

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 IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“It’s a wrap!”

LA Harbor International Film Festival™ Concludes With Record Turn-out

***The Unsinkable Molly Brown* Receives Ovation**

“Read the Book, See the Movie” (RBSM) Disney’s *Swiss Family Robinson*

Draws 900 Students to Warner Grand Theatre

April 28, 2008 - San Pedro, California, The Port of Los Angeles - The Warner Grand Theatre (WGT) in historic downtown San Pedro (SP) - The Port of Los Angeles (POLA) - was the centerpiece for the 5th annual LA Harbor International Film Festival (LAHIFF) April 24-27.

On Thursday April 25, LAHIFF kicked off the four day event with the education outreach “Read the Book, See the Movie” (RBSM) Culmination Program featuring The Swiss Family Robinson written in 1812 by Joann Wyss, and the Disney 1960 classic film version. The 93 year old director Ken Annakin attended the morning program along with starring actor James MacArthur (who played eldest son Fritz) and participated in a Q&A after the film.

Over 900 students from harbor area schools - elementary to adult education level - attended the RBSM that promotes literacy and a more thoughtful way to view a film. The free program is sponsored by L.A. County Supervisor Don Knabe, and publisher Penguin Classics who donated a record number of 910 paperback books; Walt Disney Studios provided the film print of the landmark movie. Refreshments were sponsored by Minute Maid, division of Coca Cola North America, Robert’s American Gourmet “Pirate’s Booty”, and Mary Star of the Sea High School. In-kind sponsors included the Los Angeles Maritime Museum (LAMM) and Williams Book Store in downtown San Pedro who help distribute books to the community readers who also attend.

Friday April 26 was an experiment in programming for “A Short Opening Night”, honoring Earth Day and the Good Green Life, with a program of six internationally produced short films from Belgium, Canada (2007 Oscar® nominated *Madame. Tutli Putli*), Poland, the United Kingdom (also representing Greek Cypress) and U.S.A. Opening night sponsors included Ponte Vista At San Pedro (PVAP), Canadian Consulate General of Los Angeles, National Film Board of Canada, Polish Film Festival Los Angeles, American Hellenic Council, FINDings Art Center, Clean San Pedro, Papadakis Taverna, and The Whale & Ale.

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Filmmaker Vicki Psarias, director of *Broken* (UK; 2007; 18 min.) flew in from London, England for the LAHIFF and held a Q&A after her film screened on opening night.

Saturday April 26 began with an old-fashioned matinee at noon with a cartoon and reprise screening of *Swiss Family Robinson*. Free popcorn was sponsored by Arlene and Myron Lockrem.

Highlight Saturday evening was the Hollywood Nostalgia Tribute (HNT) featuring *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, starring Oscar® and Golden Globe nominated Debbie Reynolds honored at the 7 p.m. screening. Reynolds, who considers “Molly Brown” her favorite movie, was unable to attend due to being on the road with her night club act, however Margaret Tobin “Molly” Brown (played by local actress Judi Haase) walked the Red Carpet to the Gala Reception at the Arcade Building and regaled those attending with her personal account of having survived the sinking of the Titanic two weeks earlier on April 12.

The Gala, sponsored in part by Star Fisheries, preceded the screening featuring the “Belly Up to the Bar” festival Elite Spirit Sponsor Blue Ice - great American vodka - martinis and cosmopolitans, tray passed appetizers and the “Tribute to the Titanic” buffet supper catered by Critic’s Choice; with entertainment by chanteuse Rosie Brand. \$65 tariff included a party bag and souvenir program. Film received huge ovation from the exuberant audience.

Final day April 27 “DocSunday” was sponsored by sole Contributing Sponsor ILWU, Locals 13, 63 and 94; 15th District Councilwoman Janice Hahn; and the International Documentary Association (IDA). Film line up began with *Eye of The Storm* (U.S.A.) followed by *In Search of A Legend* (Poland); and *Shipbreaker* (Canada). Closing film was POLA premiere of *Made In L.A.* (U.S.A.), the story of the struggle and triumph of L.A. garment workers in their battle with Forever 21 clothing manufacturer. Q&A session was held afterward with director/producer Almudena Carracedo and Joann Lo, Esq., who was featured in the film.

Advisor for DocSunday was Dr. Betsy McLane, Ph.D., film scholar, author ([A New History of Documentary Film](#)); Director Emerita of the IDA and LAHIFF board member, who received a certificate of commendation from Councilwoman Hahn, as did the ILWU and filmmakers whose work was shown on DocSunday.

Key art “The Unsinkable Cinematic Bridge” for the official LAHIFF poster, painted by third generation San Pedran Anthony (Tony) Podue, that was unveiled at LAHIFF press launch in March has been up for silent auction bidding and on view at POLA- Harbor Department lobby, Crowne Plaza Hotel, and the LAMM. Podue, who is a second generation San Pedran of Croatian descent, is best known for his penetrating vistas that include many bridge scenes and is one of the four artists featured in [San Pedro - Faces and Places](#) pictorial table top book.

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Additional sponsors for the LAHIFF include L.A. Dept. of Cultural Affairs; and Sustaining Sponsors: Cullen Maritime Services, Inc., Grand Vision Foundation (GVF), Frank Broidy, Charles Gasper, and Gary Dwight.

The new Epicurean Sponsor category includes: Juanita’s Foods, Niko’s Pizzeria, Papadakis Taverna, Ports O’Call Restaurant, San Pedro Brewing Company, The Whale and Ale, San Pedro Fish Market, and STARBUCKS. Accommodation Sponsor is the Crowne Plaza Los Angeles Harbor Hotel.

Other in-kind sponsors include Penguin Books, Helen Grace Chocolates, Cinema Grand, Beacon House, the Arcade Building, Distinctive Edge Gallery & Framing, Sacred Grounds, L.A. Maritime Institute (TOPsail Youth Program).

Print sponsor is National Promotions & Advertising, Inc. (NPA) of West Los Angeles, for poster and design. Official festival printer is Instant Print King in SP.

Media Sponsors are Press-Telegram’s *San Pedro Magazine*, and Time Warner Cable. Website sponsor is Live Office located in Torrance, CA.

Motivated to found the festival in 2003, Festival Director Stephanie Mardesich (recently named a “Pioneer Woman” for 2008 by the L.A. Commission on the Status of Women”) believes “There is a movie that appeals to every sector of society. Enjoying and celebrating the art of cinema in the atmosphere of one of the treasures of San Pedro, the Warner Grand Theatre, is part of our goal to educate, enlighten and entertain audiences of all ages and backgrounds – as we ‘create a cinematic bridge between the people of the region and the people of the world’.”

Since its inception has rapidly gained momentum and support from civic and business leaders throughout the entire metropolitan area, including Los Angeles Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa whose testimonial appears in the LAHIFF souvenir program:

“As the entertainment capital of the world, Los Angeles is pleased to host this annual film festival in San Pedro – the Port of Los Angeles – and celebrate the art of cinema. The diverse ethnic and cultural influences and the commerce of the harbor communities reflect the mission of the LAHIFF to ‘create a cinematic bridge between the people of the region and the people of the world’ and the City embraces those filmmakers who answer the call to inspire us through their work on the big screen.”

The iconoclastic WGT is a vintage 1931 “movie palace” and one of the three only original Warner Brothers theatres built in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. It has had a major renovation recently including the “Save Your Seat” campaign by the GVF support group dedicated to preserving and restoring the WGT to its original glory.

Besides McLane other LAHIFF board members include real estate broker Linda D’Ambrosi; Sports Illustrated photographer Peter Read Miller; community liaison Andrea Hegybeli; and east coast representative businesswoman Nancy McCutchan Nottingham. Festival co-founder is Jack Baric.

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The LAHIFF, is a non competitive, non-juried showcase for film and video with programming by referral and invitation; and a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, with contributions tax-deductible to the extent the law allows. The mission is to “reflect the harbor and all that it embraces – shipping and commerce, fishing, sailing, water sports, sea life and the area’s rich ethnic and cultural influences – *to create a cinematic bridge between the people of the region and the people of the world.*

Sponsorship opportunities are available at a variety of benefit levels, from Presenting Sponsor to Friend of the Festival. There is no paid staff, organization is volunteer driven and service hours can be earned for school or community service. Volunteer coordinator is Joe Caccavalla (contact information below).

“Now in its fifth year, we all know that the LA Harbor International Film Festival is part of the Harbor area that is here to stay. The commitment of the local community is apparent in this year’s sponsorships by our working men and women on the docks, as well as local business and national brands represented by Juanita’s Foods (based in Wilmington) and Starbucks,” stated Councilwoman Hahn.

“We are proud of the film festival and pleased to welcome visitors from all over Los Angeles and beyond for this annual event.”

The sixth annual LAHIFF is on calendar at the WGT for April 23-26, 2009. Sponsorship opportunities are available.

For media relations, more information, and “Sponsorship Opportunities” guidelines
contact Stephanie Mardesich, Festival Director

at stephaniemardesich@yahoo.com or telephone (310) 519-0756

Film links on LAHIFF website www.laharborfilmfest.com

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More about.....

LAHIFF: www.laharborfilmfest.com

Warner Grand Theatre: www.warnergrand.org

Port of Los Angeles (POLA): www.portofla.org

Grand Vision Foundation (GVF): www.grandvision.org

International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU): www.ILWU.org

International Documentary Association (IDA): www.documentary.org

Los Angeles Maritime Museum (LAMM): www.lamaritimemuseum.org

L.A. Maritime Institute (LAMI): www.lamitopsail.org

Dr. Betsy McLane, Ph.D. (A New History of Documentary Film): www.documentarydiva.com

Polish Film Festival Los Angeles (PFFLA): www.polishfilmfestivalLA.org

Anthony Podue, artist: www.poduestudio.com

To Volunteer:

Contact coordinator Joe Caccavalla: cjoeca@aol.com or telephone (310) 831-0168