

**Ann Arbor Film Festival Hosts
Fundraiser to Further Address Funding Controversy**

Local and national organizations support the festival's stand

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ANN ARBOR, Mich., October 23, 2006 – The Ann Arbor Film Festival will host a fundraiser at the Michigan Theater, and will further publicly address the state funding issue that the festival faced this year.

On Wednesday, November 15th from 7:00-10:00pm, the Ann Arbor Film Festival will host an evening of cocktails, panel discussions, silent auctions, and a special screening of the controversial documentary, “This Film Is Not Yet Rated” by Kirby Dick. Presented in conjunction with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), AAFF organizers will further explain how past due funding was withheld from the festival, as well as why the festival did not apply for funding for the 2007 festival season.

The evening will begin with a cocktail reception and silent auction in the lobby and mezzanine of the historic Michigan Theater from 7:00-7:45pm. Autographed CDs, books, films and posters from renown artists and activists who support the AAFF’s stand on the issue (such as Ken Burns, Sam Raimi, Edward Norton, The Barenaked Ladies, and others) will be up for auction.

At 7:45pm, festival director Christen McArdle and AAFF chairman Jay Nelson will discuss the funding issue, as well as moderate a panel discussion. Panel participants will include Mike Steinberg, the legal director of the Michigan chapter of the ACLU, as well as filmmakers Brooke Keesling (creator of the Academy Award winning “Boobie Girl”) and Dolores Wilbur (director of “Chests”). Both filmmakers’ works were used against the AAFF while the funding issue unraveled in the summer of 2006.

At 8:15pm, the special screening of “This Film Is Not Yet Rated” by Kirby Dick will begin. “This Film Is Not Yet Rated” is a breakthrough investigation into the MPAA film ratings system and its profound effect on American culture. The documentary asks whether Hollywood movies and independent films are rated equally for comparable content; whether sexual content in gay-themed movies is given harsher rating penalties than their heterosexual counterparts; whether it makes sense that extreme violence is given an R rating while sexuality is banished to the cutting room floor; and finally, whether keeping the raters and the rating process secret leaves the MPAA entirely unaccountable for its decisions.

The Ann Arbor Film Festival recently received cuts to its state funding for exhibiting films that certain special interest groups and state legislators deemed too provocative and controversial. While some believe that films from past AAFF festivals have been “pornographic,” AAFF officials, local and international artists, media personalities and political figures do not agree with the accusations.

Supporting Organizations & Events

The AAFF recently received a \$10,000 grant from the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences (www.oscars.org) for special programming and panel discussions at the 45th festival in March 2007. Programming will address government censorship and 1st Amendment issues that arts organizations often face; panel discussions supported by the Academy grant will address the AAFF funding issue, as well as the importance of public funding for the arts.

In addition, on November 4th and 5th, local branches of Borders Books & Music will host “AAFF Benefit Day.” Festival supporters get a 10% discount on all purchases on the weekend of November 4th and 5th at the Borders Books & Music stores in downtown Ann Arbor (Liberty St.) and at the Arborland locations. In turn, the AAFF receives 10% of those purchases made by the festival supporters. Coupons are available on the AAFF website at www.aafilmfest.org, or by contacting the festival.

About Ann Arbor Film Festival

The Ann Arbor Film Festival celebrates independent and experimental filmmakers from around the world. Founded in 1963, the festival is the oldest of its kind in North America. Now in its 45th year, it attracts over 2000 entries from filmmakers in over 30 countries, and distributes over \$23,000 in awards. Created as an alternative to commercial cinema and mainstream film festivals, the annual week-long festival remains true to its original goal of promoting film as art and honoring the artists who make it possible. This year's festival runs March 20-25, 2007. For more information, please visit www.aafilmfest.org.

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