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Through ArtistShare, Fundraising is a BLAST for Filmmaker Paul Devlin

By Kathleen Fairweather

The concept of fans funding their favorite doc projects generally means passing the hat among friends and family. ArtistShare has taken fan-based fundraising to a global level where projects are funded via the ArtistShare website (www.artistshare.com) in exchange for access to and participation in the creative process.

While filmmaker participation is new for ArtistShare, its fan-based funding model has been in existence since 2002 and has enabled access to Grammy Award-winning artists such as Maria Schneider, Billy Childs and the Brian Lynch/Eddie Palmieri Project.

IDA spent time with five-time Emmy Award-winner and Independent Spirit Award nominee Paul Devlin, the first filmmaker to test the ArtistShare model with his new movie *BLAST*. The film follows a team of young cosmologists through the Arctic to the Antarctic to launch a unique telescope on a massive, high-altitude NASA balloon.

IDA: *How did you get involved with ArtistShare?*

Paul Devlin: I was working with a musician who was exploring ArtistShare and I had a chance to meet Brian Camelio, the CEO. He had such great ideas and was so convinced that this new model was the solution of the future that naturally I wondered if it could work for me as well. And Brian was immediately open to the idea of expanding into film.

So, my producer, Claire Missanelli, and I approached ArtistShare with our new film *BLAST*. It wasn't easy to adapt the ArtistShare model for a film, but they were very supportive. Getting it up and running was almost like doing a separate movie. We hired a project manager, Amber Yoder, who has done a fantastic job and just about put the whole thing together for us.

In return for a set-up fee and a percentage of the funds raised, ArtistShare provides a template and the structure for artists to do this kind of project. They provide the website, but it is up to the individual artist to generate the content for the participant offers. ArtistShare does not get involved in the content or distribution of the film.



Filmmaker Paul Devlin at Scott Base in Antarctica, making his film *BLAST*. Devlin is raising funds for his film through ArtistShare.com. Photo: Mark Devlin.

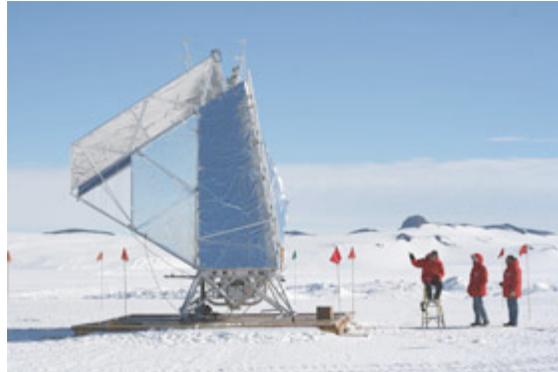
IDA: *What are the levels of participation fans can avail themselves to?*

PD: We have several different levels of participation. At the lower end, fans can pre-order the *BLAST* DVD or simply receive our behind-the-scenes video production updates. We also have levels where fans can access extra footage and information revealing the science behind *BLAST*. Or budding filmmakers can download raw footage and try their own hand at editing *BLAST* material, that we will then critique. Higher-end participation levels include opportunities to attend the premier of *BLAST*, interaction with the filmmakers and the scientists, as well as credit on the film. All of the participation levels are listed in detail on our website at www.blastshare.com.

IDA: *Does a larger donation get a bigger credit?*

PD: Contributing to the *BLAST* ArtistShare project is not a donation, nor is it an investment. It is a purchase. The ArtistShare model allows participants to purchase involvement in the creative process.

As the contribution increases, so do the benefits. The level of credit on the film goes all the way up to Executive Producer. These higher-end packages are targeted to participants who are interested in exclusivity and access. Benefits may include, for example, a personal lecture from Mark Devlin, PhD. (the lead scientist in *BLAST*) or an exclusive screening of the movie with friends at the New York City club SoHo House.



BLAST team members on ice in Antarctica with BLAST device. From Paul Devlin's *BLAST*, for which the filmmaker is raising funds through ArtistShare.com. Photo: Gaelen Marsden.

But all levels of contribution emphasize interactivity with the process of making the film.

IDA: *How do you handle the issue of credits? Does a donation mean a type of producer credit? The fans aren't really contributing to creative process—or are they?*

PD: Participants will be credited for the level of participation they purchase. So, if you purchase a Gold Participant package, your name will appear as "ArtistShare Gold Participant" in the credits of the film. The highest level gets an Executive Producer credit.

Fans are contributing to the film by purchasing an opportunity to interact with our creative process. ArtistShare started in the music business and the musicians who have been most successful using this model have done so by building a sense of community for their participants. The fans are directly responsible for creation of the art they value, not only financially, but also through direct interaction with the artist.

IDA: *The press release mentions packaging and pricing ranging from \$19.95 to \$25,000 for an Executive Producer opportunity. Does the executive producer concern himself with budget issues or profit/loss?*

PD: No, the executive producer need not be concerned with budget issues or profit/loss; he/she is making a purchase, not an investment. So we encourage participants just to enjoy themselves as they come along for the ride of making an independent film.

We think ArtistShare is a great idea, but it still has to prove that it can work for independent film. The great thing about ArtistShare is that the participant model removes some of the stigma for artists in seeking private financing. The donor model, in contrast, turns the artist into a beggar. The investment model has the potential of turning the artist into a liar—that is, if it requires touting the dubious potential for high rates of return on a documentary film. The participant model allows the contributor to make a purchase, which

puts the artist in a much better position.

IDA: *What happens if the film needs more funding?*

PD: *BLAST* is the first film to work with ArtistShare, so it is an experiment for both ArtistShare and for us. It took some time to adapt the model from music to film and get it up and running. The challenges of making a film are much different from those of making a CD and the budgets are much higher. It remains to be seen if the ArtistShare model can completely fund a film project.

In the meantime, we have also sought traditional methods of funding for *BLAST*. Nick Fraser, commissioning editor of BBC's *Storyville*, liked my film *Power Trip* so much that he funded *BLAST* early. This eventually attracted commissions from Discovery Canada, Swedish TV and Finnish TV. *BLAST* also received my first grant ever, from the New York State Council of the Arts.

Our agent, Louise Rosen, is seeking additional co-production partnerships and we have interest from ZDF ARTE and NHK. In combination with ArtistShare, we hope these will provide sufficient funds to finish the film.

IDA: *Does BLAST have distribution already in place?*

PD: We have distribution on international television from our European co-production partners. Otherwise, we expect that a successful film festival run will attract additional distribution opportunities.

IDA: *How do the "fans" follow the filmmaking? Do they have "real time" access to the production?*

PD: Keeping in touch with our fans and allowing them to access the production progress is really at the heart of our ArtistShare project. Our video production updates are designed specifically for ArtistShare participants, all of whom have access.

These include behind-the-scenes on our shoots in Antarctica and Chile, candid meetings with industry professionals such as Nick Fraser of the BBC, consultant Robert Hawk, our composer, editors, etc. We also share the tension and excitement of pitching *BLAST* at the Toronto Documentary Forum, and future updates will take participants through the entire process of finishing post-production, attending film festivals and navigating distribution.



Filmmaker Paul Devlin in Antarctica, making his film *BLAST*. Devlin is raising funds for his film through ArtistShare.com. Photo: Mark Devlin.

We also have interactive video Q&A sessions where fans can send in their questions in for our team and me to answer. This can cover everything from progress on the film to my experiences with making my other films. Participants also receive e-mail newsletters to keep them up to date on everything we are doing with the film. Another offer allows participants to edit scenes using *BLAST* footage, which we will then evaluate.

We want participants to feel that they are a part of our process in order to build a community around this experience that will sustain future projects as well.

IDA: *How have you been able to generate interest in participation?*

PD: This is a very new idea and we've just got it up and running recently. So far, generating publicity has been a challenge, even after hiring a publicist. Traditional media outlets are less

interested when they realize the film is not yet complete. So to drive traffic to the site, we have been trying many different online approaches, including interviews on blogs and podcasts, e-mails and newsletters, and even outreach on MySpace and Facebook.

Our first participants started out as just friends and family. However, as we continue to generate more publicity through the Internet, participants we don't know personally have started to join. So now we're confident the participant model can work. But we need to find ways to get the word out as far as possible and develop an effective message for those higher-end participants, if we hope that independent film will be as successful as music with the ArtistShare model.

IDA: *Are schools participating at the production level?*

PD: There are several ways a school or classroom can participate in our project.

We have a group of participants who have purchased Filmmaker Participant packages, which allows them to access raw footage from the film and try their hand at editing it. Science classes may be interested in our Cosmological Participant package, which includes access to videos and downloads that explore the science behind the film. For universities, there is the Artist in the Classroom package. This purchases an "in-house" master class with me on the process of documentary filmmaking, and includes classroom extras like study guides, Q&A sessions, production notes and a copy of the film for the school archive.

IDA: *Would the BLAST project have been made without the help of ArtistShare?*

PD: Yes. We started shooting *BLAST* before we became aware of ArtistShare, and production continued as we were developing the ArtistShare project.

Now that ArtistShare is in place, we're counting on it to alleviate some of the financial challenges that most independent filmmakers face as they try to finish their films. If it is successful, we expect that future projects will start with ArtistShare in place.



BLAST device in Antarctic snow. From Paul Devlin's *BLAST*, for which the filmmaker is raising funds through ArtistShare.com. Photo: Mark Halpern.

IDA: *What films are being developed through ArtistShare? Do you have plans for feature films?*

PD: So far we are the first and only film to partner with ArtistShare. It is our hope that many will follow, including more of our own.

I have another feature documentary in the works, tentatively titled *Super StarDumb*, about the broken promise of middle class rock and roll stardom. We'll get that going after *BLAST* is complete.

IDA: *How has technology changed the business model?*

PD: New technology has transformed—some might say devastated—the music business. It was a retail industry, now it is becoming a service industry. Music artists have responded with innovative ways to generate revenue.

The film industry may be headed for a similar transformation, and we should be ready for it—especially when resources are so tight already. The ability to reach our audience directly through the Internet presents a revolutionary opportunity. We think ArtistShare provides a good structure to take advantage of this. But we'll need the support of the filmmaking community to demonstrate its viability for all filmmakers.

Filmmakers interested in becoming an ArtistShare artist are invited to approach them with an e-mail at www.artistshare.com.

*Kathleen Fairweather is really the *nom du plum* for *Where's Waldo*, as she has left the State of Arkansas and is now launching Southern Jewish history multi-media projects in Austin, Texas. She may be reached at kfairweather@verizon.net.*

[**rewind**]

ArtistShare is one experimental model in which to navigate the tricky shoals of fundraising. But it always help to know the basics. Here's Wanda Bershen, who has written many successful grant proposals, with a primer, from February 2006, on what you need to know: <http://documentary.org/resources/zine.php?stage=3&articleID=133>

[**caught in the web**]

Awards Roundup

Given the plethora of festivals and media arts organizations out there around the world, you might have missed out, from week to week, on what docs earned which honors. "Awards Roundup" reports on the kudos and accolades for nonfiction media over the past two weeks. http://documentary.org/news/detail.php?news_id=135

News on the Doc

This is our biweekly curatorial presentation of links to developments, stories, streams and podcasts from online publications, sites and blogs. http://documentary.org/news/detail.php?news_id=136

Bloggerhythms

The documentary community is rife with bloggers, keeping us apprised of new directions, trends and developments. In keeping with our job to serve you with information on who and what else is out there, here is a list of bloggers, which we update continually: <http://documentary.org/#BLOGS>

[**ida eNewsletter**]

Next eNewsletter: Tuesday, April 1, 2007. Entries due Friday, March 28.

Please limit your entries to 100 words or less. Include a link to a photo and more detailed information about your event or opportunity if you wish and send it to 4newsletter@documentary.org.

If you like our eNewsletter, please use the Forward email link at the bottom of the page to send this to a friend.

[**call for entries**]

UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION FILM FESTIVAL

October 19-26, 2008, Stanford, CA

The 11th annual United Nations Association Film Festival (UNAFF) will take place on October 19-26, 2008 at Stanford University, California. This festival celebrates the power of international documentary films and videos dealing with human rights issues, environmental survival, protection of refugees, famine, homelessness, racism, disease control, women's issues, children, universal education, and war and peace. The theme for this year is "Blue Planet - Green Planet."

Deadline: June 1, 2008

If you have questions or need more information please visit www.unaff.org, email info@unaff.org, or call 650-724-5544.

NEW! Columbus International Film and Video Festival

Now with new lower entry fees!

The Columbus International Film & Video Festival, a.k.a. "The Chris Awards" is one of the most prestigious documentary, educational, business and informational competitions in the U.S., the oldest of its kind in North America and celebrating its 56th year.

Call for Entry regulations and Entry Forms are available on our site: chrisawards.org

Entry deadline July 1 with entries accepted starting March 1, 2008.

[screenings]

NEW! DYING TO LIVE

The Journey into a Man's Open Heart

A new documentary about finding the joy in life and death!

Screening March 13-27, 2008
Laemmle's Music Hall, Beverly Hills, California
<http://www.dyingtolivethemovie.com>

NEW! SSG SCREENING

At the Fine Arts Theatre, Beverly Hills, CA

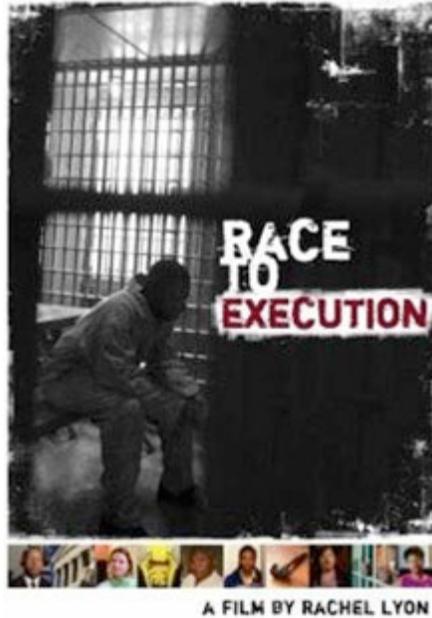
WARPED TOUR (Running time: 90 min) - Extreme Sports/Music feature documentary focuses on the WARPED TOUR's creator, the culture it's created, and how an entire generation has embraced it as their Woodstock. Q&A - with WARPED TOUR's creator KEVIN LYMAN, (Vans Warped Tour, Rockstar Taste of Chaos), WARPED TOUR's film producers JONATHAN RACH, JASON MCHUGH (CRAP TV, South Park)

Friday, March 21, 7:30 PM (Film unsigned - seeking distribution)

RSVP at: <http://www.screenitfirst.com/ssq/events/rsvp/91>

Active Voice invites you to a screening and panel discussion of

NEW! RACE TO EXECUTION
A Film by Rachel Lyon



The San Francisco State University
Department of Journalism Presents

Thursday, March 27, 2008

6:30pm – Reception with light refreshments

7pm Screening

8:15pm – Discussion and Q&A with expert panelists:

Claire Cooper, Bay Area freelance journalist and former Sacramento Bee Legal Affairs writer
Aundré Herron, Staff Attorney, California Appellate Project
Rachel Lyon, Director/Producer, Race to Execution

Moderated by Dori Maynard, President and CEO of the Maynard Institute

**SF State Downtown Campus
Westfield San Francisco Centre
835 Market Street, 6th Floor, Rm 609
San Francisco, CA 94103**

**For more information about the film go to
www.lionessmedia.com or www.activevoice.net**

**Meet the Stewarts - a traditional family with two fathers
at this special screening of...**

NEW! Preacher's Sons
Directed and produced by C Reed and Mark Nealey

This is the cinema verité story of five irrepressible but troubled boys - pulled from the train wreck of foster care - the two articulate men who are now their fathers, and their moving

metamorphosis into a solid family unit. It is also a lively road picture, as liberal minister Greg Stewart leads his fledgling tribe from their Los Angeles home to spend 4 years living under siege in the conservative heartland. *Preacher's Sons* invites you to accompany them on their trying journey and experience the courage and humor that enable them to meet the extraordinary challenges of everyday life.

Thursday, April 3, 7 pm
Laemmle's One Colorado, 42 Miller Alley, Pasadena, CA 91103
Suggested Donation: \$10

(Just after completing this film, filmmaker Mark Nealey was diagnosed with advanced-stage cancer. This screening is a fundraiser for his mounting medical bills and to help get this film out into the world.) *Preacher's Sons* is in the [IDA Fiscal Sponsorship Program](#).

Contact: Beth Colcord, (626) 449-3470
<http://www.preacherssons.com/film/index.htm>

View calendar of Events and Screenings on the IDA website:
www.documentary.org/resources/events.php

[festivals]

NEW! Festival dei Popoli - Intl. Doc Film Festival **November 14-21, 2007, Florence, Italy**

The aim of the Festival dei Popoli is to promote and circulate creative documentaries, encourage interaction between different research experiences, and act as a meeting point for people interested in documentary film.

The Festival includes the following sections: International Competition, Main Programme, tributes/retrospectives, seminars, panel discussions.

Visit our website, www.festivaldeipopoli.org, for news and further information.

View calendar of Festivals on the IDA website:
www.documentary.org/resources/festivals.php

[events]

LAST CHANCE! GET YOUR FILM FUNDED 2008 **March 29 & 30, 2008, Writers Guild Theater, Beverly Hills, CA**

A comprehensive film financing seminar and business plan workshop for the independent filmmaker.

More info: www.GetYourFilmFundedSeminar.com

MIPDOC 2008 **April 5-6, 2008, Carlton Hotel, Cannes, France**

MIPDOC, the specialist international screening market place and conference, is where all the hottest new programmes are screened. Taking place ahead of [MIPTV](#), MIPDOC provides a unique digital screening platform for making, buying and distributing non-fiction programmes worldwide.

To register, visit us at: www.mipdoc.com

NEW! Broadcast Education Association(BEA) Conference April 16-19, 2008, Las Vegas, NV

BEA Conference Offers Slate of Documentary Sessions–The Las Vegas convention, April 16-19, overlaps the final day of the National Association of Broadcasters Exhibition and Career Day.

BEA registrants attend NAB exhibits at no additional charge. Doc sessions April 17 include Panasonic workshop, environmental sustainability, faculty-creative productions, Eliza Wicht of **P.O.V.**, graduate programs from Native Voices, New School, American U, and best-of-festival presentations. April 18-19 sessions on digital distribution, Current TV, international and war documentaries, and a proposal competition. April 18 evening features the Media Arts Best of Festival.

To register and join BEA, www.beaweb.org, click **BEA 2008**.

Join Us Back in the Mountains for BANFF 2008 June 8 - 11, 2008

The 29th edition of the Banff World Television Festival will take place June 8 - 11th, 2008 at the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel and Conference Centre. Look for details of this premier event for television content creation soon. **Visit:** <http://www.banff2008.com/>

[workshops]

NEW! IDA DISCOUNT! The Wide World of Flash Video March 22-23, 2008, Venice, CA

Learn everything about video in Flash from a top industry expert!

Workshop: The Wide World of Flash Video
Dates: Saturday & Sunday, March 22-23, 2008, 9am-5pm
Location: Rich Media Institute, Venice, CA
Price: \$440 with discount code 'idaFriend'
For more info and to purchase tickets:

Sign-up: http://www.richmediainstitute.com/training/ww_flash_video/

[broadcast premieres]

View calendar of Broadcast Premieres on the IDA website:
www.documentary.org/resources/premieres.php

[opportunities]

NEW! Upcoming Deadlines for Skoll Awards for Social Entrepreneurship Applications

The Skoll Foundation now accepts applications for and grants the [Skoll Awards for Social Entrepreneurship](#) on a year-round basis, with successful applicants receiving initial funding installments shortly after decisions are made.

Please note the following application deadlines for 2008:

- * **March 18, 2008**
- * **August 5, 2008**
- * **November 4, 2008**

These deadlines assist us in managing the internal review process for these applications, a process that takes a minimum of six months to be completed. Awards will be presented publicly at a ceremony at the [Skoll World Forum](#), which occurs at the end of every March in Oxford, England.

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NEW! 3RD INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FILM CAMP COMPETITION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE CAMP

3rd International Student Film Camp 'Interaction - Zlatibor 08' organized by the Independent Film Centre 'Filmart' is going to be held on Zlatibor (Serbia) from August 4-21, 2008. 20 students of film production, directing, cinematography, sound design and editing from 15 countries, divided into 4 crews, are going to shoot 4 documentaries on the theme 'The Young'.

Application deadline is April 15, 2008

For more information or to download the application form visit
www.film-art.org/interaction or contact us on interaction@eunet.yu

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LOOKING FOR BILINGUAL ENGLISH/SPANISH EDITOR

Bilingual, English/Spanish, editorial position for low budget documentary. Using Final Cut Pro system. Email resume and contact information to Patricia at pv@artistsconfederacy.com.

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LAST CHANCE! FAST TRACK RELAUNCHED DEADLINE: MARCH 31, 2008 (POSTMARKED)

Film Independent is now accepting submissions for its Fast Track program that runs during the Los Angeles Film Festival. The deadline for submissions to the program is March 31, 2008.

WHAT IS FAST TRACK?

Designed to help filmmakers move their current projects, narrative as well as documentary, forward, Fast Track connects them with financiers, production companies, and other industry professionals. This highly selective program is open to established as well as up-and-coming filmmakers with exceptional projects still seeking funding.

For an application and information, go to:

http://www.filmindependent.org/index.php/talent_development/fasttrack

NEW YORK is REAL LIFE, THE NEW SCHOOL is NEW YORK

The New School's Graduate Certificate in Documentary Media Studies is one year of full-time graduate study in the heart of New York City. The dynamic curriculum integrates the history of documentary filmmaking, the social and artistic implications of the form and the digital video techniques you'll utilize to produce, direct and edit your own 20-minute documentary.

Visit: www.newschool.edu/doc

[funding]

THE GUCCI TRIBECA DOCUMENTARY FUND

The Gucci Tribeca Documentary Fund will provide financing and production guidance to help independent filmmakers complete documentaries that promote social change through artful storytelling, focusing on issues currently neglected by the mainstream news media. The fund will provide grants totaling \$80,000 to a minimum of three filmmakers in 2008. Recipients will be selected by the Tribeca Film Institute, Gucci and a selection committee of documentary filmmakers. All documentary filmmakers who have projects in production or postproduction may apply.

Submissions deadline is April 11, 2008. Recipients will be announced next summer.

More info: www.tribecafilminstitute.org/documentary

PBS SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FUND

The PBS Social Entrepreneurship Fund has announced its first recipient from the first call for entries, and is now accepting entries for the second round.

Press release: http://pbs.org/aboutpbs/news/20070319_fundgrant.html

Information on Call for Entries: <http://www.pbs.org/producers/funding.html>

More information: <http://www.pbs.org/producers/sefrfp032007.pdf>

INDEPENDENT FILM TRAINING GRANT INITIATIVE.

This program provides a partial salary reimbursement for bona fide film production technician "trainees" performing the credited job description for the first time. If the applicant is successful (subject to an overall cap of \$25,000 per project), companies receive up to 50 percent reimbursement of a trainee's salary, payable in a 60/20/10/10 payment schedule. The initial goal is to recognize and financially support the "training ground" of lower budgeted films being shot in New York City and its impact on expanding New York City's film crew base.

To date, \$150,000 has been committed by the New York City Business Solutions Training Grant Program, a program of the New York City Department of Small Business Services. This initial funding will be allocated over a three to six month period covering up to 10 projects. As this is a New York City grant program, trainees must be residents of any of the five boroughs and at least 60 percent of all shooting days must take place in the five boroughs.

Phone: 212.NEW.YORK | Web: nyc.gov/html/sbs/nycbiz/html/hiring/training.shtml

email: newsletter@documentary.org
web: <http://www.documentary.org>
phone: 213-534-3600

[sponsors]



