getting their productions seen."

Valerio Zingarelli, CEO of Babelgum, is pleased to see the festival is contributing to an industry shift which sees the small screen as important a vehicle as the big screen. "Films are now being made primarily for consumption online or on other smaller screen devices with 60% of entries received having been produced specifically for the small screen. This supports the realisation that to be successful, filmmakers need to go where their potential audience is and Babelgum provides the perfect platform to do so."

Trends

Perhaps providing a glimpse into the future of film production, exhibition and consumer tastes in the digital age, a quarter of the entries are original, unseen content, which means that Babelgum will be premiering the films. Young and emerging filmmakers are seeing strong representation, with



entries from 198 film students and the average age of entrants at just 29 years old.

Social trends are echoed within the entries with climate change a heavy focus, reflecting the green concerns of today's citizens. Innovation is also prominent with the latest filmmaking technology on show, such as combinations of animated and live footage.

Many of the entries use provocative themes and include storylines exploring politics, violence, mental and psychological issues to incite a strong reaction among viewers and ensure the underlying message is strongly received. If those prove too gritty, humour is also very prevalent.

The entries also include geographically diverse content including films shot in regions not traditionally associated with film locations.

Female filmmakers are more strongly represented than in the traditional film industry. Around 17% of entries were from women, more than double the industry norm, which will contribute towards greater recognition for women filmmakers in general.

Categories

Entries have been received in the seven categories of the festival. The number of entries for each is as follows:

- The Babelgum Short Film Award 37%
- The Babelgum Looking For Genius Award 16%
- The Babelgum Animation Award 14%
- The Babelgum Music Video Award 10%
- The Babelgum Social / Environment Award 9%
- The Babelgum Spot / Advertising Award 8%
- The Babelgum Documentary Award 7%

Judging

Babelgum users now have the opportunity to view and vote on a truly diverse set of short films until mid May. There is a good variety of fresh and original content and, as the average film length is just twelve minutes, it is easy for everyone to get involved and have their say on who will become the next big filmmaking talent.

The entries will then be judged by the festival jury, led by renowned director Spike Lee. The other jurors consist of film experts from across the globe, including the directors of established film festivals, film schools and film industry associations:

- **Joe Bateman**, Festival Director of the Rushes Soho Shorts Festival (U.K.)



- **Ally Derks**, Director of the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (The Netherlands)
- **Bhuvan Lall**, Founder of the Indian Independent Filmmakers Worldwide Association (India)
- **Tiziana Loschi**, Managing Director of the Annecy International Animated Film Festival and Citia (City of Moving Images) (France)
- **Joe Neulight**, Co-Founder and President of Withoutabox (U.S.)
- **Sandra Ruch**, Executive Director of the International Documentary Association (U.S.)
- **Teri Schwartz**, Dean of the Loyola Marymount University School of Film and Television (U.S.)
- **James Mullighan**, Creative Director of Shooting People (U.K.)
- **Carl Spence**, Artistic Director of the Seattle International Film Festival and Director of Programming of the Palm Springs International Film Festival (U.S.)
- **Stefano Martina**, Director of Arcipelago, International Festival of Short Films and New Images (Italy)
- **Johannes Newrkla**, Founding member of the Art Directors Club of Europe (Austria)

Highlights

Some highlights from the entries so far:

- An Irish short comedy: part animation, part live action
- An Australian short which imagines what might have happened to Bonnie and Clyde had they lived
- Made in 24 hours, a heartbreakingly honest account of two brothers' first weeks in England
- A comedy which transplants the Greek gods into the modern world, where they struggle to cope with the 21st century
- A cleverly edited and great quality stop-motion animation music video
- An animated short, made in the style of a 1940s public service announcement, which imagines how zombies would fit into modern society
- A film about the extreme reactions stress can produce in humans
- A comic film about a man who lives his life following advice from fortune cookies as literally as possible
- A provocative film focused around 9/11
- A short drama set in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of Beirut in Lebanon
- A three-part short film in Mexico which is produced much in the style of Rear Window, chronicling an important day in the life of a UFO obsessive
- An educational short film documenting endeavours to financially and culturally empower the indigenous Maya people of Belize
- A Short film which sees its main character attending a fancy dress party where all the other attendees are wearing masks displaying faces of George Bush and his administration. The lead character is flirting with Bush before things go further and he whisks her away to another room. The character then



realises she is locked in the room with Bush and his administration who watch as he rapes her.

The Babelgum Online Film Festival has proved particularly popular in the United States, which has seen the highest number of entrants (31.2%), followed by the UK (21.5%), Italy (9.6%), Canada (4.6%), Spain (3.1%), Germany (3.0%), Australia (3.0%) and France (2.8%).

In order to view the wide range of entries, anyone can visit www.babelgum.com and follow simple instructions to download the software quickly and easily. They can then enjoy films from the festival, as well as hundreds of hours of other Babelgum content, at their own convenience.

About Babelgum

Babelgum is a new interactive web TV portal. Babelgum uses peer-to-peer technology to provide the immersive viewing experience and picture quality of traditional TV combined with the interactivity and personalization enabled by the Internet.

Babelgum allows users to enjoy free, on-demand and personalized channels, using both niche and mainstream content to satisfy individuals' needs for tailored entertainment. Instead of user-generated clips, it features only professionally produced content spanning film, news, sports, documentaries, music videos, concerts, lifestyle and trends, animation and scripted programs.

Babelgum provides independent content owners with a protected platform on which to gain global exposure of their work and a unique model to monetise their content online. Babelgum's content partners include 3DD, the Associated Press, Shine Limited, BBC Motion Gallery, Reuters, Entertainment Rights, Gong Anime, IMG, Ministry of Sound TV, Zed and Off the Fence, among others. Founded in 2005, Babelgum is a privately held company, with headquarters in Ireland and offices in the U.K., France, Italy and soon the U.S.

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