



# Documenting HENRY

By Jessica  
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HENRY MALDONADO, PRESIDENT  
ENZIAN & FLORIDA FILM FESTIVAL

»» Metro Orlando's film industry has exploded over in recent years, turning locals into celebs, enticing companies to shoot and set up shop here, and creating demand for advanced specialty degrees. One constant on the scene since its founding in 1985 has been Enzian, Central Florida's premier independent movie house and home of the Florida Film Festival.

In fall 2009, Henry Maldonado retired from WKMG, local Channel 6, after four decades in television, and became president of Enzian and its renowned film festival. A lifelong film aficionado, he has produced more than 100 shorts and served on Enzian's board of directors for nearly a decade.

**T Texture:** How long have you been interested in filmmaking?

**hr Henry Maldonado:** Since I was 8 years old. I was the family documentarian, shooting us all in 8mm and 16mm during the 1960s. I would take the bus to the local movie house and sit there spellbound in darkness, alone. I lied about my age and got in to see *La Dolce Vita* — more to see Anita Ekberg in a movie that was “condemned” by the Catholic Church — and fell in love with movies.

By accident I went to Boston University, which at the time was one of the few schools that had a film degree. While I was trying to decide on a major, all the pieces came together. When I told my parents that I was not shooting for Law School, but was going to be a documentarian, it was like announcing that I was going to be a poet. Of course my dad blamed my mother, who actually loved poetry, so she got it.

**T You've lived and worked in many major U.S. cities — what brought you to Orlando, and what keeps you here?**



PHILAN EBENHACK (4)

personal way. One of the key things I learned in my 40 years in television was to have an ongoing dialogue with your audience. In TV I would do that both through our programming, and with commentaries I would do on-air after the news.

At Enzian, before each movie, I address the audience with a short video, telling them all the things we're up to. A movie theater has to be a center for community, a place where we come together to be exposed to new ideas, and at Enzian we provide a very comfortable setting, not only to receive, but to discuss and digest, both the ideas and some great food and drink. We are a place where the social interaction around the movie is an integral part of the experience, and where a movie house is as much a total destination as it is about performance.

**hr** I worked for the *Washington Post* television division for over 25 years. I was hired in Detroit to take a last-place station and turn it around. The selling point from them to me was, "this station is so bad, it can't get any worse, so we can do whatever we want." It was a golden age of local television. We did talk shows, prime-time documentaries, live fireworks, even an "American Idol"-type show. So when the *Post* took over channel 6 [in Orlando], after several general managers fell short, I was sent as the corporate suit to do what needed to be done. Now, 10 years later, I like to think WKMG is a factor and a player, and I love this community, I love Enzian, and I intend to make this area the place where I have my life's next adventures.

**T As a producer for one of Central Florida's biggest news stations, you inherently played a major role within the community. Do you try to foster a sense of community at Enzian?**

**hr** Enzian, just like a television station, touches audiences in a deep, emotional,

**T What's one of the most enjoyable aspects of your job?**

**hr** We show classics every month and have special events that include food and drink and a great classic. For Valentine's Day this year we showed Audrey Hepburn in *Roman Holiday*. Last year it was *Casablanca*. I always introduce the movie, and I always ask how many have seen it. Invariably, almost 100% have seen the film, but when I ask how many have seen it on the big screen, usually only one or two. I then promise them that they will be seeing this movie for the first time. I love to stick around and say goodbye to all of them, because they are floating three feet off the ground, and they tell me how moved they were by a film they thought they knew. "You were right" are the overwhelming parting words.

**T Is this your dream job?**

**hr** Enzian is a wonderfully engaging canvas within which you explore ideas. The people I work with are real pals, and love movies. Most importantly the Tiedtke family, which started Enzian 25 years ago, is totally involved in the operation. Sig and Philip Tiedtke are the heart and soul of Enzian, and they are dear friends. So this is as close to a dream as real life can get.

**T Central Florida's film and entertainment industry has experienced tremendous growth in the last 20 years. Where do you see it going from here?**

**hr** The future of film in Orlando, and overall, is in the independent film. The literature of film resides with the independent filmmaker. The fact that making movies for them is getting more and more accessible, the time is here for them to be poets, visionaries, and truly make films the new literature.

In the 60s and 70s when I was learning the craft, the phrase "the medium is the message" was the mantra. And that was all wrong. We now know that "the message is the message." Script, storyline, acting are what movies are all about, and with portability, ease of shooting, and inexpensive video equipment, the filmmaker is now free to truly explore what makes film so powerful: *the story* and *how you tell it*.

**T The Florida Film Festival takes place April 8-17 this year. What's in store for patrons?**

**hr** We celebrate Florida. In addition to the films in competition, we'll celebrate both the movie side of our state, and the food and drink we love so much.

Enzian has always been a feast for the eyes and for the palate, and so the Florida Film Festival follows suit. So get ready for some great Southern hospitality, and all the joy of film, food and friends that comes with it.

**T 2011 marks the Festival's 20th anniversary. To what do you attribute its longevity and success?**

**hr** First and foremost, I credit our audience. We have an audience that is very film-savvy. They come to Enzian every week of the year, and gobble up independent films. So when the Festival brings more than one hundred independent films to our area, and along come filmmakers, directors, actors, and distributors of independent films, our audience is there to welcome them, not only with great affection, but with a very deep appreciation of what they do. **x**