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## THE EMPIRE DVD COLLECTION

Now Available Exclusively From First Run Features

Empire Pictures and First Run Features have inked an exclusive distribution agreement for First Run to handle all Empire titles previously released through Empire's home video division. Having been unavailable for a year or more, the Empire titles will be brought out in waves starting with three acclaimed gems: the Academy Award nominated *The Twilight Samurai*; the Isabelle Huppert showpiece *La Vie Promise*; and the extraordinary documentary double feature about Yves Saint Laurent: *His Life and Times* and *5 Avenue Marceau 75116 Paris*. All three DVDs will be available beginning February 20, 2007.

Empire Pictures, the art house distribution company founded by Edmondo Schwartz and Ed Arentz in 2000, has occupied a distinguished niche amongst US distributors, cultivating a reputation as a home for provocative and celebrated foreign films. Early in its history it scored a notable success when *The Twilight Samurai* garnered an Academy Award nomination. Several other titles also achieved attention and playdates around the country, including the story of Napoleon's escape from the island where he was exiled, *Monsieur N.*; the best-selling adaptation of the award-winning novel *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*; and the brave answer to 9/11 from famous filmmakers around the world, *September 11*. Empire occasionally covered more conventional territory as well, with titles such as the classic kids'/family story *I Am The Cheese* (starring Robert Wagner, Hope Lange and Cynthia Nixon) and genre titles such as *The Big Score* (starring Fred Williamson) and *The Night Stalker* (inspired by the Richard Ramirez murder spree).

First Run Features was founded in 1979 by a group of independent filmmakers to advance the distribution of independent films at a time when few distributors were willing to take a chance with smaller, more difficult titles. Quickly gaining a reputation for its controversial catalogue of films dealing with political and social issues, First Run Features was one of the first companies to bring serious documentaries to theatrical markets. Titles such as *28 Up*, *Sherman's March* and *Strangers in Good Company* found their way to American audiences through First Run Features. Now, after nearly 30 years, the company is one of the largest American distributors of independent features, documentaries and short films.

Edmondo Schwartz says, "I couldn't be more pleased about the new arrangement between Empire and First Run. Empire's collection has found a forceful and fitting advocate in First Run Features, which has been a consistently successful distributor of art house home videos since the early 90's. I'm certain they'll do a great job handling our titles."

Seymour Wishman, president of First Run, adds, "We're proud to be handling the collection Empire has built up over the years. I, along with the First Run staff, are great fans of their films. We look forward to strong sales over many years."

Following the release of the first three titles, First Run will release the next two titles, *Monsieur N.* and *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* on April 17. Other titles scheduled for the first half of 2007 include the Spanish lesbian drama *Suddenly* and the aforementioned *I Am The Cheese* on May 22; and *September 11*, *Caterina in the Big City* and *Almost Peaceful* on July 24.

## **THE TWILIGHT SAMURAI**

A film by Yôji Yamada

Seibei Iguchi is a low-ranking samurai living in the fading days of the Shogun period in Japan. His wife has died of tuberculosis, and with two daughters and an elderly mother to support, he and his family must survive in austerity. But when news of his sword-fighting prowess gets out, his superiors order him on a dangerous mission: kill a renowned warrior who is on the wrong side of a clan power struggle.

*129 minutes, color, 2002, in Japanese w/English subtitles*

**ACADEMY AWARD NOMINEE – BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM**

“\*\*\*\* A real treasure!” – **ROGER EBERT**

“Absolutely brilliant!” – **WASHINGTON POST**

“Flawless!” – **CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

## **LA VIE PROMISE**

A film by Olivier Dahan

Isabelle Huppert stars as Sylvia, a weary prostitute who suddenly makes contact with her estranged teenage daughter. Fleeing the French Mediterranean, they head north. Hounded by memory lapses and desperate not to see her daughter repeat her own mistakes, Sylvia tries to rediscover her once promising past.

*94 minutes, color, 2002, in French w/English subtitles*

“*La Vie Promise* reminds us that Isabelle Huppert is incontestably one of the very great screen actresses.”  
– **LOS ANGELES TIMES**

“As lovely as it may be to look at, *La Vie Promise* still delivers a psychological punch, thanks to skillful storytelling and Huppert’s impressive performance.” – **TIME OUT NEW YORK**

“Isabelle Huppert delivers another pitch-perfect performance!” – **VARIETY**

## **YVES SAINT LAURENT: HIS LIFE AND TIMES & 5 AVENUE MARCEAU 75116 PARIS**

Two films by David Teboul

Two feature documentaries about the man who re-imagined women’s fashion. *His Life and Times* is an intimate biography featuring extensive interviews with the reclusive designer. *5 Avenue Marceau 75116 Paris* is a behind the scenes look inside Saint Laurent’s legendary atelier during the creation of his final Spring line. Together they form “a timeless portrait of an artist at work – a celebration of human endeavor” (LOS ANGELES TIMES).

*163 minutes total, color, 2002, in French w/English subtitles*

“Wonderful, intriguing, graceful!” – **THE NEW YORK TIMES**

“A tender and engaging portrait.” – **VILLAGE VOICE**

“Fashion buffs will get an eyeful!” – **CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR**

<p><b>Make it easy for your readers to find First Run Features: <a href="http://www.firstrunfeatures.com">www.firstrunfeatures.com</a> / 1-800-229-8575</b></p>
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