

REPORT ON AFCI LOCATIONS TRADE SHOW 2007

The 2007 annual Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI) Locations Trade Show was held again in Santa Monica, California, but with a new Thursday through Saturday (12 – 14 April) schedule supported by the AFCI's multi level marketing and PR campaign. The Trade Show exhibition space was sold out, but not before Film New Zealand secured prime aisle-end space for the New Zealand stand. This is the 10th year for Film New Zealand at Locations as the national film locations office representing New Zealand, its locations and its screen production industry.

The New Zealand team consisted of Susan Ord, Projects Manager Film New Zealand, Queenstown-based location scout and director Dave Comer, line producer Murray Francis, and Peter Avery, Film Venture Taranaki representing the regional film offices. Also attending were Catherine Ragan and Jessica Burns from Investment New Zealand/NZTE, Los Angeles.

Over 3000 entertainment industry visitors and 300 film offices and production resource exhibitors enrolled for the three day event – the largest locations trade show of its kind in the world. In addition there were four seminars connected to the Trade Show that various members of the team attended. “AFCI succeeded in a thorough cross media awareness campaign which saw a larger number of higher calibre attendees”, Peter Avery noted on his fourth Locations as regional film office representative.

Visitors to the New Zealand stand included representatives from all of the major US studios plus independent producers, directors, location scouts and managers. Projects in varying stages of development were discussed with particular emphasis on what has now become the most frequently asked question, “What incentives do you have?”

First-time Locations participant Dave Comer summarised his take on the annual Trade Show observing that “to see first hand how competitive the marketplace is internationally brings home to me the importance of having a

strong Film NZ identity and presence out there, and that it translates directly into film crews in NZ feeding their families and paying their mortgages (or not).”

Murray Francis observed that New Zealand may now be “off the boil” due to the predominance of interest in incentives and the impact of US dollar exchange rate. This opens the opportunity for New Zealand to “focus on location specific pictures and then offer our unique set of incentives”. Balancing that is Dave Comer's concern that based on his discussions “the larger studio projects are swayed by incentives and that decisions seem to be more in the hands of accountants than creatives. This would suggest that the New Zealand locations flagships – large projects that come for specific location reasons despite the cost, might be under threat.”

Both Dave Comer and Murray Francis noted that New Zealand is facing stiff competition in the TVC sector from South America where costs are significantly lower. Yet the New Zealand team was not discouraged: “I'm still confident that on a global scale NZ is still a relatively easy and productive place to shoot, with a certain comfort level and reliability that many other countries lack,” commented Dave Comer.

Film New Zealand's giveaway materials included Production Guides and the regional film offices' presentation packs. The two plasma screens showcased location images and the Film New Zealand 1 hour compilation DVD played throughout.



New Zealand companies from across the screen production industry once again supplied marketing materials:

Weta Workshop
Joyride Films
Slater Films
AJ Films
Park Road Post
Teaspoon Films
Cherokee Films Ltd
Studio West
Beachfront Films
Stone Street Studios
Film Factory New Zealand
Rocket Crew
Prodigy
Kelly Park
Heletranz/Tony Monk Films
Cirkus
Photon NZ

Onfilm's April issue was also available.

Visitor demand for company specific marketing material was noticeably reduced this year. Peter Avery attributed this to the profile obtained by the New Zealand screen production industry: "The better informed attendees were aware that we have world class crews and labs etc. and were less interested in gathering collateral from productions companies and post houses and more concerned about the bigger picture of whether NZ was right for their production."



Too many chiefs

SEMINARS

The AFCI seminars are an integral part of the 3 day event and this year featured:

Incentives On The Spot

Organised by the AFCI and the US Association of Independent Commercial Producers.

Panellists included: Susan Lava, HIS Productions; Jeff Begun, Axiom International & Pat Kauffman, New York Governor's Office for Film & TV Development.

Different scenarios on how TVC production companies could access incentives in the US and abroad were discussed - many jurisdictions now include incentives that actively target TVCs. This trend is likely to increase around the world which will make international productions focus more clearly on this aspect of the location decision making process. This seminar was attended by Susan Ord, Catherine Ragan and Jessica Burns.

Soft Money 3: Financing Independent Films Today and Accessing Film & TV Production Incentives Worldwide

Organised by AFCI and the Loyola University Law School and is a credit seminar in Loyola's entertainment law degree programme.

The first part of the seminar focused on funding opportunities available through public and private equity financing schemes. Panellists included Brian Goldsmith of Mandate Pictures, Danny Mandel from Newbridge Film Capitol, Steven Ranshoff, Film Finances Inc. L.A. and Carolyn Hunt, of LA law firm Loeb and Loeb.

The second half of the seminar is an annual examination of film/TV incentives worldwide and this year panellists included Jeff Begum, Axiom Entertainment Inc. LA; John Hadity, Independent Producer/Film Financier, NYC; Donne Dawson, Hawaii State Film Commissioner; Alex Schott, Louisiana Office of Film & TV Development; Anne Wilson, Film Advisory Services, Canadian Revenue Agency and Susan Ord, Film New Zealand.

New Media Perspectives

Organised by the Producers Guild of America, Loyola Law School and AFCI.

Participants included Lori Schwartz, Interpublic Emerging Media Lab; Drew Mayer-Oakes, San Antonio Film Commission; Patrick Moore, 12th Street Jam; Elaine Spooner, Fox Filmed Entertainment Intl. and Chris Thomes, Disney Internet Group.

This seminar concentrated on how producers of new media could work with film offices to find stories and possible financing solutions to new media productions. What are the differences between stories for traditional media and new media and how can film offices and producers maximize collaboration opportunities? This seminar was attended by Catherine Ragan, Jessica Burns and Susan Ord.

Film Commissions & Production Service Companies: Keys to Successful Partnerships

Organised by the Location Managers Guild of America, AFCI and the Loyola Law School.

Panellists included Jon Kyper, VP of Production, Warner Bros. Premier; Cleve Landsberg, Producer & UPM, DGA; Karen Watts, Shoot Latin America; Dileep Singh, On The Road Productions and Lawrence Mitchell, Cape Film Commission, South Africa. The moderator was Bill Bowling, Worldwide Location Executive – Warner Bros and an LMGA Board member.

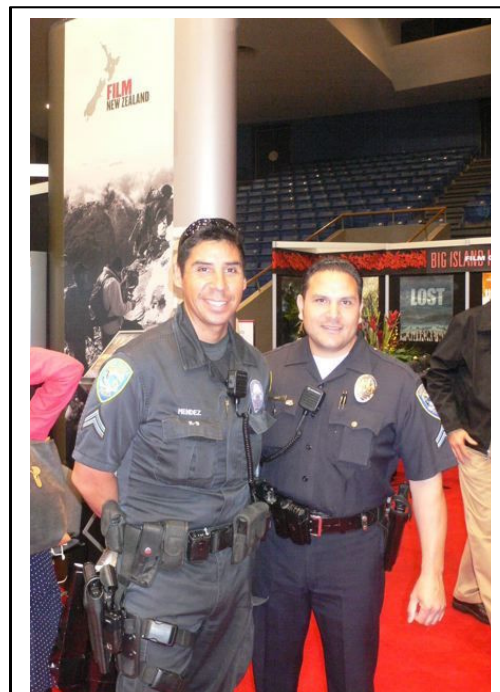
The discussion considered issues such as the recent worldwide boom in production service companies, how to develop beneficial partnerships between film offices and production service companies and how to deal with potential conflicts. This seminar was attended by Dave Comer.

This year Film New Zealand had no entries in the annual AFCI Marketing Awards but Film South took away prizes in three of the marketing categories. These were: 2nd place for the DVD ‘Timeless Land’; 2nd place for a b/w ad promoting the location stills database and in collaboration with Film Wellington, 3rd place for a colour ad, ‘Our Infinite Worlds’.

“Film South’s continued success with marketing awards must be commended for their effort and effectiveness of the communications. Only a vastly better resourced Ausfilm has surpassed Film South for volume of accolades in the last couple of years,” noted Film Venture Taranaki and Film New Zealand’s regional office elected Trustee, Peter Avery.

Film New Zealand’s management of the New Zealand presence at the AFCI Locations Trade Show is supported by NZTE/Investment NZ. Film New Zealand is a member of the AFCI.

Film New Zealand would like to acknowledge the generous sponsorship of Xtreme Forwarding covering return freight costs for the Film New Zealand stand and all marketing collateral. This continuing contribution adds value to New Zealand’s presence at the AFCI Locations Trade Show.



*Santa Monica Convention Centre
security defends New Zealand*