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New Mexico Film and Television Hall of Fame Awards Launched by Statewide Non-profit Film Organization

Induction of Members into Hall of Fame and Honoree Awards Set for February 2018

June 2017 – SANTA FE, NM:

Who will be the first inductees into the New Mexico Film & Television Hall of Fame? Thomas Edison? Bryan Cranston? The Coen Brothers?

In partnership with Shoot New Mexico, the first annual New Mexico's Film and Television Awards and Hall of Fame is being launched. This is a celebration of production and those who have made a significant contribution to the industry in New Mexico. Productions contribute \$800 million each year to the economy and created 15,000 jobs in 2016 according to a study done by the State of New Mexico.

“As a native New Mexican working in Hollywood, I can see how important our state has been to the film and TV industry. Celebrating our accomplishments will bring us together and provide a platform to let the world know how much New Mexico has contributed to the rich history of moving pictures,” said Brian Espinosa, of Optimism Entertainment and a member of the Executive Committee for the NM Film & TV Awards.

The mission of the Film Awards and Hall of Fame is to recognize the rich heritage of film and television in New Mexico and to honor those who have contributed to building the state's industry. Filmmaking in New Mexico goes back at least as far as 1897 when Thomas Edison made a short documentary called “Indian Day School” at Isleta Pueblo.

The Executive Committee anticipates an event in conjunction with the Las Cruces Film Festival and potentially other locations throughout the state.

Members of the Executive Committee overseeing the launch of the awards include:

Brian Espinosa is a Managing Partner and Co-Founder of Optimism Entertainment an International Talent/Literary management and production company based in Los Angeles, CA. He oversees the growth and development of the company's talent, music, & sports divisions and has worked on the management teams of many A-list box office hit stars, Academy Award, Emmy Award, and Tony Award nominees. He has also procured recording contracts for various music artists with Sony Music, RCA Records, Warner Bros. Records, and Universal Music. Brian works with many studios such as Disney, Paramount Pictures, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Universal Pictures, and Warner Bros. Prior to co-founding Optimism Entertainment, he worked at John Crosby Management in their motion picture and TV talent department. Brian is originally from Santa Fe, NM, is an alumni of The University of New Mexico and currently serves as the advisory board chairman for the Santa Fe Film Festival.

Jon Hendry is the business agent for IATSE Local 480 Film Technicians Union and the president of New Mexico Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO). He has worked to build the film industry in New Mexico for two decades and his efforts have contributed to the creation of thousands of long term jobs. A Scottish lawyer who started in the music business, Jon has been a resident of NM for over 30 years and has worked with every major motion picture and TV show since the early 90's. His life passions are union movements and providing fair wages, safe working environments, equality, and fundamental rights for workers.

Tobi Ives has a background in television commercial production, anthropology and fine arts. She segued into workforce development and film tax credit policy for the state's Economic Development Department, managing a variety of programs for over ten years in the film division. Now an independent contractor, she currently works with New Mexico's local film technicians' union and the IATSE International Training Trust as a crew training strategist and instructor. She also assists filmmakers with the NM Film & TV Refundable Tax Credit program.

Ross Kagan Marks graduated from New Mexico State University with a BA in 1990 and promptly directed the award-winning short film SCRAMBLED LOVE. Ross was one of the youngest graduates of the prestigious American Film Institute (AFI) Directing Program, where he received his MFA in 1994. Ross then directed the award-winning film SHOWDOWN ON RIO ROAD featuring Robby Benson and, in 1995, the full-length feature film, HOMAGE, starring Blythe Danner, Bruce Davison, Sheryl Lee and Frank Whaley, written and produced by Mark Medoff. The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, where it received an award and went on to receive more awards at numerous film festivals. In 1997, Ross directed the film adaptation of the play THE TWILIGHT OF THE GOLDS which was produced by Showtime and Hallmark and featured Garry Marshall, Faye Dunaway, Brendan Fraser, Rosie O'Donnell, Jack Klugman, Jon Tenney, and Jennifer Beals. In 1997 and 1998, Ross taught independent filmmaking at The AFI. His stage play DELICIOUS NUT opened at the Black Box Theater in Las Cruces in 2008 and has since been produced nationally. In 2013, Ross directed Amy Lanasa's

stage play TWITCH as well as two short films; THE GRIND and FLUFF. Ross directed the award-winning short film PRINCESS in 2014. Ross completed his fourth feature film THE HEART OUTRIGHT written by Mark Medoff based on his stage play. He is currently shooting a documentary on mental illness called LABELED. Ross teaches at New Mexico State University's Creative Media Institutes. He is the Executive Director of the Las Cruces International Film Festival.

NaNi Rivera is a graduate from the College of Santa Fe with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Moving Image Arts and an Associate of Arts Degree in Media Arts from the Santa Fe Community College. She has worked on several major motion pictures, produced numerous commercials and PSA's, was Garson Studios Coordinator and directed a variety projects supporting New Mexico film through the IATSE Local 480. She staffed the legislative effort and provided media material for the landmark New Mexico Breaking Bad Bill. As an accomplished job creator for New Mexico film and film related services, she continues to provide job opportunities for emerging film artists and support for film festivals around the state. She is a founding member of the Santa Fe Film Commission and is currently the Executive Director of Shoot New Mexico.

Christa Valdez graduated from New Mexico State University with a degree in applied sciences. She has previously worked as a corporate project manager, marketing and promotions specialist with small business owners, and since 2008 she has run a successful New Mexico Film & Entertainment specific website, devoted to all things and people of New Mexico Film. As a web publisher, freelance writer, and contract project advisor and spokesperson Christa strives to shine a spotlight on those who make our film industry the spectacular community builder and job creator that it is.

Kate Noble is a native Santa Fean who studied film at Columbia University then went on to spend 10 years as a TV producer and reporter for BBC News. Upon returning to New Mexico, she worked in economic and community development for the City of Santa Fe including work on many projects to bolster the film industry. Her earliest jobs included being an assistant location manager on New Mexico projects - a Paul Hogan and Cuba Gooding Jr film called *Lightning Jack* and a sci-fi TV series called *Earth 2*. She still thinks it's really mostly about where to park the trucks.

More details about the awards program, which will feature live entertainment, celebrity honorees and more, will be announced at the New Mexico Film Commission's annual conference in August 2017.

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