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The Austin Film Festival is dedicated to the writer as the heart of the creative process of filmmaking. For the last 14 years, it has prided itself on seeking out films with strong storytelling, both written and visual. AFF uncovers outstanding, emerging filmmakers; serves as a creative catalyst for legendary, contemporary and student writers; fosters their development through panels, workshops and master classes conducted by professionals; recognizes, encourages, and challenges the talents of new filmmakers and provides outreach opportunities to writers and filmmakers.

By Anna Hanks

A Sunny Day with Film + A Balmy Evening with Celebs

October 13, 2007 10:35 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

Do the Write Thing: Finding Writers Where You Ought to Be Expecting Them

The second day of the Austin Film Festival went by in an absolute blur. I think part of the reason was Thursday's late-night world-premiere of the zombie-rific *Street Team Massacre* at the tiny Hideout Theater that I'd attended. Why is it that zombie movies are always shown so late? Is it a plot to make audiences look more zombie-like themselves?

While the film was fantastic once it got to the zombie-parts, I felt bad for the filmmakers because the projection had been terribly dark in the not-normally-a-movie-theater venue. It was so wrong that the film's co-writer/director Eric Gosselin slipped me a copy of the screener. He promised that it would look far better when it screened Sunday at the Landmark Dobie Theater. That's the danger of showing festival films in places that aren't usually movie houses. Sometimes it just doesn't work so well.

The hectic day following a late night made it a real pleasure to get to the Film Texas BBQ. The event was held on the charming rolling grounds of the historic French Legation Museum.

For those who missed having years of Texas history in school, the French Legation was once the official residence of the representative from France in the 1840's. That was back in the pre-Civil War days when it was the Republic of Texas, not the State of Texas. It has long been part of Austin lore that the legate left town in a huff, after a bitter fight about neighborhood pigs repeatedly trampling through his property.

The evening of the party was warm, as most evenings still are in Central Texas in October. Arriving at the event an hour after it started meant hoofing it uphill from a distant parking space. While the East Side neighborhood close to downtown was once one of Austin's nicest-- back in the days when the city was founded-- it's just now coming out of a long period of decline. These days, beautifully restored mid-nineteenth century houses sit right next to historic places that need quite a bit of work. Condos are going in as well.

When I finally made it to the event, I was greeted with posters of films that I knew had been shot in Texas, like Sandra Bullock's comic turn as the FBI agent in heels, *Miss Congeniality*.

I spent some time looking at the mass of people huddled around the huge white tent, desperately looking for someone I knew to talk with. Finally, I spotted Clay Smith, Literary Director of the Texas Book Festival, for whom I used to write book reviews when he was at the local weekly newspaper, the Austin Chronicle. He was talking to novelist Amanda Ward and Robert Draper, whose name I remembered, but I didn't know why.

Embarrassingly, when I got home, Google told me that Draper was the author of the new and highly publicized hard-cover, *Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush*. He looked familiar because I'd seen him on *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart. Goes to show,

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you never know who you are going to run into at these film things. Since the Austin Film Festival bills itself as focusing on the writing, I guess it isn't too surprising to find ...writers.

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Being vegetarian, and having been to more than one Texas BBQ, I didn't rush for the chow. However, I managed to snag a to-go white Styrofoam box of yummy potato salad just as the food crew was packing up.

Wandering around with my box in hand, I thought I saw someone I recognized from late-night television. Indeed, it was Larry Wilmore, best known for his current role as "Senior Black Correspondent" on The Daily Show. Wilmore, who has an Emmy and a Peabody, is a panelist on several of the AFF's comedy-writing panels. While I'm a little on the shy side, I put down my potato salad and asked Wilmore if he'd pose for a picture with me. He was kind enough to oblige. Alas, I forgotten that I had walked several blocks, and really wasn't looking my most glamorous in the Texas humidity. When we turned the digital camera over to see the picture, Wilmore and I both spent a moment staring at it. It wasn't the most flattering picture of me. "It'll do?" asked Wilmore in his trademark deadpan delivery. I was sadly forced to agree... "It'll do." So, here's the photo. It's not the best picture of me, but, well, "It'll do."

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