

Film Biz Recycling held its first Eco Expo vendor panel to highlight sustainable measures currently in practice by a selection of film industry professionals, many of them local to Brooklyn. Local filmmaker Skye Hilton attended, and shared his thoughts:

FILM BIZ RECYCLING ECO MIXER

The Gowanus canal is one of the most polluted bodies of water in the United States. In March of 2010, it was added to the EPA's list of national Superfund sites, areas designated for cleanup of hazardous substances. Completed in the late 1860s, the canal served as an industrial artery for New York Harbor, and was home to manufacturing plants and mills that flooded the canal with PCBs (**polychlorinated biphenyl**), often used as coolant in heavy machinery. It's a desolate area, even more so when it's juxtaposed to its Brooklyn neighbors, Park Slope and Carroll Gardens. But seen through a flawed lens, the area surrounding the canal is a mystical place where you'd see the Zennist protagonist from a Jim Jarmusch film, wandering through a locked off wide shot.

But located just a stone's throw from the polluted canal, behind the doors of a 10,000 sq ft. dilapidated warehouse, is the epicenter of the eco-friendly Film and TV movement in New York city: Eva Radke's non-profit, **Film Biz Recycling** (<http://www.filmbizrecycling.org>). On this night, six hours until her birthday, Mrs. Radke is hosting a celebration of eco-friendly achievements in TV & Film at the 2012 *Film Biz Recycling Eco-Expo and Mixer*.

Walking into the expo feels like walking into something mid-revolution. **Film Biz Recycling** is many things, and for the son of a painter and furniture restorer, it's a place that's hard to leave once you enter. It's an orphanage of abandoned and artful pieces that draws in members of the art department, and dutiful gleaners alike, looking to find them a home. (60% of the items from the prop shop are donated directly to various charities, while the other 40% continue to fund efforts that have helped keep 285 tons of waste out of landfills since 2008). It's also a location; not only for Reuse, Reduce and Recycling, but also for filming. Tonight it's a stage, shining a spotlight on the most exciting and influential movement in the television and film industry: Going Green.

Sponsored by **Brooklyn Brewery**, **Soda Stream** and **LeNoble Lumber** and catered by Emellie O'Brien and Kayla Santosuosso of **Earth Angel Sustainable Catering**, the

environment is festive, with a wide array of panelists speaking onstage to an audience of 100 plus invitees. Steven Holtzman from **Canal Creatures**, Jamie Bullock from **Eco-set**, Emily Doublit, founder of **sustyparty.com** and Beth Bell & Lisa Dietrich from **Green Product Placement**, are just a few of the nights many presenters. As everyone gathers in their seats, awaiting the presentations to start, new friends are made and old acquaintances catch up. From Production Designers, to Producers, to entrepreneurs, to environmentally conscious locals, everyone's here in support of the cause and to let their hair down while they do it.

Possibly none more so than Emily Doublit CEO of **Susty Party**, who, when announced by Mrs. Radke, seems to move in an ethereal twirl toward the stage. She's wearing an artisanal tiara (made by **Susty Party**) that is fitting for the reigning empress of sustainable party gear.

"I founded **Susty Party** in 2008 because I love bringing people together, the spirit of parties and connecting with other people in a positive way. But that generates so much waste. How can we spread our positive energy to the environment while we're partying? So, **Susty Party** makes parties more sustainable and I try to make sustainability a party."

Ms. Doublit's line of tableware will be hitting shelves at Whole Foods and hopes to spread her Dionysian message of eco awareness to all markets, including TV & Film.

"The film industry needs to learn that affordable alternatives to disposable tableware are out there and easily accessible. In the entertainment business, sometimes you need the convenience and scale that disposable table wear provides. And we always say 'Use a Reusable', but if you need to use disposable products, we're developing the most eco-friendly products we can. Our products are made from rapidly reusable plants that are certified compostable, non toxic, fair label and made in the USA."

Moving from one form of craftiness to another, Beth Bell and Lisa Deitrich have found a way to use advertising in television and film to promote eco friendly brands. **Green Product Placement** is turning the tables on the time-tested model of marketing through product integration on the small and big screens.

"Product placement has been around since Jules Verne's time," says Ms. Bell.

"Whether you like it or not, you're gonna have products [in films and television shows].

You've seen the shows where they are eating generic brands. Why not replace those props with eco friendly brands?"

They are already making a huge impact; placing on major networks like HBO, FOX and The CW with products like Pirate's Booty and Applegate Farms dairy goods.

"If we dress a kitchen at least half of them are good brands, and if they see those brands over and over again, then it's the norm," says Ms. Deitrich. "And when it's the norm, people start eating better, start thinking about what they are putting in their lives. It's not just attacking the greening world, but it's "Joe Schmo" that doesn't buy anything organic...it's advertising...it can still make a good change."

So, the cycle continues. Plates and napkins are replaced with compostable ones by **Susty Party**, and we have Earth friendly products in mind to serve on those plates because of **Green Product Placement**. And now the production companies that hire Ms. Bell and Ms. Deitrich to place are becoming eco-friendly themselves.

Canal Creatures stands alone as one of few eco-production service companies that not only consults on other productions but produces films, commercials, still shoots, you name it; or in Mr. Holtzman's words "We figure out how to get it done." Spoken like a true entertainment professional. For Mr. Holtzman, treating the creative as king is an important aspect of ensuring that Going Green, remains effective.

"You don't want your changes to affect the quality of the creative. That's what the executives want to see. They want to say, 'Hey that's great and that's nice, but make sure to still produce the great thing.' And that is what we do. We produce excellent creative and then we make sure we make differences in the environment."

Remaining true to this idea has lent **Canal Creatures** much success. They've also done their part to champion the importance of eco-stewards on set.

"We were looking to hire eco-stewards, and realized that we knew ALL of them, mainly because there were only about five," says Mr. Holtzman, who volunteers as PGA Green Co-chair of green outreach. "One of the things we realized is that we should support them; train new ones, connect them and hire them for commercials (at a commercial rate) so they could make a living, and to also allow them to move onto wherever their creativity takes them. We really increased that network."

And on an upcoming major feature film, **Canal Creatures** is working with 24 year old eco-steward, Matt Rusk, whose stubbly face and power stance, fists pressed against his hips, suggests a kind of eco-superman stuck as Clark Kent.

"It's funny the 'title' changes no matter who you're working with. With Disney you're an Environmental Steward, with Paramount you're a Green Steward; it changes wherever you're working. But the gist is that you're facilitating a green initiative on set. So, it's a huge spectrum because you're talking to execs, you're meeting department heads to work out how we can make it more green minded, waste less, and make it convenient for them. We figure out a plan from the get go, provide some generic suggestions, and then figure out specific goals of the particular productions."

Regardless of what Matt is doing on set, whether it's helping craft service donate leftover food to needy organizations, or establishing on-set composting, his easy-going nature is a trait that clearly goes far as an eco-steward.

" You have to have thick skin to be an Eco-steward. It's a dance, you're a matador, and it's usually the foreman coming at you like an angry bull. But, if you start the conversations early, than it's less of a nuisance for everyone. And a lot of my job is monitoring the waste stream, so there's some time you spend digging around in the dumpster."

Rusk's next project is the high profile Darren Aronofsky feature *Noah*.

"On *Black Swan*, there was no bottled water, and a big interest in Going Green. That's why I'm excited to work with them to find out what steps can be put into place. And if you have the Director on board, it's not just 'Hey, this guy in this position I haven't really heard of, he wants us to stop idling in the vans, like what the heck?' If they see that the Director, is really interested in it and buying into it, and standing next to that green guy you haven't heard of, it's a much easier sell on set."

The Eco-Steward, a position on set created to find green solutions, Matt is the walking embodiment of how the paradigm is changing.

"The green film niche is an awesome community, it's a bunch of like minded people sharing insight, it's small enough where I can reach out to anyone and have a dialogue," says Mr. Rusk who became an eco-steward via a facebook message that led to Disney reaching out to him directly. "It's just been cool to hear all these different experiences. So the whole vibe here is that everything is an experiment on how we can make it all sustainable. Any step is a good step even if we know the first one needs a lot of work."

And it's exactly that vibe that Mrs. Radke has created here, tonight.

"It's all about Reduce, Reuse and Recycle...and RETHINK if you will," adds Mr. Rusk as

he floats away to another conversation, passing Abby Kaish, the elder statesman of Reuse in the room. Since 1991, Abby and **Rock and Wrap It Up** have been collecting food from sporting events and film shoots to help feed the less fortunate. Abby's the godfather of the movement, and his impressive stature is only slightly trumped by the size of the selfless aura that encompasses him as he traverses the room with a slight hobble.

"[Young people] is where it all starts. We start in the schools with our sustainability programs. An event like this is so important and it really gets the word out."

If anybody can comment on the evolution of Going Green, it's Mr. Kaish.

"I'm waiting to see at the end of the credits of a film, 'We Recycle' or 'Recycled By.' People are starting to get it. Listen, this is something that started very small, and now you can see by the list of my productions that we pick up from, that people are starting to get it, and it's just gonna go gangbusters."

And as the event wraps up, less than an hour away from Mrs. Radke's birthday, it's the head of **Film Biz Recycling** who gets the last word.

"Tonight is kind of emotional. It's incredible. I see that there is an enormous amount of change and it just makes me really happy. I may have been the one who registered the dot-com for FBR, when I was an idiot, but I'm kind of sharing my birthday month with **Film Biz Recycling** and I'm just grateful that there is an enormous amount of potential for growth. It has nothing to do with me. **Film Biz Recycling** has left my possession and it belongs to the entire industry and everyone who has helped make tonight happen."

What Mrs. Radke has helped to create is an ever-evolving gift to the industry and the environment. But like many involved tonight, she may be too humble to tell you that herself:

"Everyone put so much into this, so I'm just the pretty face," notes Mrs. Radke. "...with a passionate voice..." adds Mr. Holtzman as he sidles up next to Mrs. Radke and gives her a big happy birthday hug.

Film Biz Recycling is located at 540 President St. in Gowanus, Brooklyn. If you work in TV & Film in NYC, be sure to visit and get involved.

- Skye Hilton

For more information, check out:

<http://www.greenproductionguide.com> - A service for the entire production community available free of charge. It offers the very first worldwide, interactive green vendor guide, with access to a database of over 2,100 listings.

<http://www.pgagreen.org> - download the *Unified Best Practices Guide*, created by Producers Guild members who voiced the need on how to best produce more sustainable shoots

Featured Vendors:

<http://www.rockandwrapitup.org>

<http://www.greenproductplacement.com>

<http://www.ecosetconsulting.com>

<http://www.buysipngo.com>

<http://www.vokashi.com>

<http://www.sustyparty.com>

<http://www.canalcreatures.com>