

Downtown kicks in for film fest

By CATHERINE LACKNER

Directors of Miami's Downtown Development Authority learned last month that the Miami Film Festival is moving downtown; almost 80% of films will be shown in venues in the city's core. This month, the board voted unanimously to allocate another \$60,000 to market the move. This is an addition to the \$40,000 the authority had already budgeted for the festival.

"I've been waiting for this day for nine years," or the length of his tenure, said Jaie Laplante, the festival's executive director and director of programming. "We want to make sure everyone knows we're coming to downtown."

The festival began in 1984 with 24 movies shown at downtown's Olympia Theater, where

many of next year's films will run during the March 1-10 event. Some films will also be shown at the new Silver Spot Cinema at 300 SE Third St., he said. "It's not fully open yet, but it will be a true palace of a cinema complex." The new-concept theater features plush reclining chairs and food and beverage service.

The festival is projected to have a total economic impact of \$1.4 million, \$470,000 of that to be felt downtown, according to film festival documents. The average spent per day per attendee (not including the ticket price) is estimated at \$85, divided among food and beverage, parking and incidentals. "These are new dollars coming into downtown," Mr. Laplante said.

About 60,000 are expected to attend the festival, which is also being staged at the Tower Theater in Little Havana, on North

Beach, at the Coral Gables Art Cinema, in the Design District, and in other venues.

The downtown authority's extra money will compensate for grants of about \$56,000 per year the festival received from the Miami Beach Visitor & Convention Authority from 2013-2018, when the event was mostly on South Beach, festival documents indicate.

"Every dollar will go into marketing downtown," Mr. Laplante said. "We're pricing out things on our wish list," which might include signage at the Bayfront Park Metrorail Station, banners prominently displaying downtown images, a partnership with the Brightline train service, and activations along the Baywalk/Riverwalk waterfront pedestrian path.

Board members said they definitely want to see a map



Actress Demi Moore showed short film she directed at 2009 festival.

of downtown somewhere in the marketing materials, with public transportation options incorporated.

Said Ken Russell, authority chair and Miami commissioner, "Make sure people know how to get here."