



# LA Harbor International Film Festival

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*To create a cinematic bridge between the people of the region and the people of the world*



**FOR RELEASE IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**LA Harbor International Film Festival™**  
**Sets Sail On 18<sup>th</sup> Voyage March 11-14 In Virtual Presentation**  
**Official Poster & Banner Unveiled At The Whale & Ale Pub February 19**  
**Commemorates 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Warner Grand Theatre**  
**& Dedicated to Memory of Honorable Tom LaBonge**

**Education Outreach Program “Read the Book, See the Movie” POLLYANNA**  
**IL POSTINO Opening Night Celebrates “Little Italy”**  
**New Filmmakers LA (NFMLA) - Returns for 9<sup>th</sup> Year**  
**Hollywood Nostalgia Tribute *The Phantom Of The Opera (1943)***  
**DocSunday™ POLA Premier *John Van Hamersveld’s Crazy World Ain’t It***  
**Precedes Closing Feature Documentary *The Endless Summer***  
**Veterans & Currently Serving In Military Honored In Spirit**

**February 18, 2021 - San Pedro (SP), California. - Port of Los Angeles (POLA) -** Programming and sponsors were announced, and official festival poster/banner unveiled, for the 18<sup>th</sup> annual LA Harbor International Film Festival (LAHIFF), at the Seafarin’ Reception & Press Launch, held al fresco in front of LAHIFF Epicurean Sponsor The Whale & Ale English Pub and Restaurant in historic downtown SP. A minimal number of invited guests including members of the media, festival sponsors and supporters, civic and business leaders attended the invitation only announcement.

LAHIFF takes place March 11-14 via online “virtual” presentation with access to films programmed through internet link(s) provided that will be promoted via printed cards, email and social media preceding and during festival dates. The LAHIFF commemorates the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the vintage art deco Warner Grand Theatre (WGT) - nee Warner Bros. - 478 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, historic downtown SP that has been the main venue for the LAHIFF since 2004. A facility of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) the WGT has been closed since March 2020 due to virus restrictions. There is no date for re-opening confirmed at this time.

Festival Director Stephanie Mardesich expressed thanks to supporters and directed all to review announcement press release handed out at the event and dispatched through email and at the LAHIFF website. “We are dedicating this year’s festival to the memory of the Honorable Tom LaBonge, the late great Los Angeles City Councilman from Hollywood known as ‘Mr. Los Angeles’ who was an enthusiastic supporter of the festival and loved movies.”

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“Programming is a unique presentation since the WGT is currently closed. We were never going to ‘give up’ rather had to be more creative. Ergo, as many entities have been doing, the film festival will present in a ‘virtual’ concept, continued Mardesich. “The ‘ticket’ to view film(s), except Programs A, C and E that have special links, is via Internet Movie Data Base (IMDB) with links there to pay and view the movie(s).” There will be a designated time though films can be viewed at one’s preference in the comfort of home and hearth. A general announcement will be sent with additional program notes in the souvenir program all at LAHIFF website. “We would appreciate hearing from the audience to have an idea of how many enjoyed the movies.”

The official festival poster “*Surfing The Cinematic Bridge*”, and street banner, were unveiled by Mardesich and Susan O’Sullivan, new pub owner with her husband Martin. Key photo art for the iconic bridge image, by eminent photographer and LAHIFF board member Peter Read Miller (Sports Illustrated, NFL, Associated Press, Canon spokesman), was introduced in 2009. The first five years of the LAHIFF paintings were commissioned by prominent local artists Tom Phillips, Violet Parkhurst, Muriel Olguin and Tony Podue to create their own version of the “*Cinematic Bridge*”, originated by Phillips, that has become the LAHIFF brand re-imagined each year. This year’s theme is inspired by the DocSunday closing film *The Endless Summer*. Art direction by Alison Robertson of Wellington Signs, MJM Graphics festival printer. Framing by Distinctive Edge Framing & Gallery.

“LA Harbor International Film Festival is grateful and proud to have a long and loyal list of sponsors and supporters, especially Los Angeles County (LAC) Supervisor Janice Hahn (District 4), Contributing Sponsor, who as Council member of District 15 advocated for the film festival since it was founded in 2003 and has continued as staunch supporter from her tenure in the harbor area including representative in U.S.A. Congress, and currently as she continues working vigorously for District 4 and all constituents of the LAC.”

Additional LAHIFF supporters include Associate Sponsors Marathon Petroleum, Cal Marine Fisheries, Community Fund of Boeing California; Sustaining Sponsors ILWU Foremen’s Local #94, Joseph & Lee (Sher) Mardesich Family Trust; Rancho LPG Holdings; Benefactor Sponsors Los Angeles City Council District 15, McNerney’s Mortuary; Elite Sponsor Spirit Cruises; other Epicurean Sponsors are Niko’s Pizzeria, Wienerschnitzel, San Pedro Brewing Company, Sacred Grounds, J. Trani’s Ristorante, Think Café, Rafaello’s Ristorante, Omelet & Waffle Shop, Sebastian’s Mediterranean Cuisine, La Bocca Felice, and Think Prime. Media Sponsors are PalosVerdesPulse.com, Random Lengths News and San Pedro Today Magazine. In-Kind Sponsors include: The Popcorn Man, Los Angeles Maritime Museum, New Filmmakers L.A., Hollywood Heritage, Inc. (HH), Polish Film Festival L.A, Grand Vision Foundation (GVF), 7-Eleven, fINDings Art Center; Courier Sponsor 247 Delivers; Website sponsor is Clear Steps; Volunteer support Fred Brown Recovery Services.

“Being a sponsor of the LAHIFF demonstrates community awareness and appreciation of our mission,” proffered Mardesich. “The commitment to support culture and education is vital as partnerships between business and individuals is fundamental to perpetuate the humanity, creativity, and traits we value as citizens; and its significance can never be underestimated. We also thank community collaborators for helping us to promote the program schedule.

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LAHIFF kicks off Thursday (Program A), March 11 at 10:30 am with the “Read the Book, See the Movie” (RBSM) Culmination Program. Since the WGT is closed for the first time there is a real time Webinar set up for the free education outreach program selection the classic American novel Pollyanna by Eleanor H. Porter, and the 1960 Disney film version. RBSM promotes literacy and a more thoughtful way to view a film and the most successful motivating aspect of the LAHIFF. Nearly 17,000 books have been distributed to students and community members since 2004. This year books were again provided by LAHIFF “publishing angel” Sponsor Penguin Random House Young Readers (since 2005). Participating schools are: San Pedro’s Crestwood and Leland Street Elementary, Holy Trinity Middle School, Mary Star of the Sea and San Pedro John & Muriel Olguin Magnate (SPHS) campus high schools; and Gulf Avenue Elementary (Wilmington).

Students read and discuss the book over several weeks and would customarily attend the Culmination Program at the WGT, enthused and excited as they arrive welcomed by an authentic bagpiper, and the past two years the LAC Mounted Enforcement Unit (sheriffs on horseback), then enjoy fun healthy snacks while watching the movie version of the book followed by a lively discussion. This year’s books were distributed in December 2020 along with sponsor The Popcorn Man Cheesy Popcorn in individual bags. The “Webinar” is being set up by Sandy Martin-Alvarenga, SPHS teacher and coordinator; and the film presented via Disney Plus link. “Mrs. Alverenga has supported RBSM since its inception. We are so grateful she stepped up to augment our program so that the students in their ‘home school room’ can participate,” praised Mardesich. Other RBSM sponsors include Supervisor Hahn, Mary Star of the Sea High School, and Ranch LPG Holdings.

Opening Night (Program B) Friday March 12 “*Mangia Italiano 4*” at 7 pm is the beloved *IL POSTINO*, Academy Award® recipient for Best Picture in 1996. Film is revered as sweet romantic story with memorable musical score. An homage to the “Little Italy” district in downtown SP. Before or after opening night and all programs, audience is encouraged to order and pick up food from one of the LAHIFF Epicurean Sponsors, with many Italian restaurants to choose from. (Contact information for all Epicurean Sponsors is on page six of this press release).

Saturday, March 13 (Program C) matinee begins at high noon (12pm) featuring for the ninth year NewFilmmakers L.A. (NFMLA). LAHIFF is partnering with NFMLA for this “Special Presentation” to showcase a selection of nine short films made in L.A., co-presented by City Councilman Bob Blumenfield, Film Liaisons in California Statewide, the Easter Seals Disability Film Challenge and the National Arts and Disability Center.

Saturday evening (Program D) 7 pm is the traditional Hollywood Nostalgia Tribute (HNT) featuring *Phantom Of The Opera*. “If we can’t be in the WGT, then we’re watching a movie that takes place in a grand theatre,” commented Mardesich. “The MGM 1943 version starring Claude Rains as the nefarious phantom is the perfect choice with all the drama and romance that has made the story so intriguing for generations.” The HNT reaffirms the LAHIFF mission to promote and preserve the best of Hollywood filmmaking from decades gone by. Epicurean Sponsor Whale & Ale will present a special menu to compliment the French setting of the movie.

Closing day March 14, known as “DocSunday” is devoted to non-fiction film beginning with the award winning short documentary (Program D) 1 pm POLA premiere *John Van Hamersveld’s Crazy World Ain’t It* about artist John Van Hamersveld (who grew up in PVP Lunada Bay) the artist who created the iconic poster for *The Endless Summer*

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celebrated documentary feature (Program F) 1 pm that closes the festival “Echoing the timeless theme of the ocean, the sun, and surfing like an image of infinity and sign of hope” observed Mardesich. A “Zoom” presentation with the artist and filmmaker of the short doc is under consideration, to be confirmed.

The WGT was dedicated in 1931 by Jack Warner, one of the four Warner brothers, who proclaimed “you’ll enter the palace of your dreams” to the eager audience. It is one of the three Warner Bros. theatres built in the Los Angeles metropolitan area known as “the triplets” that had uniquely distinguished architecture and décor. The WGT is considered a treasure of historic downtown SP, and the greater L.A. region. It seats 1500 and when open offers a variety of stage productions, live performances including annual San Pedro City Ballet production of “*The Nutcracker*”, graduation ceremonies, weddings, and community events throughout the year; and also setting for numerous commercial and theatrical film productions. On going restoration projects include the GVF “Save Your Seat” campaign.

“We are hopeful for the WGT to open again soon. It’s one of the last movie houses in the country, and locally, that has capability to project 35mm film. Its historical significance, and as a major venue for so many cultural and community events, is hugely important to San Pedro and the region,” commented Mardesich.

The LAHIFF offers stimulating and entertaining programming that inspires the audience and respects the integrity of the silver screen. Mardesich, an alumna of the University of Southern California film school, founded the LAHIFF in 2003 (with Jack Baric) contends “the film festival is a way to create a collective experience augmenting the cultural landscape of and promoting all San Pedro and surrounding areas have to offer residents, visitors, and tourists.”

A 501(c) 3 non-profit organization, with no paid employees, contributions are tax-deductible to the extent the law allows. Over the past 17 years LAHIFF has continued to grow and gain support. In 2013 the Coastal SP Neighborhood Council presented LAHIFF with a special Proclamation for ten years of outstanding contribution to culture and education leadership. Volunteer hours can also be accrued for school or community service.

Since the programs are being presented in “virtual” manner there is no box office ticket charge only what fees might be required at online links. Donations to the LAHIFF are welcome. Sponsorship opportunities are available at various benefit levels. Ordinarily all veterans and those currently serving in military would be admitted for free, this year honored in spirit. Other LAHIFF board members include community liaison Andrea (Rukavina) Hegybeli; east coast representative, native of San Pedro, businesswoman Nancy (McCutchan) Nottingham, and Northern California (Bay Area) rep Carla Contestable, R.N.

“For its 18<sup>th</sup> year, the LA Harbor International Film Festival is going virtual,” said Supervisor Janice Hahn. “We all will miss being together in the beautiful Warner Grand Theater, but I am grateful that this harbor area tradition has been kept alive, allowing people to enjoy classic Hollywood movies and learn from thoughtful documentaries, from the safety of their homes.”

**Media relations, more information, and “Sponsorship Opportunities”** contact: Stephanie Mardesich, Festival Director at [stephaniemardesich@yahoo.com](mailto:stephaniemardesich@yahoo.com) or telephone (310) 519-0756. See [www.laharborfilmfest.com](http://www.laharborfilmfest.com) for updates on programming; Twitter [twitter.com/laharborfilm](https://twitter.com/laharborfilm)

**List of films and links to view:**

March 11 Prog. A – 10:30 am RBSM *Pollyanna* real time Webinar presentation <http://bit.ly/rbstmpollyanna>  
March 12 Prog. B - Opening Nigh “Mangia Italiano 4” *IL POSTINO* [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110877/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110877/?ref=fn_al_tt_1)  
March 13 Prog. C - New Filmmakers L.A. [lahiff.eventive.org](http://lahiff.eventive.org) (Must pre-register at this link to view and for Q&A)  
March 13 Prog. D - HNT *Phantom Of The Opera* [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0036261/?ref=nm\\_flg\\_act\\_45](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0036261/?ref=nm_flg_act_45)  
March 14 Prog. E - DocSunday *John Van Hamersveld's Crazy World Ain't It* <https://vimeo.com/480561807> Password: CWA  
March 14 Prog. F - DocSunday *The Endless Summer* [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0060371/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0060371/?ref=fn_al_tt_1)

**More about:**

Warner Grand Theatre: [www.warnergrand.org](http://www.warnergrand.org)  
ClearSteps: [www.clearsteps.com](http://www.clearsteps.com)  
Peter Read Miller, photographer: [www.peterreadmiller.com](http://www.peterreadmiller.com)  
New Filmmakers L.A.: [www.newfilmmakersla.com](http://www.newfilmmakersla.com)  
Los Angeles Maritime Museum (LAMM): [www.lamaritimemuseum.org](http://www.lamaritimemuseum.org)  
Grand Vision Foundation (GVF): [www.grandvision.org](http://www.grandvision.org)  
Little Italy: [www.lilaa.org](http://www.lilaa.org)  
Hollywood Heritage (HH): [www.hollywoodheritage.org](http://www.hollywoodheritage.org)  
Wellington Signs: [www.wellingtonsigns.com](http://www.wellingtonsigns.com)  
Fred Brown Recovery Services: [www.fredbrownrecovery.org](http://www.fredbrownrecovery.org)

**Complete LAHIFF Sponsor List**

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Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn, District 4

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Hollywood Heritage, Inc. ~ Polish Film Festival L.A. ~ San Pedro Art Association ~ Grand Vision Foundation ~ fINDings Art Center

**Courier Sponsor** ~ 247 Delivers

**Website Sponsor** ~ ClearSteps (Alyssa Marks, Designer/Manager)

**Epicurean Sponsors (websites /contact tel. listed for “outdoor dining/ordering to go/ curbside pick up”)**

Niko's Pizzeria [www.nikospizzeria.com](http://www.nikospizzeria.com)

Wienerschnitzel [www.wienerschnitzel.com/location/59-north-gaffey-west-sepulveda-san-pedro-230-north-gaffey-san-pedro-ca-90731/](http://www.wienerschnitzel.com/location/59-north-gaffey-west-sepulveda-san-pedro-230-north-gaffey-san-pedro-ca-90731/)

San Pedro Brewing Company <https://sanpedrobrewing.com/>

Sacred Grounds (telephone) (310)514-0800

The Whale & Ale <https://www.thewhaleandale.com/>

J. Trani's Ristorante <https://www.sacredgrounds.coffee/>

Raffaello's Ristorante <https://www.raffaelloristorante.com/>

The Sandwich Saloon <https://www.sandwichsaloon.com/>

Think Café <https://www.thinkcafesanpedro.com/>

Omelet & Waffle Shop (telephone) (310) 831-3277

Big Nick's <https://bignickspizza.com/>

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Think Prime (telephone) (310) 221-0415