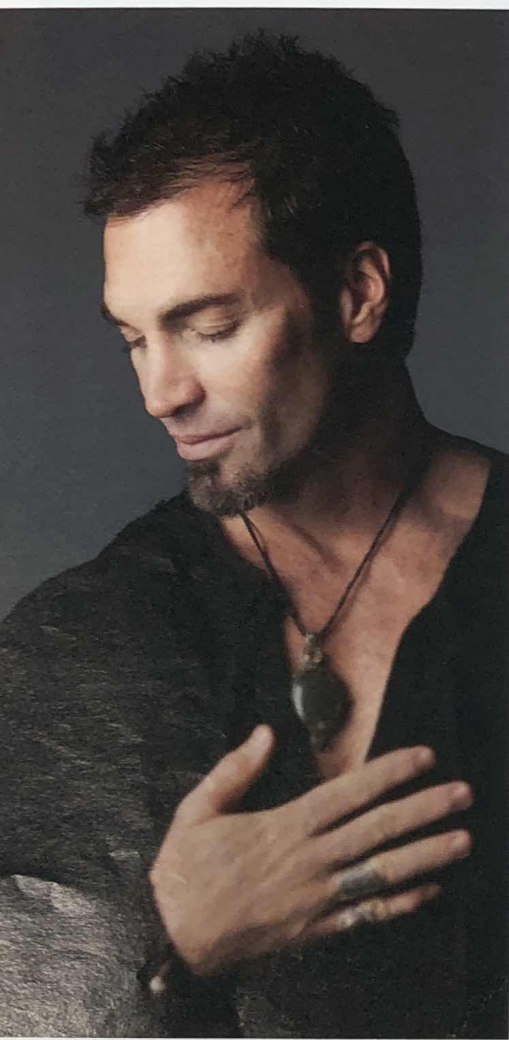


Can Film Change the World?

Elevate Studios' Mikki Willis says YES!

Story by Suzanne Takowsky
 Photographer James Graca
 Make-up Autumn Graca
 Stylist Mathilde



which was to help their fellow humans in need. Recognizing this ability to come together, Elevate was created to perpetuate messages that inspire, educate, and engage the depths of the human spirit.

In 2005, Elevate pioneered, "The Elevate Film Festival," which was the world's first socially conscious film festival that evolved from a 500 person celebration of humanity to a gathering of over 7,000 in just four years. Since 2005, ELEVATE has established itself as a globally respected brand for producing socially conscious and transformative media. The festival, which ran annually from 2005-2008, holds the honor of being "the world's largest single screen film festival," was named as one of the top 25 film festivals by Movie Maker Magazine, and was the only independent film event to be granted access to the prestigious Kodak Theatre.

After the last festival in 2008, Mikki was inspired to put the Film Festival on pause and create something bigger. This was the birth of Elevate Studios, a media and technology company that is launching a movement to uplift the planet. Moving out of their loft in downtown LA, Elevate now resides in a beautiful property in Ojai, where team members work, live and play together in community.

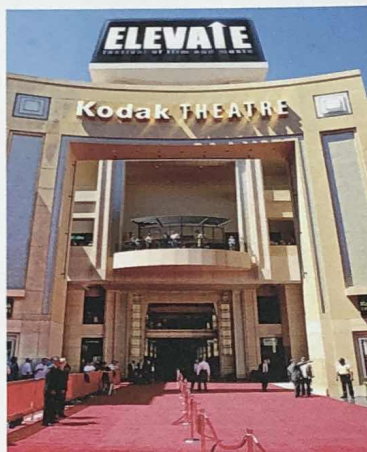
ST: So the festival expanded from the Kodak to the Nokia theater and was on track to be hosted at the Hollywood Bowl! Why did you put it on pause?

MW: With the rapid success of the festival, it became abundantly clear that the demand for high-quality 'elevated' media reaches beyond our LA community; It's global! And now with the integration of the Internet, we have the opportunity to reach millions rather than thousands. Look at what it did for Egypt! Recognizing this potential we put the festival on hold in order to expand our reach.

ST: How do you define 'Elevated Media'?

MW: Elevated media is content with a deeper message. It's the type of film that catalyzes social change, inspires personal transformation, or raises global awareness. And I'd like to stress that it's not about scaring people into action or about doom and gloom. It's a genre of film that inspires action and offers concrete solutions.

There are so many ground-breaking films in this genre being created every year. The problem is that the mainstream public only hears about 1% of them. These are the lucky few like *The Cove* or *Inconvenient Truth* that actually make it through the labyrinth of the distribution world. It's a real shame because these pieces are made for the people. These films are about health, food, water, the economy... subjects that affect us all. So the issue isn't with content, or with interest, it's with distribution. Realizing that there's no bridge to the mainstream, we created Elevate Studios. This is a media and technology company



that we're getting off the ground. The first order of business is solving this issue with distribution, and we're building an internet platform to do just that.

ST: This platform sounds intriguing. Can you share more about what you're creating?

MW: We're building an online portal for conscious film. We'll be curating the best-of-the-best of what's out there and make it available as an instant pay-per-view rental over the Internet. The intention is to create a solution that fairly compensates filmmakers and supports real-world change. We also want to make it easy for people to come together around supporting the messages in these films. So we'll be incorporating key social media features that facilitate conversation, create community and make it easy for films to go viral.

ST: Tell us more about your team.

MW: We've assembled an A-team of professionals to make this vision a reality. Our community is a collection of experts in finance, business development, social media, marketing, artificial intelligence, robotics, as well as the lead architect of one of the biggest multi-player video games worldwide.

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Elevate Films literally rose from the ashes of 9/11 as founder, Mikki Willis, found himself at ground zero during the attacks. In the midst of the chaos, as people scrambled amongst the wreckage of the fallen towers, Mikki noticed a sense of spirit and unity amongst the people he's never seen before, as if there was something bigger at work. He noticed everyone working symbiotically, with no judgement, no racism, just synergistically aligned with a common intention,