



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
2008 RHODE ISLAND
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
MEDIA RELEASE

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RIIFF'S FOURTH ANNUAL "FIRST LOOK"
PREMIERE SCREENING & CELEBRATION

Screening of acclaimed new film, "Anita O'Day: The Life of a Jazz Singer" crowns event honoring Elaine Lorillard, founder/creator of the Newport Jazz Festival

PROVIDENCE, RI (March 3, 2008) – For the past four years, RIIFF has held an unusual fundraising event: a "First Look" at new and cutting-edge film work and a party to celebrate staff and friends who have made the Festival what it is today: Jon and Betty Jane Berberian, owners of the Columbus Theatre Arts Center and Lawrence J. Andrade, Flickers/RIIFF Board member. Call it cake meets film with a champagne toast along the way. This year promises to be even more exciting as we premiere the amazing film **Anita O'Day: The Life of a Jazz Singer** by filmmakers Robbie Cavolina and Ian McCrudden.

This is the first, definitive documentary on the life of the legendary Jazz vocalist Anita O' Day. In Anita's own words, we hear the tale of a musical genius who broke race barriers and lived her life boldly, unconventionally, without looking back. In candid interviews with the Filmmakers, Anita gives a poignant and often funny account of her jazz odyssey, that is now well into its seventh decade. With her classic wry wit, Anita speaks with television icons such as Dick Cavett, Bryant Gumble, David Frost, and Harry Reasoner to reveal why at 87 she was the last living singer from the Golden Age.

The film showcases rare and never before seen vintage performances and includes interviews from vocalists Annie Ross and Margaret Whiting, Jazz Impresario George Wein, award winning arrangers Bill Holman, Johnny Mandel, Russel Garcia & Buddy Bregman, writer/actor producer John Cameron Mitchell, Joe Franklin and friends from different times in Anita's life.

This fast paced trip with Anita has pictorial elements of jazz album design and the graphic qualities of the 40's 50's and 60's. Including original ads, reviews, and numerous never before seen images.

ABOUT ANITA O'DAY

The term trooper might very well have been coined for legendary jazz diva Anita O'Day. The so-called "Jezebel of Jazz," O'Day's life was as tempestuous as her tone was smooth; she endured a number of rocky marriages, rape, abortion, heroin addiction, jail, and was even pronounced officially dead after a massive drug overdose, but through it all the lady kept singing and swinging. Many of O'Day's numerous friends and admirers (a who's who of jazz) provide eloquent, and frequently hilarious commentary about her life, but the most forthright voice is that of O'Day herself. Blunt, irreverent and sharp as a tack, she was the only white female among the upper echelons of the golden age of jazz, and one of the longest to live. She provides a unique look back on a fascinating period in American cultural history. Vintage clips showcase Anita's inimitable talents, but more stunning is footage from Bert Stern's 1958 documentary about the Newport Jazz Festival--which was created/founded by Elaine Lorillard--"Jazz on a Summer's Day," which featured Anita's honeyed rendition of "Sweet Georgia Brown".

According to Lawrence J. Andrade, RIFF Board member, "**Anita O'Day: The Life of a Jazz Singer** is an absolute must-see for music fans. Robbie Cavolina and Ian McCrudden's fascinating portrait is a fitting tribute to this one-of-a-kind dame!

"We'll also be presenting a rarely seen interview with Elaine Lorillard, whom we will honor this evening, from the "Between Takes" television series Flickers produced in the late 1980s through 2001."

ABOUT ELAINE LORILLARD

A long-term Board member of the *Flickers Arts Collaborative*, producers of the annual **Rhode Island International Film Festival**, Mrs. Lorillard was the recipient of the organization's highest honor: *The Creative Vision Award for Artistic Excellence* in 2001. In 1997, she was honored at the Flicker's produced, *Jubilé Franco Américain* in Woonsocket, RI for her role in promoting the importance of jazz as an art form. She also appeared on our fine arts television series, "Between Takes," which sparked the attention of Japanese author, Machie Sakai, leading to her biography on Elaine's work "Newport Jazz Festival, 1953-1960." Elaine Lorillard was a visionary and a true American original.

The "First Look" screening fundraiser is presented by the **Rhode Island International Film Festival** and the Flickers Arts Collaborative.

THE WHO, WHAT AND WHERE OF IT:

The film screenings of RIFF's "**First Look**" **Premiere Screening & Celebration** will take place at the historic Columbus Theatre Arts Center, (270 Broadway) in Providence, RI.

Date: Thursday, March 20th.

Times: The special pre-screening party launches at 6:00 p.m. The film will screen at 7:30 p.m.

Cost: Tickets for the the 6:00 p.m. **Party/Reception** and film screening are \$25

(students with a valid ID will be offered a discount \$15/ticket.)

General Admission for the movie *alone* at 7:30 p.m. is a recommended donation of \$10.

Join us as we toast the memory of Elaine Lorillard and salute her contributions to the arts; not only in Rhode Island, but throughout the world. Local musicians will provide entertainment before and following the film.

All proceeds generated by the screening will be used for the planning and production of RIIFF's 12th Annual Season. *RIIFF is a 501-C(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible as allowed by law.*

The **Rhode Island International Film Festival** is generously supported by WJAR TV 10, The City of Providence, the Providence Tourism Council, Clear Channel Communications, Columbus Theatre Arts Center, Amtrak, the University of Rhode Island and individual contributions. Sponsors for this event include **Broadway Bistro**, located at 205 Broadway, Providence; **Narragansett Brewery**, and **Newport Vineyards**. Photography by Mary Hanley. The 12th annual Rhode Island International Film Festival will take place August 5-10, 2008.

For more information, write RIIFF, P.O. Box 162, Newport, RI 02840. Telephone: 401-861-4445. E-mail: info@film-festival.org

ABOUT THE RHODE ISLAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL:

The **Rhode Island International Film Festival (RIIFF)** discovers and empowers filmmakers. Held in Providence, and locations throughout the state of Rhode Island, RIIFF is one of only a handful of festivals worldwide that is a qualifying event for the Academy Awards (i.e. "Oscars"). RIIFF incorporates gala celebrations, premiere screenings, VIP guests, industry seminars, educational programs, and award ceremonies into a week long extravaganza. Cited as one of the "Best International and Short Film Festivals in the United States," RIIFF is New England's largest film festival, screening a record 300 films. Its innovative programming, cultivated industry ties, and loyal audiences have made the Festival a strategic and desirable platform for film premieres, drawing hundreds of independent filmmakers from around the globe.

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