
SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

SONY PICTURES CLASSICS DISCOVERS HIGHER GROUND

NEW YORK, NY (February 14, 2011) – Sony Pictures Classics announced today that they have acquired the rights in North America, Australia and New Zealand to Vera Farmiga’s directorial debut, *HIGHER GROUND*. Academy Award® nominee Vera Farmiga also stars in the film, alongside Academy Award® nominee John Hawkes, Donna Murphy, and Joshua Leonard. Carolyn S. Briggs and Tim Metcalfe penned the script based on Briggs' memoir “This Dark World: A Memoir of Salvation Found and Lost.” *HIGHER GROUND* was in US dramatic competition at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival.

HIGHER GROUND is a Strategic Motion Ventures presentation of a BCDF Pictures Production in association with Authentic Management Projects, The Group Entertainment, and Ruminant Films. The film is produced by Claude Dal Farra, Renn Hawkey, Carly Hugo, Jon Rubinstein and Matt Parker under Dal Farra’s BCDF Pictures banner. BCDF’s Lauren Munsch and Brice Dal Farra, and Jonathan Burkhart executive produced. CAA brokered the deal with Sony Pictures Classics.

Spanning the 60s through the 80s, *HIGHER GROUND* expertly depicts the landscape of a tight-knit spiritual community. Inspired by the resonant memoir written by Carolyn Briggs (who also co-wrote the screenplay), *This Dark World: A Memoir of Salvation Found and Lost*, the film is a study of one woman’s internal struggle with the primary love relationships in her life. As a contemplative child, Corrine (Farmiga) longs for stability and a sense of belonging. Her parents’ marriage disintegrates when Corrine is fifteen, so she searches for security in Ethan (Leonard), a talented musician. After a shotgun wedding and a terrifying brush with death, the couple dedicates their lives to God and joins a small hippie church. Corrine and Ethan find strength and joy in this community, though some of the tenets leave Corrine unsettled. The results provoke her to begin asking questions and inspire her to finally claim her own voice.

“*HIGHER GROUND* is one of these rare independent films -- perfectly crafted, honest and inspiring. Vera Farmiga not only delivers a great performance but her debut as a filmmaker is one of the most auspicious in years. We feel this film will catch fire with audiences the way it has with us,” states Sony Pictures Classics.

In a joint statement, BCDF Pictures said, “We couldn't be happier that Vera's film will be distributed by Sony Pictures Classics. We are pleased to be in business with Michael Barker, Tom Bernard, and Dylan Leiner. Their skill, knowledge, and passion for independent film will be a great asset in bringing a very special movie, *HIGHER GROUND*, to large audiences across the country.”

ABOUT SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

Michael Barker and Tom Bernard serve as co-presidents of Sony Pictures Classics—an autonomous division of Sony Pictures Entertainment they founded with Marcie Bloom in January 1992, which distributes, produces, and acquires independent films from around the world.

Barker and Bernard have released prestigious films that have won 25 Academy Awards® (22 of those at Sony Pictures Classics) and have garnered over 100 Academy Award® nominations (92 at Sony Pictures Classics) including Best Picture nominations for *AN EDUCATION*, *CAPOTE*, *HOWARDS END*, and *AND CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON*.

ABOUT SONY PICTURES ENTERTAINMENT

Sony Pictures Entertainment (SPE) is a subsidiary of Sony Corporation of America (SCA), a subsidiary of Tokyo-based Sony Corporation. SPE's global operations encompass motion picture production and distribution; television production and distribution; digital content creation and distribution; worldwide channel investments; home entertainment acquisition and distribution; operation of studio facilities; development of new entertainment products, services, and technologies; and distribution of filmed entertainment in more than 100 countries. Sony Pictures Entertainment can be found at www.sonypictures.com.