

Lisa Lee Martin: Streaming Visionary and Newkirk's Creative Catalyst

Interview by Cee Cee Donovan for Oklahoma Business Magazine

When Lisa Lee Martin arrived in Newkirk, Oklahoma, in 2019, she was searching for locations for her supernatural series, *Hunting Jessica*. What she found was a town with deep roots, remarkable stories, and a community ready for revival. Now, as CEO of Raman-Martin Film Productions and founder of RM Entertainment Channel (RME Free TV), Lisa is leading a renaissance in local media, business, and culture—while keeping Newkirk's unique character front and center.

A New Home, A New Mission

Cee Cee Donovan: Lisa, you originally came to Newkirk for a film project. What made you stay?

Lisa Lee Martin: I came to scout for *Hunting Jessica* and immediately fell in love with Newkirk's charm and history. After some creative disagreements about using a soundstage, I decided to honor my commitment to this community. I moved here, set up my production company on Main Street, and have been dedicated to helping Newkirk grow ever since. I'm proud of my heritage as well. I'm Choctaw on my late mother's side, and her family originated from Oklahoma City. That connection to Oklahoma's Native roots gives me an even deeper appreciation for the stories and traditions here.

Newkirk is a tight-knit town filled with great people. The sense of community here is truly special—neighbors look out for each other, and everyone pitches in to make Newkirk a wonderful place to live. I'm especially grateful for our dedicated law enforcement and fire department. The Newkirk Police Department is known for its strong community involvement, public safety initiatives, and genuine care for residents. Our fire department, like so many in Oklahoma, is staffed by committed professionals and volunteers who are always ready to serve and protect.

Lisa now serves on Newkirk's design and tourism boards and lives right next to her film production offices. Alongside her brother, Austin Gerry (VP of Raman-Martin Film Productions), she's produced everything from the paranormal series *Newkirk Hauntings* to fitness videos and several cooking shows, all available on RME Free TV—a free, ad-supported streaming channel accessible on Roku, AppleTV, AndroidTV, FireTV, Amazon Plus, iPhone & Android apps plus online at rmechannel.com.

Celebrating Local Voices: Karen Dye's Legacy

Cee Cee: Your upcoming documentary about Newkirk is generating a lot of buzz. Can you tell us about your inspiration?

Lisa: The documentary is inspired by my interviews with Karen Dye, a true pillar of Newkirk's history. Karen is the author of *Newkirk Set in Stone*, *Tall Tales and Half Truths*, and a wonderful children's book about Newkirk. All her books are available at our local Mercantile and on Amazon, with every cent of the proceeds going to support the Newkirk Community Historical Society's preservation efforts. Karen's work is a treasure trove of local lore and heritage—she's dedicated her life to saving our historic buildings and sharing Newkirk's stories with new generations.

Cee Cee: What did you learn from Karen and other locals?

Lisa: Karen's passion for preservation is contagious. She's shown me how much pride there is in our architecture, our legends, and our community spirit. I also learned from longtime resident Joe Anderson, who lives next to where Charlie Adams trained his famous horses. Joe,

interviewed by my brother Austin, shared how Newkirk has changed over the years and how much potential there is for thoughtful growth.

Business, Family, and Community Growth

Cee Cee: What makes Newkirk ideal for businesses and families?

Lisa: It's the perfect blend of old-fashioned charm and new opportunity. We have a supportive community, beautiful historic buildings, and a Main Street that's ready for new ventures.

For Main Street inquiries, reach out to Rhonda Packard at (580) 362-2377 or newkirkmainstreet@gmail.com.

For broader business opportunities, Chamber President Dawn Brakey is your contact at (580) 362-2155 or newkirkchamber@gmail.com.

If you're looking for a business location or a new home in Newkirk, Gary Bilger is an excellent resource—he can help you find the perfect spot to grow with our town at (580) 722-4241.

And if you're a filmmaker looking for the perfect location, I'm always available at (580) 670-5678 or lisaleemartin@raman-martinfilmproductions.com.

This summer, Newkirk welcomes Land Run Distillery on Main Street, led by Jeff Casey. It's set to offer whiskey tastings, food pairings, and live events—another sign of Newkirk's exciting future.

We're also thrilled about the soon-to-open art gallery at 115 N Main St. This new space will showcase local and regional artists, and will offer a monthly supper club featuring special guests—bringing together art, cuisine, and community in a vibrant downtown setting.

RME Free TV: Local Stories, Global Reach

Cee Cee: What sets RME Free TV apart from other streaming platforms?

Lisa: Our channel is free to all subscribers, making our content accessible to everyone. But we've also developed a paid preview feature—perfect for raising funds through special events, sports, concerts, business summits, training, cattle auctions, and more. I'd love to see local schools use it to stream sporting seasons for alumni, with proceeds supporting school programs. It's a tool for connection and community support.

We're also adding a news segment and hope to collaborate with a major news network soon. Our goal is to become a true resource for local news, education, and entertainment.

Original Content: From Cooking to the Paranormal

Cee Cee: Your programming is incredibly diverse. What are some highlights?

Lisa: We want something for everyone. The Unconventional Kitchen, hosted by chef Krislyn Packard Wilson, is like Ree Drummond meets Wednesday Addams—quirky, creative, and fun. We also have Cooking with Rhonda and a Viking cooking show with John Bunch coming soon. On the documentary side, we're proud to have already released our mini documentary on the Scottish Rite Masonic Temple in Guthrie, which explores its remarkable architecture and legacy. Our paranormal series, Newkirk Hauntings, was inspired by the real-life legends of the Cline Building and other local sites. We film everything right here in Newkirk, with the community's support.

COVID-19 Challenges and the Oklahoma Film Rebate

Cee Cee: How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact your filming schedule and budget?

Lisa: Like so many in the industry, our production was significantly delayed by the pandemic. We faced shutdowns, new health protocols, and supply chain issues that added both time and cost to the project—just like productions everywhere from Hollywood to independent studios. We had to implement safety measures, reschedule shoots, and adapt to changing regulations, which increased our expenses and pushed our timeline far beyond what we'd planned.

Cee Cee: Did the Oklahoma film rebate program help offset those extra costs?

Lisa: I successfully completed the Oklahoma film rebate process for our productions, which was a huge help overall. However, even though the final rebate application included a section for COVID expenses and rural uplifts, I was not granted the additional rebate for those costs. After a perfect audit, I was told the rural uplifts didn't come into play until 2021, but in reality, those incentives were actually written into the original "Compete with Canada" Act. It was frustrating because our project was exactly the kind of rural, local production those uplifts were meant to support.

I have continuously sent emails requesting the extra rebate incentives and have asked about having these added to the next year's rebate to help cover the additional expenses we incurred. I am currently researching who did receive the extra incentives and why my project did not. I want other filmmakers to know about these nuances so they can advocate for themselves and maximize the incentives available.

Cee Cee: What advice do you have for filmmakers navigating Oklahoma's rebate program now?

Lisa: It's a great program, but you need to be diligent and proactive. Read the fine print, keep detailed records, and don't hesitate to ask questions or push for what your production qualifies for. If anyone needs help or guidance through the rebate application or production process, I'm more than happy to share what I've learned and help others succeed.