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Waterfront Film Festival Selects Venue, Names Verve Pipe's Vander Ark as Honorary Co-Chair for Oscar Night® America Party

WFF Will Host a Gala Fundraiser on Feb. 22 in Celebration of the 2009 Oscars

Grand Rapids, Mich., Dec. 16, 2008 – The Waterfront Film Festival has selected a venue and named Verve Pipe's Brian Vander Ark as honorary co-chair for its glamorous gala event and fundraiser on Feb. 22 in conjunction with the 2009 Academy Awards®.

WFF volunteers and supporters will transform Levitation, an event-staging company, into a Hollywood studio set for a special Oscar® viewing party on the night of the annual awards ceremony. The fundraiser, which begins with red-carpet arrivals starting at 6:30 p.m., will recreate a movie "back lot," including a huge screening-room theatre plus a catering tent and VIP lounge areas for guests to watch the 81st Annual Academy Awards. The telecast hosted by Hugh Jackman begins at 8 p.m. Eastern Time on ABC in the Kodak Theatre, Los Angeles.

Earlier this year, WFF was selected by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as one of the 52 official venues for Oscar Night® America. Grand Rapids joins Detroit, Chicago and Milwaukee, among other Midwest venues, for the Oscar Night America parties in 2009. Only one non-profit event per media market can be selected to host a viewing party and fundraiser. Last year, 51 cities raised more than \$3.3 million for charity through ONA parties.

"Guests for West Michigan's first-ever Oscar Night America party will feel like they have stepped onto a movie set," said Dana Depree Minter, WFF co-founder and event co-chair. "They'll be watching the show – and will also have the opportunity to be part of the show – while supporting the Waterfront Film Festival.

"We are particularly delighted that West Michigan's own Brian Vander Ark has agreed to serve as honorary co-chair for this event. We are planning an elegant, fun and entertaining evening that will allow film lovers to gather together for one of the high points of each year: the annual presentation of the Academy Awards. We hope that all moviegoers will join us for this gala event."

Tickets for the event, which will be held at Levitation "Studios," 2740 29th Street SE in Grand Rapids, are \$125 per person and include an open bar. Tickets go on sale in early January at all Schuler's Books & Music locations in West Michigan and online at www.WaterfrontFilm.org. To get on the tickets waiting list now, please contact Tickets Chair Kristin Salerno at 616-340-1086 or kristinsalerno@yahoo.com. A portion of each ticket price is tax-deductible.

Attire for the event is elegant, artistic, black-tie optional.

A native of Holland, Vander Ark is best known as the lead singer for The Verve Pipe, which he formed in 1992 with drummer Donny Brown and his brother, bassist Brad Vander Ark. The band's major label debut in 1997, "Villains," featured the single "The Freshmen," one of the most successful tracks in 1997.

Vander Ark has also released three solo albums, including a self-titled release in January 2008. He has expanded his career, performing in feature films such as "Rock Star" with Mark Wahlberg and Jennifer Aniston.

"The Waterfront Film Festival is one of the best festivals for filmmakers and film fans in the country," Vander Ark said. "There is a true, genuine love of film in the air. I'm proud to be part of it by co-chairing the Oscar Night America celebration."

John Despres, owner of Scene-it-All Productions and set designer for "The Steam Experiment," which filmed recently in Grand Rapids, is already working with volunteers to design the staging that will transform Levitation into a movie set for the evening of Feb. 22. Levitation owners Jamie Goebel and Linda Martin, who recently purchased the 50,000 square-foot building for their company – which produces concerts, inaugurations and other large events across the country – are donating space to WFF for the next two months as the "movie set and back lot" are constructed.

Students at Compass Film Academy in Grand Rapids and those going through TicTock Studios' Film Crew Training Program will help to create Hollywood magic in West Michigan for the evening. Venues within Levitation will include:

- A red carpet entrance complete with photo-snapping paparazzi to greet guests
- A theatre with riser-seating where guests can view the 81st Academy Awards telecast
- A lounge for VIPs and others to relax and enjoy the evening
- A catering tent that will feature Michigan foods and wines and an open bar
- Craft services, which will offer on-the-go snacks and drinks
- A wardrobe that doubles as a coat check
- A video village complete with director chairs and smaller TV monitors where guests can congregate

Guest celebrity bartenders, one confirmed Academy Award winner and possibly two, members of the Michigan Film Office Advisory Council and filmmakers from TicTock Studios will be in attendance. Official Academy Awards materials such as the ceremony program brochure and ballot will be available in limited quantities. The president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will offer a special taped welcome to guests.

WFF is currently seeking sponsors for the ONA event, which is also co-chaired by Molly Klimas, owner of Intent Public Relations. Cash donations as well as in-kind donations are sought. Interested businesses and organizations should contact Cindy Johnson at 616-450-2462 or cjevents@sbcglobal.net. The organization is also seeking volunteers to assist with the event; those interested should contact Leslie Mosterd at 616-566-3350 or lamosterd@hotmail.com.

The Waterfront Film Festival hosted 14,000 independent-film fans at its 2008 festival and has an estimated economic impact to the region of \$1.3 million in tourism dollars over a four-day weekend every June.

For more information on the film festival, visit www.WaterfrontFilm.org. For more information on Oscar Night America, visit www.oscars.org/ona.

About the Waterfront Film Festival

Now in its 11th year, the Waterfront Film Festival celebrates independent film and filmmakers in a non-competitive environment. Located in Saugatuck, Mich., WFF is one of the leading destination film festivals in the Midwest, regularly hosting Midwest premieres of Academy Award-winning and -nominated documentaries. It has been recognized as one of the top five film festivals. WFF is committed to education and features seminars designed to encourage the next generation of actors, writers and directors. For more information on the 2009 festival, which is scheduled June 11-14, visit www.WaterfrontFilm.org.

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