



‘Live Free or Die Hard’ Earns Thumbs Up! **at ‘08 Hackademy Awards**

*Latest in Bruce Willis Action Series Frees Audiences
From Sales Job for Hard Death by Tobacco*

SACRAMENTO, Calif., February 13, 2008 — While tobacco use remains a hard habit for Hollywood to quit, the 13th annual Hackademy Awards once again show how actors and the entertainment industry really do have the power to encourage young people to live free of smoking.

Bruce Willis’ PG-13 action flick “Live Free or Die Hard” took top honors at the annual Hollywood-style awards ceremony for not including any depiction of tobacco use. In fact, Willis went on record in early 2007 stating he deliberately dropped smoking from his cop character John McClane — who puffed through previous “Die Hard” releases — to avoid making the habit look cool to kids.

“It’s just a nasty habit. I didn’t want to feel responsible for any kid smoking to try to look cool because he thought I looked cool doing it,” Willis was quoted in an interview with Vanity Fair magazine.

The Hackademy Awards is based on reviews by teenage volunteers with the Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down! program (TUTD), sponsored by Breathe California of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails with Western Health Advantage as presenting sponsor this year. Designed to raise awareness of the impact of tobacco use in films on pre-teens, teens and young adults, TUTD also gives an annual “Thumbs Down!” award to a smoke-filled movie that exemplifies how tobacco use can validate a harmful habit for youth without depicting the devastating health consequences. Actors and actresses in each category are also recognized because of their power as role models to teens.

Data gathered by reviewers show that stars and credited non-stars smoke in 83 percent of all movies with depictions of tobacco use. Meanwhile, half of all movies reviewed that contained

tobacco use were rated for youth audiences and 66 percent of movies rated PG-13 contained tobacco use. “Bee Movie” won an honorable mention as a close second for the Thumbs Up! award for its anti-smoking messages. But after a lively debate, “Live Free or Die Hard” won out because of the movie’s popularity among teens. Reviewers also praised it for breaking free from the habit of other action movies to use cigarettes as character props.

“You’d think that this kind of movie would have smoking in it, and I was happy that it didn’t,” said reviewer Renata, a junior from Sheldon High School in Elk Grove. “Bruce Willis could have smoked a cigarette in any place in the movie and made it look cool.”

Unfortunately, youth reviewers had plenty of choices when it came to the dubious honor of this year’s Thumbs Down! award. Top contenders included “Alpha Dog,” “Balls of Fury,” “The Simpsons Movie” and “Hairspray,” which took the ’08 Thumbs Down! award for packing in five times more incidents of tobacco use than were in the original “Hairspray” released nearly 20 years ago.

Rated PG, “Hairspray” was filled with smoking, including a scene where high school girls made cigarette smoking look cool and two scenes where a cigarette was smoked by a pregnant woman.

“The Simpsons Movie” gave “Hairspray” a wheezing run for the money. Clearly aimed at a youth audience, “The Simpsons Movie” cast cigarettes in several places, including one scene with teens smoking as an expression of rebellion — an especially potent endorsement when directed at younger audiences.

“The Simpsons was an animated movie, so to include tobacco, they didn’t just drop it in, they had to make a deliberate choice to animate it in,” said Christine, a reviewer and senior at Cordova High School in Rancho Cordova.

For actors and actresses, the Hackademy Awards spotlighted:

- Justin Timberlake for Thumbs Down! actor. Timberlake’s performance in “Alpha Dog” missed few opportunities to glamorize tobacco, and the actor was unanimously voted to receive the award because of his significant influence on teens through his films, music and popularity as a celebrity role model. Oddly, co-star Bruce Willis was one of the Thumbs Down! runners up for smoking through the same movie, but at least he later stubbed out the habit with “Live Free or Die Hard.”

- Shia LaBeouf for Thumbs Up! actor. The PG-13 releases “Disturbia” and “Transformers” are among the latest smoke-free movies featuring this up-and-coming actor, who apparently has never played a tobacco-using character — proof that being a “smokin” young star has nothing to do with smoking cigarettes on screen.
- Jodie Foster for Thumbs Down! actress. In her latest star role, Foster plays a vigilante with a cigarette habit, a tired ploy that could lead teens to equate smoking with toughness, instead of leading to a tough way to die. Reviewers were particularly disappointed by Foster, an established actress in the industry, for choosing to light up instead of using her entertainment industry status to insist on a non-smoking character.
- Jessica Alba for Thumbs Up! actress. Also winning a Thumbs Up! in 2006, Alba consistently portrays beautiful and beautifully tobacco-free characters, including her characters in last year’s smokeless “Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer”, “Awake” and “Good Luck Chuck”. Reviewers noted that Alba’s appeal makes her a major influencer among teens of both genders. “I think a major factor is that guys think she’s really pretty and a lot of the movies she has been in are really popular,” said reviewer Christine.

Breathe California of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails also hosted an online People’s Choice award at www.scenesmoking.org. Closing Feb. 5, visitors agreed with TUTD reviewers that “Hairspray” deserved the Thumbs Down!. However, a smoke-free “Ratatouille” set in France won the People’s Choice Thumbs Up!, perhaps foreshadowing that country’s recent step forward by banning smoking inside cafes, restaurants and discos.

Dartmouth College’s studies have established a direct link between smoking depicted in films and an increased willingness by teens to try smoking. Studies show that 40 percent of the youth who use tobacco products do so because of exposure to smoking in movies. Those studies

also show that in the United States alone, 2,050 teens will begin smoking on a daily basis. Approximately 660 of those individuals will die prematurely due to their smoking habit.

The Motion Picture Association of America supposedly took notice of the issue in May 2007 when it announced tobacco use would be factored into decisions on movie ratings. However, there's little evidence the MPAA has acted on its announcement, according to findings by Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down! volunteers and the University of California, San Francisco. The few youth-rated movies from 2007 that alerted audiences to tobacco use through a "descriptor" on the rating label included "Hairspray", "The Bee Movie" and "The Water Horse." No movies have received the "R" rating that a broad coalition of health groups has been demanding for movies portraying tobacco use.

When the MPAA did include tobacco descriptors, it mainly did so only on youth-rated movies that opened on a few screens or went straight to video. A full report on the research can be downloaded from <http://repositories.cdlib.org/ctcre/tcpmus/MPAA2007>.

For more information about the Hackademy Awards, log onto www.scenesmoking.org. Breathe California of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails promotes cleaner air, healthier lungs and a tobacco-free tomorrow. Originally founded in 1917, the organization that is today Breathe California of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails is an independent non-profit. For more information, call (916) 444-5900, or visit www.sacbreathe.org

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