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**“OPERATION FILMMAKER” TO AIR NATIONALLY ON PBS SERIES *INDEPENDENT LENS*
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2008**

***Do-Gooder Intentions Go Disastrously Wrong When Hollywood Gives a Young Iraqi Film Student the
Chance of a Lifetime***

“Fascinatingly complicated ... encapsulates the entire situation between America and Iraq.”

—Wesley Morris, *The Boston Globe*

(San Francisco, CA)—**OPERATION FILMMAKER** tells the complex, funny, sad and insightful story about what happens when some well-intentioned Hollywood insiders try to intervene in the life of a young Iraqi film student. Featuring Liev Schreiber, Elijah Wood and Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, Nina Davenport’s acclaimed **OPERATION FILMMAKER** will have its television premiere on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard, on Tuesday, December 30, 2008, at 10 PM (check local listings).

One year after the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States, MTV aired a documentary about Muthana Mohmed, a 25-year-old Baghdad film student. Muthana had a winning smile and an indomitable spirit, but his school had been destroyed by bombs. American actor Liev Schreiber saw the MTV piece while preparing to direct his first feature. Feeling guilty for having so many opportunities while someone else had none, Schreiber invited Muthana to join the production of *Everything Is Illuminated* in the Czech Republic. It seemed like an inspiring, feel-good story of bridging cultures, so documentary director Nina Davenport went along to film it.

Soon after Muthana arrives in Prague, however, the gaping contrast between his worldview and that of his Hollywood employers becomes apparent. At night, he watches television images of escalating violence in Baghdad; by day, he listens as crewmembers somberly discuss the importance of properly preparing vegan snacks for the producers. And when Muthana declares his love for George Bush, the liberal producers are horrified.

In addition, Muthana, who is living away from his family for the first time, isn’t accustomed to being self-sufficient. He has difficulty managing such tasks as doing his laundry and renewing his visa—never mind comprehending high expectations on a stressful film set. The results are often harrowing. When Muthana starts to fear for his safety if he returns to Baghdad and asks his employers if they will continue to help him after filming ends, his patrons reach the limits of their charity.

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No one has a good exit strategy. For filmmaker Nina Davenport, what was meant to be a month of filming turns into a year and a half, and she tells this story, full of remarkable twists and turns, with a sharp eye for humor and surreal juxtapositions. Everyone's motives are questioned, including documentary filmmakers and their "semi-factitious" stories. A fascinating mix of tragedy and farce, **OPERATION FILMMAKER** perfectly captures the mixed signals that characterize so much of our confused dialogue with the world.

To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the companion website for **OPERATION FILMMAKER** at pbs.org/independentlens/operationfilmmaker. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions.

About the Filmmaker

After studying photography and filmmaking at Harvard College, **Nina Davenport** completed her first film, *Hello Photo*, a poetic travel documentary about India. The film premiered at Rotterdam and won Best Documentary at the Melbourne International Film Festival. Her second film, *Always a Bridesmaid*—described by the Hollywood Reporter as “dripping with artistic merit”—was autobiographical; it aired on Cinemax/HBO and on Channel Four in the United Kingdom. Davenport’s third feature, *Parallel Lines*, a lyrical road movie about the private stories and personal grief of Americans in the aftermath of 9/11, premiered at the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam in the Joris Ivens Competition and subsequently aired on the BBC’s *Storyville*.

OPERATION FILMMAKER, Davenport’s most recent film, first screened as a work-in-progress at the Rotterdam International Film Festival in 2007, where it won the prestigious KNF Dutch Film Critics Award, and later premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival. Her unique and personal style of documentary has earned her numerous filmmaking awards and grants. Davenport grew up in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, and lives in New York City.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities and moments in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen. Further information about the series is available at pbs.org/independentlens

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