

# EXTRAS SCENE

## LOUISIANA LAW FIRM COURTS ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS

by Susan Ross

Asher Friend and Allen Frederic are old friends from Tulane University Law School. “We both graduated from Tulane in ’03,” says Friend. “We were summer associates at Jones Walker, and then started together as associates in the fall of 2003.” The two have remained close friends, and are now each partners in the Corporate & Securities Practice Group at Jones Walker LLP, the largest law firm in the Gulf South. With more than 375 attorneys, the firm boasts a comprehensive range of legal services.

“Historically, our business practice group has done work representing primarily the finance side of the film space in Louisiana and beyond,” says Friend, who co-chairs Jones Walker’s entertainment practice with Frederic. “However, the development of our entertainment practice really started in earnest about a year ago with Allen and I leading the charge. As the film industry in Louisiana has grown, so has our involvement.”

Their involvement hasn’t been limited to negotiating and drafting legal documents. Frederic recently produced a micro-budgeted feature length film called *The King of New Orleans*. “The director is one of my oldest friends from New Orleans, Chike Ozah, who directed ESPN’s *Benji*, one of the *30 for 30s*,” says Frederic. “We are in post-production right now. By the end of the day, it will be about a \$50,000 feature film. We’re just hoping it’s a film fest darling.”

Frederic also has a co-executive producer credit on *The Butler*, which opens wide August 16. “A firm client was looking to get involved in the film industry. I worked with this client for about a year, looking at potential projects. We came across *The Butler* and my client was very excited,” says Frederic. “I represented him throughout the entire process, from reviewing and commenting on the operating agreement, financing agreements and sales agreements, to negotiating the distribution agreement with The Weinstein Company.”

“Certainly it is a very important story and hopefully when it is released, the rest of the world will agree with that,” says Frederic of the true story that inspired *The Butler*. “I was very impressed by the script from Danny Strong, who just won an Emmy for *Game Change*. Lee Daniels is just a brilliant director and it certainly doesn’t hurt that the cast is amazing.” *The Butler’s* incredible cast includes more Oscar winners than any other film in history.

In late 2009, Jones Walker began representing Cinereach, the New York based production company that produced *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, a small independent film developed and shot in Louisiana. It went on to earn



Jones Walker’s Allen Frederic and Asher Friend photo by Charlotte Cox

an Academy Award nomination for best picture. “We could not be more proud to have been involved with this historic production,” says Friend.

In January, Jones Walker enlisted Jose Martinez, Jr. and Nikki L. Barbanell, two entertainment attorneys based in Los Angeles who previously co-founded Martinez Barbanell LLP, who specialize in representing distributors, investors, lenders, producers and talent in all facets of film development, production, finance, acquisition and distribution. “Allen and Jose started talking and putting everything together,” says Friend. “Given Jose and Nikki’s extensive experience and expertise in the industry, particularly on the production legal and distribution sides, it was an extremely synergistic opportunity.” Jones Walker also opened an office in Los Angeles.

Active with LFEA and the New Orleans Film Society, Friend and Frederic are looking forward to further developing Jones Walker’s relationship with the entertainment industry. “Allen and I are both very involved with and interested in the arts, generally,” says Friend. “We’re just extremely interested in supporting the industry.”

For additional information on Jones Walker’s entertainment practice, visit [www.joneswalker.com/practices-156.html](http://www.joneswalker.com/practices-156.html)

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