

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 15th Voyage March 15-18
Warner Grand Theatre – historic downtown San Pedro – the Port of Los Angeles
Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn Unveils Official Poster & Banner

Education Outreach Program “Read the Book, See the Movie” 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea by Jules Verne
Opening Night POLA Premiere Celebrates “15: A Quinceanera Story” From HBO
New Filmmakers LA (NFMLA) - On Location: The Los Angeles Video Project Returns for 7th Year
Hollywood Nostalgia Tribute Bye Bye Birdie in 35mm
DocSunday™ POLA Premieres The Alter Of Light & Finding Kukan
Free Admission to all programs for U.S. Veterans & Those Currently Serving In Military

February 15, 2018 - San Pedro (SP), California. - the Port of Los Angeles (POLA) - Programming and sponsors were announced for the 15th annual LA Harbor International Film Festival (LAHIFF) at the Seafarin’ Reception and Press Launch, held at and hosted by festival Elite Sponsor Ports O’ Call Restaurant. Members of the media, festival sponsors, civic and business leaders were among guests at the invitation only event. The four day LAHIFF, a non-competitive, non-juried film festival with movies selected by research or referral and invited to be programmed, takes place March 15-18 at the vintage art deco Warner Grand Theatre (WGT), 478 W. 6th Street, historic downtown SP - POLA. The WGT is a facility of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA).

LAHIFF founder Stephanie Mardesich welcomed guests, introduced elected officials or their representatives, festival sponsors and special guests, then announced final programming (subject to change without notice), commenting, “The LA Harbor International Film Festival is celebrating a milestone 15th anniversary and it’s with fond memories being here at Ports O’Call where the idea was inspired in the summer of 2003. All but one ‘Seafarin’ Reception & Press Launch’ has been here. We are proud and appreciative to have a long and loyal list of sponsors, especially Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn (District 4) who as Council member of District 15 advocated for the film festival immediately (from day one better?, and has been a staunch supporter from the harbor to her Congress and Washington , D.C. and now back .working vigorously for all constituents of the County of Los Angeles.”

Being a sponsor of the LAHIFF demonstrates a sense of community awareness and support of the LAHIFF mission. “With new continuing and new sponsors this year the commitment to culture and education is strong. Partnerships between business and individuals in supporting cultural events is fundamental to perpetuate the humanity, creativity, and traits we value as citizens, and its significance can never be underestimated,” Mardesich concluded.

After the program announcement Supervisor Hahn addressed the crowd prior to unveiling the official poster and street banner *The Cinematic Bridge. Puts On A Happy Face*”

“Since the LA Harbor International Film Festival was founded, the programming has been exciting and provocative year after year. The focus on literacy with “Read the Book, See the Movie” inspires a lifetime of reading pleasure for the students and community. This year’s lineup continues the exceptional tradition of the past 14 years,” stated Supervisor Hahn

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Key photograph for the iconic poster image, by eminent photographer and LAHIFF board member Peter Read Miller (Sports Illustrated, NFL, Associated Press), was introduced in 2009. The first five years of the festival 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*” that has become the LAHIFF brand and re-imagined each year. This year’s theme is inspired by the Hollywood Nostalgia Tribute (HNT) film *Bye Bye Birdie* (art direction by Seann Curry, and banner production Wellington Signs).

LAHIFF begins March 15 with the free education outreach program “Read the book, See the Movie” (RBSM) Culmination Program. Thousands of books have been distributed to students and community members since 2004. This year’s selection is 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea by revered French author Jules Verne. Three different editions of the classic tome were provided by sponsor Random House – Penguin Publishing.

After reading the book students attend the Culmination Program arriving at the WGT greeted by an authentic bagpiper (Chrissy Orcholski). They enjoy fun healthy snacks, then watch the film version of the book followed by a lively discussion. This year’s movie is the Walt Disney Productions 1954 adaptation starring James Mason as the intriguing Captain Nemo leading a stellar cast including Kirk Douglas in a rare singing role. The 35mm print is provided by Disney, who rarely allow films off the lot. A total of 900 books were distributed to students from harbor area Mary Star of the Sea, San Pedro John & Muriel Olguin Magnate, Port of Los Angeles Charter and Peninsula High Schools; and Leland Street, Holy Trinity, Christ Lutheran, Mary Star, and Gulf Avenue Elementary Schools. Dr. Robert Ballard renowned marine archeologist who acknowledges the book is a personal favorite and inspiration, was invited to speak to the students, however his schedule precluded who is a key advisor to AltaSea (proposed marine science campus in SP in formative phase) and will curate an exhibit aboard Battleship Iowa later in the spring. Jenny Krusoe, executive director of AltaSea will be present to show a brief video that included Dr. Ballard and speak to the students about its purpose, inspiring future careers and community service.

RBSM sponsors include Contributing Sponsor Supervisor Hahn with refreshments provided by The Popcorn Man, 7-Eleven, Mary Star of the Sea High School; and “Juice Sponsor” Arlene (Dickey) and Myron Lockrem.

Opening Night Friday evening March 16 features the POLA premiere of the HBO documentary *15: A Quinceanera Story* (in four parts) that reveal four unique stories about the “rite of passage” for teenage Latina girls and corresponds to the LAHIFF 15th anniversary. Sponsor for the program is Los Angeles City Councilman Joe Buscaino, District 15. “It’s a great honor for the LAHIFF that HBO has granted rights to premiere the excellent films that we believe will appeal to the extensive Hispanic population in the harbor cities and to all who are intrigued by the cultural experience. With the movie, the CD 15 support and our 15th anniversary It takes ‘15’ to the third power,” remarked Mardesich.

Saturday March 17 begins at high noon with, for the sixth year, *New Filmmakers LA “On Location Program” Showcase of Short Films* (26 films, one to five minutes in length) made by finalists of the community engagement program sponsored by the City of Los Angeles, KTLA, Sunset Las Palmas Studios, and L.A. and City Council members Bob Blumenfield and Mitch O’Farrell

Founded in 2007 New Filmmakers L.A. (NFMLA) has established itself as a significant advocate for independent cinema with over 20,000 constituents in the Los Angeles community, screening over 750 films from about 50 countries annually.

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In addition to fostering the advancement of new filmmakers and its members NFMLA's objective is to promote the economic, educational, social, and cultural advancement of filmmaking, arts and culture in the community. LAHIFF has invited the Boys & Girls Clubs of San Pedro and Wilmington to attend as guests to meet the filmmakers and take inspiration from the films to increase their knowledge of and inspire their interest in filmmaking.

At 7 p.m. the Hollywood Nostalgia Tribute (HNT) features the screen adaptation of the hit Broadway musical *Bye Bye Birdie* (Columbia Pictures, 1963 112 min;) in 35 mm. Directed by the acclaimed George Sidney the film was nominated for two Academy Award®, Golden Globe and Laurel Awards. The picture is homage to the time of innocence at the prelude to the Viet Nam war with the story inspired by Elvis Presley being drafted into the U.S. Army. Starring Dick Van Dyke (reprising his Tony Award winning role as "Albert"), Janet Leigh, Ann-Margret and teen idol Bobby Rydell with stellar support cast. Prior to the curtain rising for the movie there will be a brief performance by the award winning San Pedro High School band (SPHS) "Jazz Ensemble." All members of the SPHS band and the Richard Henry Dana Middle School (RHDMS) band and their families are invited to attend as guests of the LAHIFF. "Last year the RSCMS marching band performed and truly 'raised the roof' of the WGT. We're excited to include the award winning SPHS band members this year and to entertain and for the students to enjoy the wonderful movie," stated Mardesich.

Among the memorable tunes from the score is "Put On A Happy Face" that inspired the title for the Red Carpet Gala Red Carpet reception taking place from 5-6:45 p.m. in the mezzanine lobby of the WGT. Along with Libation Sponsor SVEDKA Vodka "BBB -tinis" service will include wine, Port Town Beer from San Pedro Brewing Company (SPBC) and non-alcoholic beverage. Guests will enjoy tray passed appetizers and Americana buffet catered by Ports O'Call Restaurant and Epicurean Sponsors Wienerschnitzel, San Pedro Fish Market, Niko's Pizzeria, Sandwich Saloon and SPBC.. Other sponsors include the Los Angeles Maritime Museum (LAMM) , The Popcorn Man and 7-Eleven.

Tickets for the HNT Gala are \$65 before February 28th, \$75 after that date or at the door space permitting. Also included in the price are film screening, souvenir program and party bag. Guests are encouraged to wear vintage or cocktail attire. General admission for film program only is \$10; no discounts.

"When we hear the audience commenting as they exit 'that was terrific, why they don't make movies like that anymore?' it confirms our mission to promote and preserve the best of classic Hollywood filmmaking. It's the greatest compliment and tribute after seeing a film as intended, on the big screen, in the setting of a true 'movie palace' the WGT," added Mardesich.

Closing day March 18, known as "**DocSunday**" - devoted to non-fiction film - is presented by Culture & Education Sponsor Andeavor Foundation. Programs are devoted to documentary genre and films are POLA premieres. With the theme of "social justice" the opening program at 1 p.m. is Abigail Disney's *The Armor Of Light* (co-directed with Kathleen Hughes). The film played at the Grace Cathedral Social Justice Film Festival (San Francisco, CA) in 2017 among other significant festivals and has numerous nominations and awards. Local faith based communities, philanthropic organizations, schools and all people of conscience are invited to attend the free screening (donations accepted) in an effort to open up communication about a topic of controversy and concern.

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DocSunday closing program at 4 p.m. *Finding Kukan* investigates the story of Chinese Hawaii-born Li Ling-Ai, the un-credited female producer of *KUKAN* the 1941 Academy Award® winning color documentary about World War II China that has been lost for decades. Award nominated and programmed in many prestigious film festivals the movie is adroitly directed by Robin Lung and took over eight years to produce. Lung is winging from her home base in Honolulu, Hawaii to attend the LAHIFF, sponsored in part by new “Hospitality Sponsor” Lux Marketing, Inc. She will participate in “Conversation and Q&A” after the screening with members of the film crew invited.

Additional LAHIFF sponsors include Associate Sponsors Tri-Marine International, and Community Fund of Boeing California; Sustaining Sponsors ILWU Foremen’s Local #94; Valero Energy Foundation, Council District 15, and J & L Mardesich Family Trust. Benefactor Sponsors are BNSF Railway, DCA, and McNerney’s Mortuary.

More “Epicurean Sponsors” include Sacred Grounds, J. Trani’s Ristorante, Think Café, Sonny’s Bistro, Think Prime, and Big Nick’s. Accommodations Sponsor is DoubleTree by Hilton, San Pedro - Cabrillo Marina. Print and Art Sponsors are Alchemy, MJM Graphics, and Distinctive Edge Framing & Gallery. Official t-shirts produced by Boca Activewear. Media Sponsor is San Pedro Today Magazine. Promotion and In-Kind Sponsors include: Battleship IOWA, New Filmmakers L.A., AltaSea, Visit San Pedro, Golden State Pops Orchestra, San Pedro Chamber of Commerce, Grand Vision Foundation, The Arcade Building, Hollywood Heritage, Inc., Polish Film Festival L.A., San Pedro Art Association, Breathe L.A., and (new volunteer organization) Fred Brown Recovery Services. Security Sponsor is Black Knight Patrol.

The new website sponsor is [ClearSteps](#). “Toward the end of 2017 we were faced with changing sponsorship of the site. Kudos to Alysa Marks, designer/manager, linking the LAHIFF to us to ‘ClearSteps’ the site has a dynamic new look. We are grateful for her brilliant effort since 2004 that presents current programming information and archives from past 15 years,” stated Mardesich. The website now includes *Cinema Stephanie* “blogette” bi-monthly installments created and penned by Mardesich after she attended the London Film Festival in October 2017, for the sixth time as accredited journalist.

The WGT, dedicated in 1931 by Jack Warner who declared “you’ll enter the palace of your dreams”, is one of the three Warner Brothers Theatres built in the Los Angeles metropolitan area known as “the triplets.” Considered a treasure of historic downtown SP, and the greater L.A. region, the WGT seats 1500 featuring a variety of stage productions, live performances including the Golden State Pops Orchestra concerts and annual San Pedro City Ballet production of “*The Nutcracker*”, graduation ceremonies, weddings, and community events throughout the year; also scheduled are numerous film and commercial productions. With 35mm film projection capability the WGT is one of the only venues in the Los Angeles region to view films in the classic tradition. On going restoration projects include the GVF “Save Your Seat” campaign.

The LAHIFF offers stimulating and entertaining programming that inspires the audience and respects the integrity of the silver screen. “What the Warner Grand Theatre represents historically with regard to film appreciation and preservation is exceptionally important for the art form, and San Pedro as a destination location in film production, as film continue to be a valued source of entertainment and erudition appealing to every segment of society; a source of joy or catharsis,” remarked Mardesich. “The LAHIFF honors tradition of legendary Hollywood with a view to the current cinema. The changing technology makes it an even more precious experience to view film on screen, viz. in 35mm. The LAHIFF is committed to present films on the ‘big screen’ as they were originally intended as often as possible.”

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Mardesich, an alumna of the University of Southern California film school, founded the LAHIFF in 2003. The LAHIFF is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization with no paid employees. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent the law allows. Sponsorship opportunities are available at various benefit levels. Over the past 15 years the LAHIFF has continued to grow and gain support. In 2013 the Coastal San Pedro Neighborhood Council presented Mardesich and the LAHIFF with a Proclamation for ten years of outstanding contribution to culture, education, and leadership. Service hours can be accrued for school or community service. Other LAHIFF board members include community liaison Andrea (Rukavina) Hegybeli; east coast representative, native of San Pedro, businesswoman Nancy (McCutchan) Nottingham; and Los Angeles County Board of Education member James Cross, M.A.

General admission for festival programs is \$10; \$8 with discount for affiliations (LAMM, GVF, HH) seniors and students, except the HNT. **Free Admission for U.S. Veterans and those currently serving in military forces on first come first seated basis.** Film program tickets only on sale from February 16 online www.brownpapertickets.com, or (800)838-3006; and at the box office (cash only) during the festival dates one hour before program times. "There is a tacit understanding that so long as there are seats available no one will be turned away because they cannot afford a ticket. We are the Statue of Liberty of film festivals. Though we have had a few SRO screenings over the years with 1500 seats in the WGT it is likely there will always be a place for a new audience member. We'll even provide popcorn." commented Mardesich.

As Supervisor Hahn concluded: "The LA Harbor International Film Festival is a valued cultural event for all ages; educational, informing, entertaining, and celebrating the cinematic arts. We encourage residents, visitors, and tourists in and around Los Angeles County and beyond to enjoy the diversity of programs and also discover and appreciate everything San Pedro and the harbor area has to offer."

For media relations, more information, and "Sponsorship Opportunities Guidelines"

Contact: Stephanie Mardesich, Festival Director at stephaniemardesich@yahoo.com or telephone (310) 519-0756.

See www.laharborfilmfest.com for updates on programming; Twitter twitter.com/laharborfilm and short link for tickets: <https://bpt.me/3338779>

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Warner Grand Theatre: www.warnergrand.org
ClearSteps: www.clearsteps.com
Peter Read Miller, photographer: www.peterreadmiller.com
Los Angeles Maritime Museum (LAMM): www.lamaritimemuseum.org
New Filmmakers L.A.: www.NFMLA.org
Battleship Iowa: www.pacificbattleship.com
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