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For Immediate Release

February 29, 2008

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Northwest Film Forum Executive Director Michael Seiwerath Announces His Departure

Seattle – Michael Seiwerath, executive director of the Seattle-based non-profit Northwest Film Forum, has announced his plans to step down from his position within the next several months. Seiwerath has been a part of the organization for twelve years and has held the position of Executive Director since 2001. During his tenure, Seiwerath guided the cinematheque and filmmaking center through a decade of consistent growth, including the expansion from a two small venues with limited staff, to a specially-designed 8,000 square foot space housing two cinemas, editing suites, classroom space, and filmmaker offices. No plans have yet been made for his replacement, though Seiwerath will stay on throughout the transition process.

Michael Seiwerath started at Northwest Film Forum soon after its founding with an all volunteer staff. Seiwerath held the roles of Theater Manager, Studio Director, and Program Director before obtaining the position of Executive Director. His leadership helped the organization establish a reputation as the premier film exhibition space in Seattle, and the heart of artistic filmmaking in the Pacific Northwest. Nearly 1000 members strong, NWFF has grown to currently aide 625 filmmakers in the production of more than 100 films annually, and offer more than 60 workshops each year. Seiwerath's dedication to the innovative Start-to-Finish grant program, which partners the resources of NWFF with a local artist to produce a feature length film, using both for and non-profit funding, established the program as a model unique in the non-profit world. The most recent completed film,

Robinson Devor's *Police Beat*, premiered in Dramatic Competition at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, and has played to great acclaim at festivals worldwide. The current feature, David Russo's *The Immaculate Conception of Little Dizzle*, is in post-production.

Under his leadership, NWFF completed a \$625,000 capital campaign for the build-out of its current home, helped raise over one million dollars for the production of local films and grew the organizational budget by 80%. During this time, NWFF has increased its national presence, distributing films (*Police Beat*, *Walking to Werner*) and putting together its first international touring film retrospective (*A Man Vanishes: The Legacy of Shohei Imamura*), a collaboration with the Freer and Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Institution. The year-round cinema programming has grown to highlight two festivals, *Local Sightings*, Washington's premiere festival of regional film, and the *Children's Film Festival Seattle*, which annually tours to venues such as the REDCAT in Los Angeles and Pickford Cinema in Bellingham, Washington.

Seiwerath will leave the organization in its most solid and respected state. Northwest Film Forum boasts a talented full-time staff of seven, a part-time staff of two, a highly-qualified and diverse board and over fifty enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers. Building on the vision of founders Jamie Hook and Deborah Girdwood, the unique character of NWFF was shaped in large part by Seiwerath's efforts, and the organization will continue to benefit from the lasting impacts of his untiring hard work and excellent leadership. At this time, Mr. Seiwerath has no immediate plans for the future, but remains committed to the success of Northwest Film Forum.

Stated Michael Seiwerath: "I am extremely proud of what NWFF has accomplished in the twelve years I have been working here. From our humble beginnings as a non-profit startup, it's grown to become a Seattle landmark for movie screenings, and a force in film production and education. It's a comprehensive home for cinema, where on the same day, a visiting artist is introducing their work, a cinematography class is under way, and filmmakers are editing late into the night. I am particularly pleased with our programs to commission new work, showcase premieres of movies made with our assistance and involve artists exploring the intersection of film and other art forms."

"Our growth and successes have come out of the efforts of our dedicated board, staff and volunteers, as well as the support of members, funders and

audiences. In particular, I am grateful for the contribution of our current staff, whose excellent work will continue our mission. I am stepping down this summer, at a period of relative calm between film productions and festivals, so I can reflect on what the future holds for me. I have confidence that the new leadership will take the organization to great heights.

Jennifer Roth, Northwest Film Forum Board President commented: "The NWFF Board of directors is proud of all of the accomplishments of Mr. Seiwerath and wish him the very best in his next endeavors. We are pleased that he will help us transition to our next phase and continue to be a part of Northwest Film Forum in the future. We plan to conduct a national search to find the next director and believe that change is always for the best. Though we will miss Michael and believe the organization has flourished with his vision, we trust his decision and are confident that this is in the best interest of NWFF."

Please direct all further press inquiries to Ryan Davis (ryan@nwfilmforum.org, 206.329.2629). More information about Northwest Film Forum can be found at www.nwfilmforum.org.

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