

National "Top Ten"™ festival leader named new Executive Director of BendFilm

by Bend Weekly News Sources

The BendFilm Board, along with founder and retiring executive director, Katie Merritt, announced today that Merritt's replacement has been hired. Erik Jambor, the co-founder and former director of the Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival / Alabama Moving Image Association (AMIA), has accepted the director position effective February 15.

Erik Jambor was named new Executive Director of BendFilm

"BendFilm could not be more pleased to have found Erik." Stephen Archer, president of the BendFilm board of directors, said. "He values the connection between the audience, the film and the filmmaker. BendFilm has made its reputation by doing exactly that. It is a great fit for us."

Merritt, who will continue with BendFilm as development director in charge of fundraising concurs. "It has been exciting and humbling to meet with candidates from all over the world with an interest in the position, but the moment we found Erik, we knew our search was over. He is our philosophical twin, has experienced fourteen years in the independent film industry and created and led a nationally recognized festival for the last nine years. This is the person to take the organization and the festival to new, spirited heights."

Jambor, a resident of Birmingham, recently resigned from Sidewalk/AMIA to pursue other opportunities and was immediately attracted by the BendFilm vision. Under Jambor's direction, the Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival garnered recognition from TIME Magazine as one of the nation's ten "Film Festivals for the Rest of Us" in its June 5 issue, The Ultimate Film Festival Survival Guide named Sidewalk in its list of "Top Ten Film Festival Destinations" and MovieMaker Magazine called Sidewalk one of the "Twenty Film Festivals Worth the Entry Fee".

"I am extremely excited about the opportunity to help catapult BendFilm to the next level," Jambor said. "Their values and objectives are exactly in line with my own and I could tell from all of our initial meetings that this is where I belong. It's an incredible opportunity and I can't wait to bring my experiences with Sidewalk to the supportive community of Bend."

Currently in its fourth year, the BendFilm Festival has also attracted regional and national recognition. BendFilm predicates its reputation on hosting competition filmmakers, industry veterans such as Gus Van Sant and John Waters and over ten thousand annual festival goers in a casually intimate atmosphere of accessibility without velvet ropes. In 2006 Movie Maker Magazine wrote, "The BendFilm Festival is a destination that festival fairy tales are made of." Shawn Levy, chief film critic for The Oregonian and three time attendee wrote, "Can BendFilm do it? Can it become an important regional or national festival with a reputation for drawing top talent? Signs, as the Magic 8 Ball might say, point to yes."

Merritt points out that the BendFilm Festival's phenomenal success is the result of "True regard for the independent film industry, perspiration, some inspiration and zero experience or qualifications. We've been tenacious and lucky to get so far on our wits. Now the festival requires a seasoned professional like Erik to continue our mission in a substantial and sustainable way."

Jambor begins his BendFilm employment telecommuting on February 15, and will complete his move from Birmingham to Bend in time for his first day in the office, March 1.

The BendFilm Festival takes place the second weekend of October. This year's dates are October 11-14, 2007. For additional information on BendFilm, please visit www.bendfilm.org.

Erik Jambor's Biography

As one of the first students enrolled in Florida State University's film school, Jambor received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Motion Picture, Television and Recording Arts in 1993. Upon returning to Birmingham, he co-founded New World Rising, a high-end video post-production company, where his commercial work received "Best of Show" honors at the 1994, 1995 and 1997 Birmingham Advertising Awards.

Erik's film editing work includes the independent feature films WEST FROM NORTH GOES SOUTH

(1993) and RODE TO NOWHERE (1997), as well as the short film THE LAST REAL COWBOYS (1999) starring Billy Bob Thornton. His 1996 short film GAMALOST, which he wrote, directed and edited, won the Gold Award for best original dramatic short at the fourth annual Worldfest Charleston and screened at twelve international film festivals.

Jambor's dream of bringing new films to a new audience became a reality in 1998 when he co-founded the Alabama Moving Image Association, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization created to run Birmingham's Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival. As co-founder and director of the festival, Jambor continues to fulfill the goal of inspiring, encouraging and supporting films and filmmaking in Alabama.

Under Jambor's management, the Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival, now in its 8th year, has received numerous national accolades from festival attendees, press, filmmakers and guests. TIME Magazine named Sidewalk one of ten "Film Festivals for the Rest of Us" in its June 5 issue and Chris Gore recently named Sidewalk in his list of "Top Ten Film Festival Destinations" in The Ultimate Film Festival Survival Guide. Recently, MovieMaker Magazine called Sidewalk one of the "Twenty Film Festivals Worth the Entry Fee". They later called Sidewalk a "Best Kept Secret".

At Sidewalk 2006, Sidewalk honored writer/director John Sayles and producer Maggie Renzi for their more than two decades of collaboration in independent film (The Brother From Another Planet, Matewan, Passion Fish, Lone Star, Limbo). The previous year, Sidewalk presented its inaugural Spirit of Sidewalk award to actor John C. Reilly (Talladega Nights, Chicago, Magnolia, Boogie Nights, The Good Girl, Hard Eight). Other past attendees of the festival include: Peter Gilbert (Hoop Dreams), Joey Kern (Grind, Cabin Fever), Azura Skye (Red Dragon, Bandits), Amber Benson (Buffy The Vampire Slayer), Mary Kay Place (The Big Chill), Mary Lynn Rajbuski (24, Punch Drunk Love), Dash Mihok (The Thin Red Line, Romeo Juliet), Dan Myrick (Blair Witch Project), Vincent Kartheiser (ER, Another Day In Paradise, Angel), Chris Gore (IFC, FilmThreat.com), Daniel Wallace (Big Fish), Gill Holland (Hurricane Streets), Adrian Grenier (HBO's Entourage, Woody Allen's Celebrity), Louise Fletcher (One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest), David Keith (An Officer And A Gentlemen), Chris Mulkey (Twin Peaks) and legendary Croatian animator Bordo Dovnikovic.

In May of 2000 Governor Don Siegelman appointed Jambor to the Governor's Film Task Force, recognizing his major contributions and inspiration to the rapidly growing film community in Alabama. He was also actively involved in the formation of the Birmingham-Jefferson Film Office.

In 2004, Jambor was recognized by the Birmingham Business Journal as a member of the "Top 40 Under 40". Birmingham magazine also selected him as a member of the Birmingham Creative Class in 2004 and, in 2006, as one of their City Guide's "356 people, places and things you should know".

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