



Mississippi Film Office
Mississippi Development Authority, Division of Tourism
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mississippi Film Office breaks ground at new site in Canton

CANTON, Miss.—Mississippi will receive a great boost to its film industry on January 15th at 10:00 a.m. with the ribbon cutting of the Mississippi Film Enterprise Zone in Canton. As part of the celebration of Mississippi Film Week (January 13th- 17th, 2003) and its 30th birthday, the Mississippi Film Office, a part of Mississippi Development Authority's (MDA) Division of Tourism will host the special event in coordination with the Canton Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Madison County Economic Development Association. The Film Enterprise Zone will be the first centralized film production zone in the state.

The Enterprise Zone is a 25-acre site that will be used exclusively for the film industry in Mississippi and is projected to be the state's premier location for film production. The anchor of the Enterprise Zone is a \$1.7 million public soundstage, whose funds were acquired through the Mississippi Arts Commission, the City of Canton, and from federal funding. The first public tenant of the Enterprise Zone will be a sound stage facility built with these funds, and its first private tenant will be a local Mississippi production company.

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“This is an important moment for the Mississippi film program,” said Ward Emling, manager for the Mississippi Film Office. “As we celebrate the 30 years of the Mississippi Film Office, the creation of the Mississippi Film Enterprise Zone clearly points our way to the future of the industry in our state. It moves us from simply being an importer of production to being a creator and an exporter of product. The new ground that we break here enhances our program and creates opportunities for Mississippi filmmakers.”

Wednesday’s ribbon cutting falls in the middle of the weeklong celebration of the film office’s 30th birthday. The Mississippi Film Office was created on January 17th, 1973. Beginning with *Thieves Like Us* (1973), more than 40 films, 21 documentaries, two television series, 24 television programs, and countless short films have been filmed in Mississippi. Since its creation, the film office has assisted filmmakers in showcasing the works of such Mississippians as Larry Brown, William Faulkner, John Grisham, Beth Henley, Willie Morris, Thomas Hal Phillips, Eudora Welty, and Tennessee Williams, among others.

Film production in Mississippi has accounted for more than \$100 million dollars in direct expenditure over the years and has generated hundreds of thousands of paychecks to Mississippians. The production of *A Time to Kill* alone extended 10,000 checks. “We have seen that film production is economic development,” said Robert J. Rohrlack, Jr., executive director of MDA. “The Mississippi Film Office is committed to creating a competitive film industry here that will continue to bring solid growth to our state.”

The week’s activities will include a press conference on Monday to launch the week, the ribbon cutting in Canton on Wednesday, and a final birthday party on Friday morning in the Rotunda of the New Capitol. Communities across the state will be showcasing made-in-Mississippi films throughout the week. Local Convention & Visitors Bureaus can be contacted for more information on Mississippi Film Week movies. All events are free and are open to the general public.

For more information on the week’s events or on the Mississippi Film Office, contact Ward Emling at 601-359-3297 or visit the Division of Tourism’s website at www.visitmississippi.org.

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