

**July 2007 Film/Tape World**

## **BAWIFT: An Oasis of Creative Support**

**By Sharon Gerhard**

Are you a woman working in media production? Do you wish you had some like-minded friends to bounce ideas off of? Or a connection to resources in a hurry? A source for suggestions when you're stuck? Or a shoulder to cry on when you feel like you just can't watch it one more time?

BAWIFT – Bay Area Women in Film and Television – may be the panacea. A community of over 600 women media makers, BAWIFT has the goal of helping women 'connect, create, and be inspired.' The organization does that through regular meetings, special events, and online services: a website and a listserv called 'Chicks-Chat.'

Started in 2001 as Cinema Chicks, BAWIFT became a formal chapter of the Women and Film and Television International Network in 2003. Last month these chicks celebrated their fourth birthday by screening members' short films before celebrating the two winners of the *WIF/GM Distribution/Marketing/Festival/Travel Grants*. *Past events have included panels on Distributing to Make a Living, Publicizing Your Film, Grant Getting, Activist Filmmaking, Finding Regional Resources, Negotiating Skills for Women Filmmakers, Legal Guidance* and lots more.

The BAWIFT community meets monthly in San Francisco to hear guest speakers, network, and share information for professionals, and show and tell. According to board member Karil Daniels, the benefits of membership are many. Daniels says "BAWIFT is a unique organization where the needs of its women filmmakers are the group's highest priority."

The group's most highly anticipated regular events are BAWIFT's special work-in-progress screenings, where members show their work to get feedback from colleagues. Members also attend special events and festive parties, in addition to meetings with featured speakers (like producer Debbie Brubaker or screenwriter Janet Peoples). They also have the opportunity to meet and network with theater owners, attorneys, publicists, reviewers, festival programming directors, and film distributors.

Members are also listed in the Women in Film and TV International database, as well as the BAWIFT online Talent Directory, and they are able to list their productions on the BAWIFT online 'In Production' page, to let the community know what they're working on. Members also enjoy discounts and special rates on selected services, seminars, and attend monthly meetings free. BAWIFT's most widely used resource is the online Chicks Chat listserv, where members post news, share resources and information, find crew, find jobs, receive notices of special or free screenings, get tech help and more.

Filmmakers are a pretty dedicated bunch. Only another filmmaker can understand their troubles – or their triumphs. At the helm of BAWIFT is a newly elected Board of Directors including Ondine Kilker, Simone Nelson, Kirstin Tegtmeier Higgins, Ellen Trost, Michele Turnure-Salleo,

Mabel Valdiviezo, Marlene Velasco-Begue and Karil Daniels. Having ‘been there’ themselves, these women are dedicated to “maintaining a supportive and collaborative community of women in the Bay Area.” Check it out at [www.bawift.org](http://www.bawift.org).

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