



MEDIA CONTACTS:
Liza de Villa Ameen, 323.856.7885, lameen@AFI.com
Sarah Ledesma 323.856.7871, sledesma@AFI.com
AFI.com, twitter.com/AmericanFilm,
facebook.com/AmericanFilmInstitute, youtube.com/AFI

ROBERT MANDEL TO STEP DOWN AS DEAN OF AFI CONSERVATORY

"More stories to tell," says leader of the American Film Institute's MFA Program

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01 AM (PT) MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2013, LOS ANGELES, CA – The American Film Institute announced today that film and television director Robert Mandel will step down as Dean of the AFI Conservatory. After nine years as academic leader of the renowned graduate level film school, Mandel will return to directing while remaining on faculty at the Conservatory. Mandel is also an alumnus of the AFI Conservatory (AFI Class of 1979).

"AFI is my home and always will be," stated Mandel. "Its an educational environment like no other in the world, where young men and women learn to make movies – by making movies. It has been my honor to help see the dreams of the next generation become reality and it is they, in fact, that have inspired me to return to directing. There are more stories to tell."

"Mandel embodies the ideal of the AFI Conservatory – storytellers who have enjoyed great acclaim returning to share their trials and triumphs with the storytellers of the future," said Bob Gazzale, AFI President & CEO. "His contributions to AFI have been extraordinary, and we are proud and honored to know they will continue through his role on the faculty."

During Mandel's time at the AFI Conservatory, he identified and attracted more than a dozen world-class faculty members – all award winning leaders in their disciplines. Most recently, James L. Brooks joined as Artistic Director.

Mandel also enhanced the curriculum and resulting thesis films by increasing the time and quality of direct mentoring and supervision of AFI Fellows by masters in the field. He added courses in acting, independent film finance, television and show running. With Mandel's leadership, AFI Conservatory thesis films debuted to professional audiences at standing room only events. To further launch the careers of graduates, Mandel created a career office for job opportunities and established an AFI Fellow-Alumni mentoring program. Mandel's commitment to create more access to the industry for AFI Fellows also resulted in programs such as screenwriting pitch sessions to agents, managers and production executives.

Mandel joined AFI in 2005 in the midst of his career directing films such as *F/X* and *SCHOOL TIES* and television shows, including pilot for *THE X-FILES*, as well as episodes of *LOST* and *PRISON BREAK*. He won an Emmy Award® for his first after-school special, *ANDREA'S STORY*. Mandel began his career as a stage director, with productions at The Manhattan Theatre Club, The Roundabout and The Public Theater, where Joseph Papp was his mentor. He has MFA degrees from both Columbia University and AFI.

About the AFI Conservatory

The American Film Institute is America's promise to preserve the history of the motion picture, to honor the artists and their work and to educate the next generation of storytellers. The AFI Conservatory offers a two-year Master of Fine Arts degree in six filmmaking disciplines: Cinematography, Directing, Editing, Producing, Production Design and Screenwriting. Aspiring artists learn from the masters in a collaborative, hands-on production environment with an emphasis on storytelling. AFI Conservatory's alumni have been consistently recognized with all of the major industry awards – Academy® Awards, Emmy® Awards, Guild Awards – and even the Tony Award. Esteemed director, producer and screenwriter James L. Brooks serves as Artistic Director of the AFI Conservatory where he provides creative leadership for the elite film program. Sony is a proud supporter of the AFI Conservatory.

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