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CONTACT

Voleine Amilcar, ITVS	415-356-8383 x 244	voleine_amilcar@itvs.org
Mary Lugo	770-623-8190	lugo@negia.net
Cara White	843-881-1480	cara.white@mac.com

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AARON SCHOCK'S AWARD-WINNING *CIRCO*, A POIGNANT LOOK AT A STRUGGLING, FAMILY-RUN CIRCUS IN RURAL MEXICO, PREMIERES ON INDEPENDENT LENS ON THURSDAY, MAY 3, 2012 AT 10 PM

The Ponce Family's Hardscrabble Circus Has Lived and Performed on the Back Roads of Mexico Since the 1800s. But Can Their Way of Life Survive into the 21st Century?

"*Circo* is a marvel of a documentary, a clear-eyed and affectionate film that tells a remarkable story with both visual and personal sensitivity."

- Kenneth Turan, [Los Angeles Times](#)

"The most amazing act in the Gran Circo Mexico doesn't take place in the ring — it's the grind between performances. In *Circo*, Aaron Schock documents the fearsome labor and intense willpower it takes to keep this shoestring show on the road, and the price paid by the family that runs it." - Walter Addiego, *San Francisco Chronicle*

"CRITIC'S PICK! *Circo* offers a touching chronicle of a dying culture harnessed to ambitions that remain very much alive." - Jeannette Catsoulis, [The New York Times](#)

(San Francisco, CA) — Aaron Schock's evocative *Circo* (*Circus*) intimately portrays the Ponce family's Gran Circo Mexico as it struggles to make a living off its artistry, sweat, and wit in a changing world. *Circo* premieres on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Mary-Louise Parker, on Thursday, May 3, 2012 at 10 PM (check local listings).

Set within a century-old, family-run rural traveling circus, *Circo* delivers an indelible portrait of



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a Mexican family struggling to stay together despite mounting debt, dwindling audiences, and a simmering family conflict that threatens this once-vibrant family tradition. Tino, the ringmaster, is driven by his dream to lead his parents' circus to success and he corrals the energy of his whole family, including his four young children, towards this singular goal. But his wife Ivonne is determined to make a change. Feeling exploited by her in-laws, she longs to give her children the opportunities available through schooling and return to them a childhood lost to the endless labor required to keep the circus afloat. Filmed along the dusty back roads of rural Mexico, this cinematic road movie starkly contrasts the magical and luminous world of the circus while examining the universal themes of family bonds, filial responsibility, and the weight of cultural inheritance. Through an intricately woven story of a marriage in trouble and of a century-old family tradition that hangs in the balance, *Circo* asks: to whom and to what should we ultimately owe our allegiance?

To learn more about the film, and the issues involved, visit the companion website for at www.pbs.org/independentlens/circo. 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 where viewers can share their ideas and opinions.

About the Filmmaker

Aaron Schock (Director/Producer/Cinematographer/Writer) holds an MA in government from Columbia University and worked for several years in nonprofit community development in New York City before moving into filmmaking. His first film, *Song of Roosevelt Ave.* (2005), is an award-winning documentary short about undocumented immigrants in Queens. *Circo* is his first feature, and he filmed the entire documentary himself, with no crew. The film was distributed theatrically in the US, Canada, and the UK, and won Best Documentary at the Hamptons International Film Festival and the Malaga Film Festival (Spain), Special Jury Mentions in Guadalajara (Mexico) and Toulouse (France), and was nominated for the prestigious Grierson Award at the BFI London Film Festival.

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 the Independent Television Service (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.

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