



NEWS RELEASE

AFI BOARD OF TRUSTEES UNANIMOUSLY SELECT BOB GAZZALE AS NEW PRESIDENT AND CEO

15-Year AFI Veteran To Succeed Jean Picker Firstenberg as Third CEO in American Film Institute's 40 Year History, Effective November 1, 2007

LOS ANGELES (June 26, 2007)—Sir Howard Stringer, Chairman of the American Film Institute (AFI) Board of Trustees, today announced the unanimous selection of Bob Gazzale as new AFI President and CEO.

Gazzale, a film historian and multiple Emmy-nominated television producer and writer, has been a senior executive at AFI for 15 years. He will succeed Jean Picker Firstenberg, who announced she would retire at the end of AFI's 40th Anniversary celebration this fall. Gazzale will assume the office on November 1, 2007, becoming the third person to lead AFI since President Lyndon B. Johnson announced the institute's creation in the White House Rose Garden.

"After considering a diverse and impressive group of candidates, AFI's Board agreed by that Bob Gazzale's passion for American film and the character and quality with which he upholds the standards of AFI will lead us proudly into the 21st Century," said Stringer. "Or as we say in the movies, we searched for brain, heart and courage, and found it all in our own backyard."

Gazzale, 42, will have oversight and responsibility for all aspects of the nation's leading film education and cultural organization, including AFI's world-renowned Conservatory, award-winning television productions, visionary on-line and digital programs, which comprise the AFI Digital Content Lab and K-12 Screen Education Center, as well as AFI's expansive film festivals and exhibition programs, and the AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center in Silver Spring, Maryland. Gazzale joined AFI in 1992 and for the past eight years has served as Director of AFI Productions. He has produced and written the past seven AFI Life Achievement Awards. He also helped conceive **AFI's 100 Years...** series on CBS – an annual three-hour television event honoring the centennial of American film, the past seven of which he has produced and written.

"The vote of the AFI Board of Trustees is an immeasurable honor," said Gazzale. "My commitment is to make them proud, and in doing so, to lead this great American institution into the future with the continued reverence and respect due our nation's storytellers. With the dynamic changes in the world of the moving image, now more than ever we need an American Film Institute to train the next generation and honor the very best the art form has to offer."

The search committee was comprised of AFI Board Chairs and Vice Chairs including Stringer, Jon Avnet, John F. Cooke, Mark Canton, Bob Daly, Rich Frank, Tom Pollock and John DiBiaggio. Neil Fink of Gunderson & Associates served as search consultant.

"The single largest responsibility of the AFI Board is to select the president and CEO," said Bob Daly, former Warner Bros. Co-Chairman and current Chairman of Save The Children. "We took great care in determining the kind of person we wanted, and we canvassed the field extensively. I have every confidence Bob Gazzale will continue AFI's proud tradition and enjoy a long and strong tenure at the helm of AFI."

The Board also announced it had named Firstenberg, President-Emeritus and a Lifetime Trustee.

"Bob Gazzale is a young man with great knowledge and respect for film and television history," said Firstenberg. "He also has the vision and the passion to take AFI to the next level. He is a brilliant choice, and I look forward to cheering his successes for many years."

Firstenberg's 27-year tenure covers the acquisition of AFI's Los Angeles campus, the accreditation of the AFI Conservatory and the institute's entrepreneurial evolution, including the creation of the **AFI's 100 Years...** series, which is credited with introducing a new generation to the classics of American film. Firstenberg succeeded AFI's first director, George Stevens, Jr., in 1980.

Born in California, Gazzale is a graduate of the University of Virginia (1987), who majored in English. He launched the Virginia Festival of American Film the following year, where he produced over 200 film events with a focus on bringing together the worlds of academia and entertainment. The Festival became notable for honoring America's film icons, including James Stewart, Gregory Peck and Charlton Heston.

Firstenberg and Gazzale met at the Virginia Film Festival, and Firstenberg invited him to join AFI in 1992. After two years in Los Angeles, Gazzale ran AFI's National Programs out of New York for five years before returning to Los Angeles. He met his wife, Mimi, at AFI and they have two children, Nicholas 6 and Ella 2.

About the American Film Institute

AFI celebrates its 40th Anniversary in 2007.

AFI is a national institute providing leadership in screen education and the recognition and celebration of excellence in the art of film, television and digital media. AFI trains the next generation of filmmakers at its world-renowned Conservatory, maintains America's film heritage through the *AFI Catalog of Feature Films* and explores new digital technologies in entertainment and education through the AFI Digital Content Lab and K-12 Screen Education Center. As the largest nonprofit exhibitor in the US, AFI ON SCREEN encompasses the annual AFI FEST presented by Audi: AFI Los Angeles International Film Festival—as well as year-round programming at ArcLight Hollywood and the AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center in Silver Spring, Maryland, including SILVERDOCS: AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Festival. AFI AWARDS, the annual almanac for the 21st century, honors the most outstanding motion pictures and television programs of the year, while **AFI's 100 Years . . .** series has ignited extraordinary public interest in classic American movies. And, during the past 35 years, AFI's Life Achievement Award has become the highest honor for a career in film. Additional information about AFI is available at AFI.com.

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Contact:

Alison Deknatel
Director, Communications, AFI
323.856.7896
adeknatel@AFI.com