

JON FITZGERALD

With over twenty-five years of experience in the independent film programming, curation and production communities, as well as the online streaming space, Fitzgerald holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in *Film Studies* from the University of California at Santa Barbara. Upon graduation in 1989, he joined the training program at the William Morris Agency. Subsequently, he worked in production on a half dozen studio features before embarking on his first feature film *SELF PORTRAIT*, which he wrote, directed and produced. To provide a much needed additional avenue of discovery for emerging independent filmmakers in Park City, Fitzgerald and two other filmmakers launched the Slamdance Film Festival in 1995. As the first-born alternative to Sundance, it was designed to generate an avenue of exposure for new talent, including his own. He would then become the Executive Director for the following two years.

From 1997-1999 Fitzgerald transitioned to the position of Director of Festivals at the American Film Institute. He was brought on to breathe new life into the decade-long running Los Angeles International Film Festival (formerly Filmex), by introducing new programming and unique film slates and making it a financially viable event for the organization. During his first year, he successfully increased the Festival's attendance by over thirty percent, introduced competitive sections, established a corporate marketing and community outreach program and focused the slate by lowering the number and increasing the quality of films shown. In his first year, the Grand Jury Prize winner, *CHARACTER*, went on to win the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. Other highlights during his tenure include the US premiere of Oscar winner *LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL*, Lasse Hallstrom's *THE CIDER HOUSE RULES* and Pedro Almodovar's *ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER*.

In May of 2000, Fitzgerald was recruited to join Ifilm.com as Vice President of Programming, where he helped to create a new programming model, following the company's launch of its new innovative portal structure. The role included financial forecasting and data analytics. In addition to general program management, and curation of its broad slate of film channels, Fitzgerald developed festival, international and educational models, while developing unique marketing activations to expand special programs and sponsorship support. The brand was later sold to MTV and Spike and folded into the Viacom networks.

Fitzgerald then became the Executive Director of the Santa Barbara International Film Festival in 2002, and was responsible for overseeing the programming, sponsorship, marketing, and artistic direction. Fitzgerald added several new dimensions to the event, while expanding the SB Cinema Society, producing successful gala events with George Clooney's *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, Stephen Daldry's *The Hours* and Pedro Almodovar's *Talk to Her*, helping to establish Santa Barbara as one of the top regional film programs in the country.

From Santa Barbara, Fitzgerald went on to launch Right Angle Studios in 2003. A vertically integrated company, with a focus on filmmaker, film festival and industry consulting, Fitzgerald provided a range of services, from festival blueprints and operational guidance, to marketing and distribution strategies for filmmakers and film festivals around the globe. Fitzgerald supported the launch of a number of film festivals, including, the Lonestar Film Festival, Bahamas International Film Festival, and the Abu Dhabi Film Festival, while providing custom service packages to many other festivals, including: Newport Beach International Film Festival, Gasparilla Film Festival, Sunscreen Film Festival, Naples International Film Festival and Golden Star Shorts Fest.

Fitzgerald also placed numerous films with festivals, distributors and sales agents. With his understanding of shifting industry trends, he supported industry start-ups with critical financial forecasting and data analytics reporting.

Recognizing the power of film to create change, Fitzgerald moved back into production with Cause Pictures. With a firm understanding of the independent landscape, Fitzgerald planned to play the festival circuit and form a unique distribution strategy for each movie. All movies would be made for a price, with a core audience in mind, and would become profitable.

The first project was *The Back Nine*, about an amateur golfer who goes on a quest to see if it's possible to eventually compete on a professional level, starting the journey at the age of 40. After winning awards on the film festival circuit, the film was acquired by Magnolia Pictures. His next two projects *The Highest Pass* and *Dance of Liberation* are transformational in theme as well. After winning several jury and audience awards, *The Highest Pass* was acquired and released by Cinema Libre. *The Milky Way*, a film that explores the current landscape of breastfeeding in America, was his next documentary project. His latest documentary *Warrior One*, supported the empowerment and leadership practices for underprivileged teenage girls, as they embarked on a trek to Machu Picchu.

In October of 2012, Fitzgerald authored *Filmmaking for Change: Make Films That Transform the World*, published by industry leader Michael Wiese Productions. Later in the same year, Fitzgerald combined his experiences in the programming, online exhibition and film communities to launch CineCause. The Company was designed as a portal to quality social impact film content, connecting socially relevant movies to related causes. As an advocate for indie filmmakers, the company focused on expanding their innovative tool set as well as developing social action campaigns for film projects.

In 2013, Fitzgerald was hired as the Executive Director of the Hollywood Film Festival, where he elevated the event through a series of new initiatives and quality film programming, including the *Hollywood Network* the *CineCause Spotlight* and *Celebrate Hollywood*. In 2014, CineCause acquired the Hollywood Film Festival, with the intention of anchoring the event in social impact cinema and cause related presentations. Under his leadership, 2013 had their strongest slate up to date, raising their media profile and increasing box office by 46 percent. After spearheading two successful years as the Festival Director, Fitzgerald stepped aside to focus on the web portal, changing the name from CineCause to Cause Cinema 2015.

Since 2017, Fitzgerald has worked as Head of Acquisitions for several digital platforms including: Flix Premiere, Film Hub and Filmocracy. In 2020, he partnered with Filmocracy co-founder Paul Jun to launch Filmocracy Fest, a new virtual film festival platform. He currently works with Filmocracy as Head of Sales, supporting their virtual festival initiative.

in 2019, he launched iGEMS.tv as a recommendation engine to help guide audiences to the best in internet Movies and TV Series. With the explosion of film and TV content, and the proliferation of digital streaming platforms, Fitzgerald sees human curation as a solution to the problem of search and discovery. In 2021, the company added iGEMSpro, as a resource for independent filmmakers seeking festival and distribution opportunities.