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CONTACT: Andrew Filippone, Jr.
Director/Editor, **HAPPY MONDAY**
(805) 905-1000
andrew@tellingstory.com

HAPPY MONDAY PHOTOS: <http://www.tellingstory.com/hm2006>

ELEVEN YEARS LATER, A FILM RETURNS TO NEW ENGLAND

Radically Re-Imagined, **HAPPY MONDAY** Receives its World Premiere at the 11th-Annual Rhode Island International Film Festival

It's unlikely that any of the actors or crew who worked on the 1996 short film **HAPPY MONDAY, MR. KREBS** even remember it. It was a long time ago and, like many artistic projects that are fueled by too much enthusiasm and too little experience, the film was never finished, abandoned by its overwhelmed and overmatched first-time director, Andrew Filippone Jr.

If you had been there on the downtown Boston set that August weekend in 1996 you would have seen that things were not going to end well for the film, the story of a mid-level corporate functionary (Monroe Krebs, played by Boston actor Davis Robinson) who escapes his dreary existence through imagination, art, and romantic love. Standing on Court Street on the morning of the first day of shooting, and having just filmed a scene where Robinson approaches

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a building entrance, Filippone turned to the film's cinematographer, Richard Moos, and asked, "Was that too slow?" "I don't know," Moos answered, "was it?" A fair question from Moos, surely, since only the director can say whether or not an actor's movement in a scene is correct.

Unfortunately for Moos and everyone else involved with the film, Filippone didn't know either.

"They should have mutinied," Filippone says now of the cast and crew who worked for free to bring HAPPY MONDAY, MR. KREBS to life. "I had no idea what I was doing and I had no right holding the 'Director' title. I was completely and totally unqualified, and I let everyone down."

For the next ten years, Filippone, a Boston native, moved between New York and Los Angeles, working as an editor in film and television. With each cross-country move, he took with him the more than 6,400 feet of film negative from HAPPY MONDAY, MR. KREBS.

"I didn't know what I would do with the negative," Filippone admits. "I felt like I couldn't finish the film that we originally set out to make, because I had already ruined that through my own incompetence on the set. And my interests had changed over the years, too. Scripted, fiction filmmaking wasn't what I wanted to do. I was becoming much more interested in documentary and experimental forms."

Filippone realized this new interest by directing and editing two films in that period: COMMUTE (2002), a meditative 53-minute film that he calls an "ambient documentary," that screened as part of d>art03 at the 50th Sydney Film Festival; and MINA & THE FAMILY TREASURE (2004), a feature-length documentary that was executive produced by Rosie O'Donnell and broadcast on PBS.

After finishing MINA & THE FAMILY TREASURE, Filippone reached a turning point. "Completing MINA was a like a chapter end for me. In my mind it was the culmination of a journey that began when I left Emerson College in 1994 and entered the working world of film and television production. Getting that feature-length documentary finished and on television

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felt like the end of phase one."

Moving into the next phase of his filmmaking life, Filippone vowed to begin by returning to his first failure - HAPPY MONDAY, MR. KREBS. "I wanted to make that right, both for myself and for everyone who worked on it," he says.

Filippone approached the HAPPY MONDAY, MR. KREBS material with fresh eyes. "There was no point in trying to make the same film from 1996," he explains. "I was a different person. I had much more experience as a filmmaker. And I had new ideas."

For this second attempt Filippone, now a committed documentarian, decided that he would take as his subject not the fictional story of Monroe Krebs, but instead the true story of the failed production itself, the unrealized idea at its center, and his own culpability as the director. His next challenge was to find a film form that would best tell this story.

Filippone explains, "The usual way to tell this kind of story in a documentary film would be to mix scenes and shots from the original negative with new elements like talking-head interviews with the cast and crew, still photographs from the set, and video and audio footage of me now reminiscing about what I thought and felt then. But doing this, I thought, would undercut the essential tragedy of this whole thing, because to see the characters from the original short film moving on screen and in color would suggest that they live on somewhere, which they don't."

For several months Filippone struggled to find the right form for the new film. Then one night, he and his wife went to dinner in Venice, CA. He remembers, "The restaurant was called Hal's, and it had a lot of art on the walls. We were seated at our table and I looked up at the painting directly across from us, and I was mesmerized by it. It was a simple scene - just a man, with a drink in his hand, sitting at a bar - but it was the way the artist presented it that got me. The painting was made from two separate canvases, one placed in front of the other. The front-most canvas was cut in specific ways so that, from certain sight-lines, it interacted seamlessly with the background canvas and created a different painting. This knocked me out."

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The lesson Filippone took from this? "The artist went beyond the canvas when the inherent qualities of the canvas stopped him from doing what he needed to do."

Inspired now to think beyond the limits of standard documentary film conventions, Filippone began a period of intense research and exploration. At the end of it he came upon a film form that he believed eloquently and succinctly expressed the tragedy he was after. Three years after that, the new film was complete.

This new film, **HAPPY MONDAY**, will receive its world premiere at the 11th-annual Rhode Island International Film Festival (RIIFF). The film will be on exhibit as part of RIIFF's Opening Night Gala Party on Tuesday, August 7, 2007, at the Providence Performing Arts Center.

Filippone calls **HAPPY MONDAY** a "documentary film object" because it so radically re-imagines film form and presentation. It is a film that's been cut free from the screen and taken a tangible, physical form. It's essentially a large light box - eight feet long, four feet wide, and four feet high - on top of which sits strips of the original film negative. The film strips are connected to a series of acrylic stanchions that together create a vague human body shape that lies prone on its back, its chest splayed. Viewers approach the light box and linger over the object, reading its individual frames. A soundtrack combining new music and audio elements with voices taken from the short film's original sound reels fills the room, completing the new work.

"To me," Filippone explains, "moving **HAPPY MONDAY** off the screen shows audiences the characters from the short film as they truly are, entombed in the frames of the negative, frozen and silent like victims of some disaster. And the larger human form, which lies exposed and lifeless, speaks to the failure of the entire short film production."

Filippone says that he'll spend the time before the Rhode Island festival tracking down the original cast and crew from **HAPPY MONDAY, MR. KREBS**. "I'd like for them to see that something good came out of their work after all."

Later in the year Filippone will travel to Montevideo, Uruguay, where **HAPPY MONDAY** will be on exhibit as part of The International Experimental Cinema Exposition.