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EcoFocus Film Festival to show award-winning documentary *The Cove*

Athens, GA- EcoFocus Film Festival, Athens, GA's environmental film festival, will be screening the 2009 Sundance Audience Award-winning film, *The Cove*, on Friday, Oct. 9 at Ciné in downtown Athens.

The Cove begins in Taiji, Japan, where former dolphin trainer Ric O'Barry has come to set things right after a long search for redemption. In the 1960s, it was O'Barry who captured and trained the five dolphins that played the title character in the international television sensation *Flipper*.

Taiji Cove, a remote, glistening cove surrounded by barbed wire and "Keep Out" signs, hides a dark reality. The nature of what the Taiji fisherman do is so chilling -- and the consequences are so dangerous to human health -- they will go to great lengths to halt anyone from seeing it. *The Cove* tells the amazing true story of how an elite team of activists, filmmakers, and freedivers embarked on a covert mission to penetrate this hidden and deadly cove.

The screening begins at 7 p.m., followed by a panel discussion of renowned professors and researchers in the fields of animal and environmental issues. After the screening, a catered reception will take place catered by The National restaurant. Admission is \$8.

A special highlight of the event will be a video message from O'Barry sent from Japan, where he is currently stationed and determined to use his presence and media attention to put pressure on the Japanese government and its fishing industry.

Although the film covers heavy thematic material, EcoFocus Festival Director Sara Beresford says: "This film is surprisingly inspirational. People believe this film is just about dolphins being slaughtered, but that's only a very small part of the film's message. The rest is an amazing story of adventure, inspiration, and the power of one person to create change. This is an important and fascinating film."

Panel Discussion Participants include:

Lori Marino is a Senior Lecturer in the Neuroscience and Behavioral Biology Program and a faculty affiliate at the Center for Ethics at Emory University. Her research interests include the evolution of brain, intelligence and self-awareness in cetaceans (dolphins and whales) and other nonhuman species, and human-nonhuman animal relationships.

John H. Schacke, who served as Science Director and President of The Dolphin Project from 1994 to 1999, is a member of the Georgia Marine Mammal Stranding Network and was a founding member of the Atlantic Dolphin Research Cooperative. He is a part-time instructor in the UGA School of Ecology.

Carrie Packwood Freeman, is an Assistant Professor of Communication at Georgia State University, researches communication strategies for social justice movements as well as the media's coverage of nonhuman animal and environmental issues, in particular, animal agribusiness and veganism.

Randy Malamud is a professor of English at Georgia State University who works in the field of ecocriticism. His books include *Reading Zoos: Representations of Animals and Captivity*; *Poetic Animals and Animal Souls*; and *A Cultural History of Animals in the Modern Age*.

The Oct 9 event is the beginning of a week-long theatrical run of the film at Ciné. Additional screening times are listed on the EcoFocus website.

EcoFocus is a month-long series of film screening events throughout October at Ciné in downtown Athens and on the University of Georgia campus. EcoFocus strives to break away from stereotypes and the preconceived notion that environmental films are, by definition, preachy and boring. Films selected for EcoFocus appeal to a broad audience of both the environmentally savvy as well as the environmentally unaware. The festival is for anyone who enjoys meaningful films, and EcoFocus hopes to inspire audiences into awareness and action on behalf of the environment.

EcoFocus Film Festival is an initiative of the Eugene P. Odum School of Ecology at UGA. EcoFocus is a collaborative effort drawing on the expertise and enthusiasm of an advisory board and festival committee members from the university, Athens, and around the country. By combining the strengths of our local academic and creative community, and the Athens community's support of film and the arts, EcoFocus is poised to place new emphasis on environmental awareness in this region through film, and to generate change.

A full schedule of film events and ticketing information is available on the EcoFocus Film Festival website at ecofocusfilmfest.org. Contact Director Sara Beresford at 202-494-6669 or EcoFocusFilmfest@gmail.com; Press Contact Jamie Woodhead at 678-232-3549 or EcoFocusPress@gmail.com.

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Note to Editors: More information about *The Cove* and other films in the festival lineup can be sent upon request, including photos from film press kits.

