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## SONY PICTURES CLASSICS ACQUIRES FROM BLEIBERG ENTERTAINMENT US AND ENGLISH-CANADA RIGHTS TO ISRAELI FILM "THE BAND'S VISIT"

### Director Eran Kolirin's First Feature Screening At This Year's Cannes Film Festival

New York, NY. May 22, 2007. Sony Pictures Classics announced at the 60th Cannes Film Festival today that they have acquired the US and English-Canada rights to writer and director Eran Kolirin's first feature, "The Band's Visit." The Israeli film, which is screening in the "Un Certain Regard" category at the festival has received tremendous response from audiences. Kolirin is eligible to take home the Camera D'or Award this year at Cannes, an award presented to the best first feature film screened in any category. "The Band's Visit" stars Sasson Gabai ("*Made in Israel*" and "*Aviva Ahuvati*") and three-time Best Actress winner at the Israeli Academy Awards, Ronit Elkabetz ("*Sh'Chur*," "*Hatuna Meuheret*," and "*Ve'Lakhta Lehe Isha*"). The film also stars Saleh Bakri and Khalifa Natour. Kolirin's previous works include the television movie, "*The Long Journey*" (2004) and "*Tzur Hadassim*" (1999), for which he won Best Screenplay at the Jerusalem Film Festival.

"The Band's Visit" is the story of an Egyptian Police band that travels to Israel to play at an initiation ceremony for an Arab cultural center, but when they arrive at the airport no one is there to greet them. They set off on their own to find the center, but, through a series of mishaps, end up stranded in a desolate Israeli town somewhere in the heart of the desert. With no transportation available until the next morning they are forced to find lodging with a local cafe owner and some neighboring families. Through a series of comic misadventures the band and the townspeople are forced to interact, ultimately discovering a common understanding that transcends the language barrier, as well as the cultural barrier.

Michael Barker, Tom Bernard and Dylan Leiner from Sony Pictures Classics acquired the film from producer Ehud Bleiberg from Bleiberg Entertainment.

"It is a privilege and honor for me that Michael Barker and Tom Bernard are releasing the "The Band's Visit," comments producer Ehud Bleiberg. We are all very excited to be joining the Sony Pictures Classics family and know they will do wonderful things with this film.

Sony Pictures Classics released the following statement: "The Band's Visit" marks the birth of a major new international filmmaker, Eran Kolirin, in a story that is so warm and human (and funny as well). It is an important movie about how in today's world there is a necessity for trust in human connection, and the

restorative power of music. This is the kind of movie that wins major awards and is very commercial at the same time. This movie will bring people together. "The Band's Visit" feels like a repeat of our experience last year with "The Lives of Others." Who would have thought we would have had such good fortune two years in a row. It is a privilege to be distributing this great Israeli film and to be working with Eran Kolirin and his producers Ehud Bleiberg, Eilon Ratzkovsky and Koby Gal-Rady."

"The Band's Visit" was written and directed by Eran Kolirin; Produced by Eilon Ratzkovsky, Ehud Bleiberg, Yossi Uzrad, Koby Gal-Raday, and Guy Jacoel; A July August Prods. (Israel)/Bleiberg Entertainment (USA)/Sophie Dulac Prods. (France) production. (International sales: Bleiberg Entertainment, Beverly Hills.); Starring Sasson Gabai, Ronit Elkabetz, Saleh Bakri, Khalifa Natour, Imad Jabarin, Tarak Kopty, Hisham Khoury, Francois Kheel, Eyad Sheety, Shlomi Avraham, Rubi Moscovich, Hila Surjon Fischer, Uri Gabriel, Ahouva Keren; Camera (color), Shai Goldman; editor, Arik Lahav Leibovitz; music, Habib Shehadeh Hanna; production designer, Eitan Levi; costume designer, Doron Ashkenazi; sound (Dolby Digital), Itai Eloav; sound design, Gil Toren; line producer, Tami Kushnir; casting, Orit Azoulay; language: Arabic, English, Israeli dialogue.

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