

Award-Winning Filmmaker James Boyd Brings Two AI-Assisted Projects to Southern California Film Festivals

From founding Nodance to generative AI, Boyd brings his "human made with AI tools" approach to four Southern California festival screenings.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, August 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Award-winning filmmaker [James Boyd](#) will bring two distinctly different projects created with generative AI tools to four Southern California film festival screenings over the next month, continuing a career-long exploration of how emerging technology can give independent filmmakers new ways to tell human stories.

Boyd's Silver Telly Award-winning science-fiction comedy [404](#) screens Friday, August 21 at 9:45 p.m. at Film Invasion Los Angeles in Glendale. His new horror-comedy project [DEAD DRIP](#) will then make its world premiere Sunday, September 6 at 7:30 p.m. during the 14th Annual Studio City Film Festival, taking place September 2 through 10 at the Laemmle NoHo 7 in North Hollywood.



James Boyd | Writer-director

On Tuesday, September 15 at 6 p.m., 404 and DEAD DRIP will both screen in the same festival block at the Indiewood Film Festival at Hollywood's historic TCL Chinese Theatre. Four days later, 404 continues its festival run with a Saturday, September 19 screening at 10 p.m. at SIMI Film Fest at the Simi Valley Town Center in Simi Valley, California.

Although both productions make extensive use of generative AI, Boyd describes his approach with a simple phrase: "human made with AI tools."

"I'm a filmmaker using AI to tell human stories," said Boyd. "The technology can change dramatically, but the fundamental job hasn't changed. You still have to create characters people care about, make creative decisions, find the emotion, find the humor and ultimately give an

audience a reason to watch.”

For Boyd, embracing disruptive filmmaking technology is not new.

In 1998, he founded the Nodance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. Nodance became the world’s first DVD-projected film festival, using emerging digital projection technology to eliminate one of the significant expenses then facing independent filmmakers: the cost of creating a film print simply to exhibit their work theatrically.

The idea behind Nodance was straightforward: use technology to remove an economic barrier between independent filmmakers and their audiences.

Nearly three decades later, Boyd sees a natural progression from that early digital transition to generative AI.

“When we started Nodance, filmmakers could finish a movie but still face the enormous expense of creating a film print before an audience could see it,” Boyd said. “DVD projection removed that barrier. AI tools are now removing a completely different set of production barriers. To me, the connection is obvious. The technology changes, but what interests me is what becomes possible for the filmmaker.”

404 | AI short film directed by James Boyd

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That philosophy is reflected in two projects that use emerging generative technologies to produce radically different results.

404 is a comedy about an AI bot struggling to find purpose after her empathy algorithm is rejected by the humans who created her. The film has accumulated multiple festival honors and won a Silver Telly Award in the

Generative AI, Comedy category.

DEAD DRIP moves in a very different direction. The horror-comedy project follows an eccentric group of supernatural characters through an irreverent world of vampires, monsters and human absurdity. Its September 6 screening at the Studio City Film Festival will mark the project’s world premiere.



For Boyd, the contrast between the projects is intentional. He believes the creative potential of generative AI will ultimately be measured not by a recognizable “AI aesthetic,” but by how differently individual filmmakers use the tools.

“I don’t think AI filmmaking should be a genre,” Boyd said. “404 and DEAD DRIP don’t look or feel like the same project because they aren’t supposed to. The filmmaker should determine the voice, not the tool.”

Boyd’s career has moved through multiple technological eras of independent filmmaking, from 35mm production and the early transition to digital cinema to today’s rapidly developing generative production tools.

“AI can give you possibilities you didn’t have before, and sometimes it gives you something you never expected,” Boyd said. “But somebody still has to decide what belongs in the movie. Somebody still has to tell the story. That part is human.”

UPCOMING SCREENINGS

404

Film Invasion Los Angeles

Friday, August 21, 2026, 9:45 p.m.

Glendale, California

DEAD DRIP — World Premiere

14th Annual Studio City Film Festival

Sunday, September 6, 2026, 7:30 p.m.

Laemmle NoHo 7, North Hollywood, California

404 and DEAD DRIP

Indiewood Film Festival

Tuesday, September 15, 2026, 6 p.m.

TCL Chinese Theatre, Hollywood, California

404

SIMI Film Fest



DEAD DRIP | AI short film by James Boyd

Saturday, September 19, 2026, 10 p.m.
Simi Valley Town Center, Simi Valley, California

ABOUT JAMES BOYD

James Boyd is an independent filmmaker, producer and founder of the Nodance Film Festival. His career has spanned traditional and emerging forms of production, from 35mm filmmaking and early digital cinema to generative AI. His current work explores AI as a production tool for filmmaker-driven narrative storytelling, an approach he describes as “human made with AI tools.”

For more information about James Boyd, 404 and DEAD DRIP, visit JamesBoyd.com.

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