

Imagine Maryland

Date: August 13, 2008
Location: Creative Alliance
Baltimore, MARYLAND
Forum: Filmmakers Focus Group
Facilitator: Carla Dunlap, Christine Stewart, Sharon Blake
Scribe: Janel Cohen

SUMMARY OF MAJOR THEMES:

About Maryland, people appreciate:

- Landscape, architecture, geographic diversity
- Film community and support from them
- International flavor, ethnic diversity and tolerance
- Growth in the artistic community

Major Issues for film community/film makers:

- Government incentives to bring films to Maryland
- Funding from private sector - Create pool of venture capital for film makers with incentives to encourage them
- Platform for showing work

Future Visions Themes:

- More opportunities to show the films /Touring of Maryland films
- State Incentives to bring films to Maryland
- Grants - annual grant specifically for film/TV/documentary on Maryland
- Promotional contest on film in Maryland – filmmakers create 30-60 second ads, 'ad' festival shows them and then they are used as PSAs for the year.
- Greater support for youth film programs so more appreciation and opportunity

Advice to MSAC:

- Educate those with resources about the value of arts and film and what they do for Maryland – connect those with capital to filmmakers
- Provide regular platform for showing films – a central place, festival
- Help promote film in Maryland and Maryland film nationally
- Add filmmaking to AiE residency program
- Provide annual/semi-annual gathering for filmmakers and include other types of arts

SOME KEY QUOTES:

“I found myself at the recent film festival ... trying to convince people to move to Baltimore because there is something palpably different about the notable film/media we produce, edginess/experimental.”

“There is something inspirational about Maryland and Baltimore that keeps people pursuing their dreams.”

I was able to stay here and do my own work here because of the community and support - a lot of like-minded people.”

“Environment is great, scenery - above and beyond that, there is a rich source of artists and people willing and wanting to do different things, especially in supporting the film industry.”

“I'm a transplant - what I like about Maryland is that you can have/make any story you want in Maryland. It has everything except natural lakes.”

” There is interesting growth in the artistic community – it is nearing combustible element.”

“The weird thing about filmmaking – The films are all unique, but it’s difficult when you have to find financing – We start from the ground up every time.”

“Need to tie the "arts" and the filmmaking community.”

“Support youth film programs so there is more appreciation - we can increase writing, reading - reach kids who may not be reachable - give them an opportunity.”

RAW TRANSCRIPT OF THE MEETING:

Carla Dunlap Welcome/Introduction:

Thank you for coming. This meeting is part of the strategic planning process, and we're trying to get input from around the state.

Introduced staff from the Arts Council: Janel Cohen, Sharon Blake, Chris Stewart. Film Office staff: Jack Gerbes, Katherine Batavick, Kathi Ash, Cathryna Brown, Debbie Dorsey- Baltimore Film; Thank you creative alliance.

Our planning process consists of focus groups, regional meetings, data research, key interviews; the completed plan is expected around early next year. Minutes from meetings are on our website 7-10 days after the meeting. Also, our public survey is up on our website and coming soon is an arts organization survey.

Around the room for introductions; what is something exciting that happened in the film/arts with you recently?

- In the process of trying to get an independent film underway
- Shooting a short film; funding
- Non-profits, documentary style film
- Associate producer for an indie film that just recently debuted
- There's always something
- We open our doors at no charge (in College Park main campus) for filmmakers to show their films
- Filmmaker

- Setting up small production company, short films
- Filmmaker
- Filmmaker, in post production
- Work with casting; help indie filmmakers to get talent; help teach kids how to do their own things
- New to Baltimore; freelance actor, etc
- Local production commercials
- Filmmaker; working on a script; started film festival (Chesapeake film festival in Easton)
- Filmmaker; middle of shooting movie - directing, filming, very exciting
- Video editor, final cut, etc; shoot my own projects; shooting film on WWII vets now; silverdocs
- Filmmaker; little production company; worked on Patterson park documentary
- Attorney and filmmaker/screenwriter
- Cartoonist; animation company; interested in learning more of what is possible in Maryland; lot of talent here
- What do you value about Maryland, why are you in Maryland
 - Family here
 - I like the attitude and spirit here; landscape
 - Family is here, but my plan was to move to California - I was able to stay here and do my own work here because of the community and support - a lot of like-minded people
 - Besides the weather, there's a diversity of people I could find for casting, close to other major cities
 - Architecture, filmable place
 - Environment is great, scenery - above and beyond that, there is a rich source of artists and people willing and wanting to do different things, especially in supporting the film industry, even though it's not as highly competitive like California
 - I get excited, at times, because of being in Maryland and shooting and working - I found myself at the recent film festival - next thing I knew I was trying to convince people to move to Baltimore because (affordable, talent) there is something palpably different about the notable film/media we produce, edginess/experimental
 - Something inspirational about Maryland and Baltimore that keeps people pursuing their dreams and also to stay at home.
 - I was one of the people willing to work for free, Baltimore does reward and support people who are trying to learn and work hard
 - There is a pluckiness of do it yourself, ground up – there's a support system that allows them to pay the rent, work on features, and still work on their own stuff.
 - Discovery, national geographic, big employers
 - Location manager; do a lot of movies and have a lot of contacts
 - I'm a transplant - what I like about Maryland is that you can have/make any story you want in Maryland. It has everything except natural lakes. Span of any story, and locals to make any other story in history take place here.
 - Interesting growth in the artistic community - nearing combustible element
 - International flavor; different cultural backgrounds
- What do you think the major issues are facing the film/arts community?

- Communications is a key "item" for me; I'm beginning to break through (learning what organizations are valuable, networking) - finding and communicating - thank goodness for the internet - need to identify who to communicate to
- Funding
- Funding; I do run a communications company and anyone can post information (as a community service) - I'd like to see a pool of venture capital for filmmakers with incentives and tax write-offs; we have the capacity but not the resources to take us to the next level
- I can see the arts council helping facilitate an understanding those who have resources around town to point out the value of the arts. Baltimore doesn't buy the whole New York thing. How do you articulate to those with resources the value of investing in Maryland filmmakers and film in Baltimore, what it does for the profile of the town, incentives; educate repeatedly and ubiquitously
- Facilitation between the people with money - they know the projects exist, but the connections aren't made - State could help by putting people in touch - small council with financial advisors - create a platform for them to know all the incentives
- Venture capital for filmmakers
- Indie film is different from big screen - one of the key points is cast and money - Maryland film office raises the awareness of Maryland as a place to film - MSAC could do is to be a point of contact - venture capital idea would be great, but to sure how the MSAC could do/organize that, but they could be a meeting point for the community.
- Would love to hear if anyone who has been able to get investor for slate or just individual? Most are individual - MSAC could find someone who would invest in a slate
- The weird thing about filmmaking – The films are all unique, but it's difficult when you have to find financing – We start from the ground up every time.
- Need platform for displaying what we do in the film world - for the community and what each other is doing. Need a center place. Need to tie the "arts" and the filmmaking community
- Internet supplies a challenge and opportunity - quality of digital equipment out there, lot of footage being created on the internet - the competition is quite massive - how do we excel in this new world and use it to our advantage
- Incentive for people to actually invest - something worth looking at - small incentive to get people to take that extra look
- Kids- help support youth film programs so there is more appreciation - we can increase writing, reading (i.e. reading lines) - reach kids who may not be reachable - give them an opportunity
- Film night (they have one here already) – there could be more support for that
- Without incentives, we won't get anything - need to get it done
- Improve business conditions - need better legislation
- Delegates/Senators/Departments/Governor/etc can draft legislation
- Hard to write a good script – we need the script (legislation) that convinces people the value - I would love to see how you're selling this

- idea, it's difficult to articulate – We could have a back and forth conversation on the "script"
- It's not that they don't get it on the legislative/Governor's level (we've spent years down there) they don't want to get it. We try to educate them - jobs, revenue, health care
 - Why aren't our people working here at home - incentives
 - Break-out: 5 top things where you see your community in the next 5 years
 - Group 1
 - ♣ Common form for displaying our work - from internet to live places - list of events, calendar, etc.
 - ♣ Infrastructure/database for people on the artistic side, smaller medium, lower budget
 - ♣ Scholarship for education for film/script/etc
 - ♣ Regular meetings/discussions
 - ♣ Grants - annual grant specifically for film/TV/documentary on Maryland
 - ♣ To call in the film community who is here to support the film, i.e. make a PSA, promote the arts
 - Group 2
 - ♣ Filmmakers are awesome - that will be our special - filmmakers have a heavy business and artistic components with larger budgets. Ideas have to be both artistic and business oriented
 - ♣ Local screen day with Maryland Film Festival
 - ♣ Touring of Maryland films in schools/community centers around the state
 - ♣ Opportunity to gather like this - if you have a public filmmakers gatherings, you get everyone - we would like an opportunity to have a sit down with professionals - more down to business
 - ♣ Without any incentive package, only indies will be made in Maryland
 - Group 3
 - ♣ After we talked about incentives we talked about educating the community about the arts and film - educate the people who educate the investors - have MSAC represent the filmmaking community with different organizations to promote
 - ♣ Improve working filmmakers in schools - bringing expertise into the classroom - arts in residence
 - ♣ More filmmakers symposiums, sessions around the state - community outreach operations
 - ♣ Promoting the local to the national - promote the efforts of Maryland filmmakers or invested film to the national stage - educate about the possibilities of film
 - ♣ Promotional contest on film in Maryland - cash prize: 30-60 second spots "film in Maryland" - 48 hour festival that's a "commercial" - fun community endeavor - fun and snappy - cross pollinate film and business communities - get everyone stirred up - get another state agency to support ad time (i.e. lottery) - outside panel of filmmakers to judge
 - Do you know us? What we do? How aware are you? Do you use our services? Are they useful?

- ♣ I know you do grants
 - Carla explained the different grants - every other year, IAA media is up
- ♣ How do you get peer group of judges? we get outside judges
- ♣ By a series of grants since I graduated, MSAC helped me go from painter to filmmaker - very helpful
- ♣ Does MSAC want to be more known (because of the heavy competition already)? Answer: yes
- ♣ IAA - 6K top award has been that amount for a long time
- ♣ I refer people to MSAC
- ♣ You have all our emails - send us frequent information
- ♣ Maryland Lawyers for the Arts is now also taking on film - they have a quick email newsletter
- Are there any last suggestions for MSAC?
 - ♣ Maybe if there were a specific incentive to do some piece of what they do for that money - do a piece of the process in film-suggestions that could spark
 - ♣ Do you do any annual/semi annual gathering of artists in the community? Thinking of something like that - when you get the right ingredients and actively mix them, get everyone out - cross-pollination - "arts expo" so people get to know each other - email list
 - ♣ Reach out to beyond the artistic community - why isn't there a film festival ad at the Muvico? reach out to the non-art crowd and promote itself and its artists wider
 - ♣ Maryland State Arts Festival - inter-arts and reach out to non-arts constituents - critical mass
 - ♣ 60 second film idea is great - would be good to get the word out
 - ♣ Movie chains - what if on a Saturday matinee, each movie chain featured an independent film - Maryland film matinee
 - ♣ Utilize PSA time - TV stations have to give certain time to PSAs - there is a lot of competition though
 - ♣ Annual competition - best director, actress, etc. Sponsorship for award/award ceremony - tool to unite and excite community
 - ♣ Since I am one of those who are fairly unaware - do you promote to colleges and universities? Answer: we don't have a formal process
 - ♣ Match program from private donors for filmmakers
 - ♣ MSAC built to interact with non-profits, but film enterprises are basically set up as for-profit - MSAC can be more fluid/flexible to support individuals/interact with individuals
- 5 words
 - ♣ New ideas I never heard before
 - ♣ Good time
 - ♣ Very informative
 - ♣ I don't have any words
 - ♣ Need money, call film office
 - ♣ Got to learn about new organizations
 - ♣ Interesting, meet new people, hope

- ♣ Let's do this again soon
- ♣ Very good gathering
- ♣ Incentives, Incentives, Incentives, Incentives, Incentives
- ♣ Maryland Arts Council Michael Phelps
- ♣ I think this is good
- ♣ Support filmmakers right now please
- ♣ Trustworthy local courteous
- ♣ Increase marketing line
- ♣ Support mad filmmaking
- ♣ Thank you all for coming (from Film Office)
- ♣ This was awesome fun
- ♣ Make big noise, big money
- ♣ Let's work together more, unity
- ♣ Thanks for coming out and sharing
- ♣ Thank you Carla and staff

Close of meeting – Thank you for coming!