

# PACIFIC

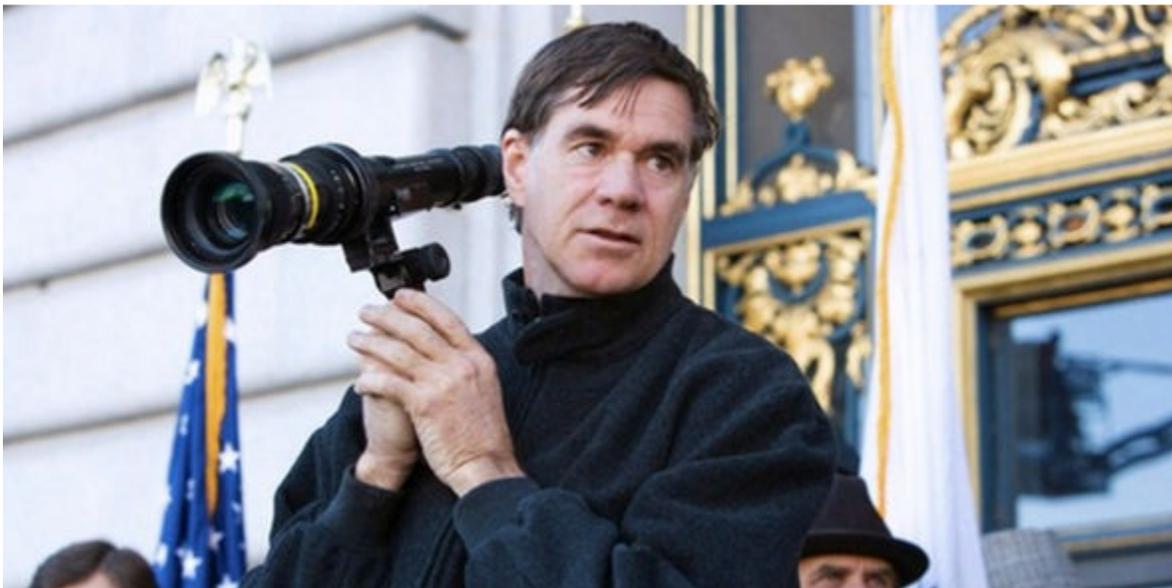
*San Diego*

## M A G A Z I N E

### For Reels

## San Diego Film Festival project genuine global buzz

By David Nelson



The San Diego Film Festival (SDFF), now in its 11th year, lights up screens September 26 to 30.

Appointed president of the board of directors of the non-profit San Diego Film Foundation, local publishing guru Kevin Leap, who's been at the helm of the North County Times and San Diego and Riviera Magazines, is leading the team charged with developing SDFF into the West Coast's most respected festivals.

"Film is one of my passions, and I'm dedicated to making this one of San Diego's premier events, recognized on an international scale," Leap says, quick to point out that most of the credit for SDFF's mounting hoopla should go to the foundation's CEO, Dale Strack; vice president of programming, Tonya Mantooth; vice president of sponsorship, Steven Persitza; and vice president of marketing, Patti Judd.

"We're blowing up borders, screening films from Croatia, Japan and Brazil – from all over the world," he says. "And we're hoping to host filmmakers from those countries as well."

If drawing big crowds has anything to do with the success of the project (it does), Leap's the right man for the job – as director of the San Diego International Auto Show (his current full-time gig), he's responsible for a six-figure attendance at the Convention Center each December.



One person's upcoming visit to San Diego for SDFF has Leap jumping.

"I'm excited to Gus Van Sant is coming," he says of one of his old friends and favorite directors, whose films include "Good Will Hunting," "Milk" and "My Own Private Idaho."

Trekkies nationwide are atwitter about the arrival of Rob Roddenberry (son of legendary "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry), who's bringing "Trek Nation" and another film called "White Room" to SDFF.

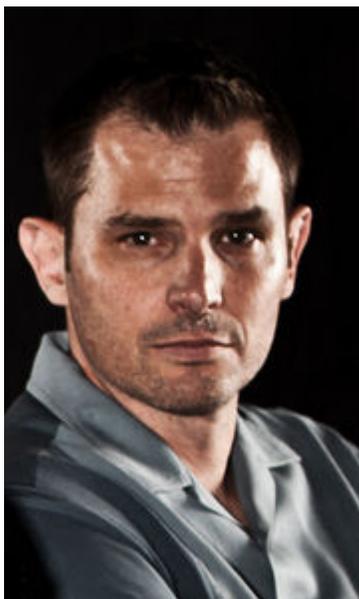
Last year, SDFF was confined to Downtown. This year, the films, the fest and its popular afterparties (see below) have spread to La Jolla.

"We're expanding from the Gaslamp to La Jolla to make the festival accessible to all San Diego," Leap says.

And with 50 percent more films (nearly 120 in total) being screened this go-round, SDFF is already on track to become one of America's Finest film festivals... reely.

## McFLY BOY

### Local filmmaker derives inspiration from 1980s blockbuster



An experience he had in high school catapulted Vernon Mortenson into what would become a career in film.

"My dad's cousin was a Teamster at Universal. He took me on the set of "Back to the Future" for two weeks, and I just fell in love with it," says Mortenson, who lives with his wife, son and three Newfoundlands on an East County ranch. "My dad said, 'You have to go to film school if you want to work in movies.'"

Mortenson went on to earn a bachelors degree in film from the Pasadena Arts Center and a masters in screenwriting from TKTK ("I was lucky to study under Sid Field, who literally wrote the book on screenplay structure"), but only after spending 20 years as a U.S. Navy Special Warfare Command commando stationed on Coronado.

"I think life experience is the single most important thing to a

writer,” says Mortenson, now a writer, director and producer. “I write about my life experiences, that I was a missionaries’ kid and traveled all my young life, and then joined the Navy and traveled more.” (He’s been to 87 countries so far.)

As managing partner of Los Angeles-based Rogue Arts (roguearts.com), an independent film production and distribution company, Mortenson will soon head to Mexico, where his company is one of only three U.S. indies to successfully co-produce a feature film (“The Kid: Chamaco”) using the Mexican Film Fund. His new movie, “Here Lies Miguel Cervantes,” will show at SDFF and is Rogue Arts’ second collaboration with prestigious Mexican filmmaker Miguel Necochea.

Although he’s had a penchant for filming in south of the border, Mortenson sees San Diego as having a bright future in the movie business.

“We have an opportunity to provide a great alternative to Los Angeles,” he says. “I’ve watched many good filmmakers leave San Diego because they couldn’t support themselves here, and that’s a shame. Building the San Diego Film Festival will strengthen the film industry here.”



## **BETTER OFF DEAD**

### **Thanks to a zombie flick, a moviegoer finds new life as a director**



Debuting at SDFF is “Zombie Man,” a film Army combat veteran, MBA, business owner and North County resident, Scott Wenger.

Wenger, who directed and executive-produced the 20-minute feature, has no background in film. But the venture isn’t much of a stretch, since his creative media firm specializes in web development and design.

“It takes a lot to get a film to this point,” he says, “and to be able to show it at a venue like San Diego Film Festival is incredibly gratifying.”

Set 28 years after an infectious outbreak made zombies a part of national life, Wenger’s film follows a young man searching for his “mombie,” who was placed in a “zombie preserve” when he was a child.

“It’s not a horror flick, but rather a drama, comedy and political satire,” says Wenger. “I look at zombies as a metaphor for certain aspects of our culture.”

“Zombie Man” was shot entirely in San Diego, with an entirely local cast and crew, a fact that seems to have influenced the film’s plot line, which has zombies dealing with, among other modern issues, illegal immigration.

“What I bring to the film world is from my life experience,” explains Wenger. “I’m intensely interested in what it means to be human, what it means to be us. All my films will probably deal with this topic in one way or another.”

A longtime SDFF fan, Wenger is thrilled his creation will be a part of it. “I’ve attended for years as an audience member,” he says. “Now, I get to attend as a filmmaker... and I’m excited to be on the other side.”



## PENNIE FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

### 1970s rock star muse hosts party at SDFF



San Diego-bred writer and director Cameron Crowe’s hit 2000 film, “Almost Famous,” features Kate Hudson in the role of a groupie named Pennie Lane.

The real Pennie Lane (born Pennie Trumbull) is alive and well, living on scenic Sauvie Island, in Portland, Oregon

“I’m really looking forward to the ‘Almost Famous’ Block Party on Friday night [September 28],” says Lane. “I lived in San Diego most of my adult life, and it will be good to

be back. I’m excited about Thursday, too, because they’re doing a tribute to Gus Van Sant, who truly deserves this honor.”

In 1972, Lane created a quartet among Portland friends who became The Flying Garter Girls. They adopted the names Sexy Sandi, Miss Julia, and the Real Camille, and became known as the “ultimate in entertainment for entertainers.” For three years, The Flying Garter Girls were invited to join rock tours on the West Coast, becoming the ultimate insiders, yet they never spoke about it. Their motto: *(We) Don’t Kiss and Tell!*

These days, Lane’s social card remains full.

“I’m up at 5 a.m. every morning,” she says. “I do most of the work myself on my 16-acre Rock n’ Roll Ranch. However, I’m a great supporter of young talent and always welcome new bands. I encourage them to come out to the ranch and play their original music. And when touring friends are playing Portland, it’s not uncommon to have them show up after their show and play some amazing acoustic music around the bonfire.”

Lane’s current project: raising Icelandic lambs and pinot noir wine grapes on an Oregon farm that’s been in her family since the 1950s. And if she gets her way, which she usually does, she’ll some day use part of the land to build a retirement home for rock stars.

“It’ll be called The Raisin Ranch, because we’ll all be wrinkled up like raisins. But it will be fabulous! Let’s face it, when we get to be a certain age, we all will need a great place where we can still party together.”

Rock on, Ms. Lane. Rock on.

## Shooting Stars

### Where to see (and be) a big-screen celeb

Rub elbows with filmmakers and celebrity guests, and then be prepared to rub your eyes the next morning, because these SDFP afterparties can go late into the night. Find updated information at [sdfp.org](http://sdfp.org).

#### **Wednesday, 9/26: Opening night premiere and party**

(9 p.m. – midnight at FLUXX, 500 4th. Ave., Gaslamp)

After walking the red carpet for the feature film premiere at the Gaslamp’s Reading Cinemas, paint the town red at FLUXX nightclub and enjoy Spanish cuisine courtesy of Café Sevilla.

#### **Thursday, 9/27: Gus Van Sant tribute and retrospective**

(5:30 – 11:00 p.m. at the Sherwood Theater at MCASD, 700 Prospect St., La Jolla)

Join celebrities and filmmakers in celebrating the life and career of director Gus Van Sant – whose films include “Milk” and “Good Will Hunting.” This posh, yet casual, night of film and fun includes cocktails and food from Brian Malarkey’s new La Jolla restaurant, Herringbone.

#### **Friday, 9/28: “Almost Famous” Block Party**

(5 – 11 p.m. at Fifth Ave. and G St., Gaslamp)

Rock ‘n’ roll in the streets of the Gaslamp with ’70s music and a screening of Cameron Crowe’s Academy Award®-winning film, “Almost Famous.” The real Pennie Lane, the inspiration for the character played by Kate Hudson in the film, will host the event, which features food by Sammy’s Woodfired Pizza and live music courtesy of House of Blues.

#### **Saturday, 9/29: Filmmaker’s Brewhaha and awards night**

(9 p.m. – midnight at Hotel Palomar, 1047 Fifth Ave., Gaslamp)

Everyone’s a winner, but only the top filmmakers will win SDFP’s coveted awards at this mega-fest in the Gaslamp.

## **Just For Show**

**SDFF movie times and theaters (find updated info at [sdff.org](http://sdff.org))**

### **Reading Cinemas**

701 5th Ave., Gaslamp  
619.232.0401, [readingcinemasus.com](http://readingcinemasus.com)

### **MCASD La Jolla**

700 Prospect St., La Jolla  
858.454.3541, [mcasd.org](http://mcasd.org)

### **Showtimes for both theaters:**

Thursday, 9/27: 3 – 10 p.m.

Friday, 9/28: 3 – 10 p.m.

Saturday, 9/29: 11 a.m. – 10 p.m.

Sunday, 9/30: 11 a.m. – 9 p.m.

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