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Lafayette Filmmaker's Directorial Debut a Winner

By Michael Sakoda



Phillip Mayall and his family on the red carpet at the Snake Alley Film Festival in Iowa. Photos provided

"8 Guns Over a Dead Girl," the directorial debut of Lafayette filmmaker Phillip Mayall, took home the award for Best Action Film at the Snake Alley Film Festival in Iowa. "I was genuinely stunned," said Mayall about the win. "I wish I had remembered to thank Luis Villalon and Rachel Steinberg and everyone who made it a success, but I was so shocked that all I could really say was, 'This is an honor, thank you.'"

Mayall was born and raised in Urbana-Champaign, Ill., and that's where his desire to work in film was sparked. "I've had this problem with theater since high school," he said. "I was doing plays there ... did plays at the University (of Illinois) during the summer. We had this community theater called The Depot ... but then I laid off for about 20 years."

In the interim, Mayall worked for the U.S. Postal Service for 28 years, but the itch was always there. "I think it was when *Beverly Hills Cop III* came along. I was one of the extras and that kind of refueled my interest in it, and I started working as an extra," he said.

"I was in a lot of Robin Williams films and 'Nash Bridges'... did a bunch of commercials for Bay Cable Advertising," he said. "I did some voice over stuff - 'Star Ocean: The Second Story' - and when the movie 'The Game' came out, I worked in that enough to become a SAG member."

In 1999, Mayall took a second job with American Airlines, and took a step back from his true passion. "There was an overlap there that limited my creative window of opportunity," he said.

But he always found a way. "I did the 48 Hour Film Festival a couple of times," he said. "Then I said one of those foolish things people say, 'If we can do this in 48 hours, imagine what we can do in three weeks.'"

Before his retirement in 2011, Mayall read a collection of short stories, and one tickled his fancy. "I read, '8 Guns Over a Dead Girl,' and thought, 'This would be a great movie,'" he said. "So I emailed the author, Patty Templeton, and sent her a script, and it went from there."

Mayall, his cinematographer, Luis Villalon, and producer, Rachel Steinberg, shot the movie in six days, then Mayall embarked on the post-production. "It took about two and a half years in post-production," he laughed. "Next time, I'm going to say, 'If we can do this in three years...'"

The film also marked the beginning of PhilMFilm, Mayall's production company. "It's Film-Film, or Phil M. Film," he said. "It's kind of a play on both." PhilMFilm was involved with Rebuilding Together San Francisco in April 2012. "They do a lot of good work for people who really need it ... sort of like Habitat for Humanity," he said. "They help doing work for senior centers and schools, so we went and shot for four days and made something for them to put on their website."

Over the past 25 years Mayall and his wife, Sharon, also retired from the Postal Service, have lived, raised their three children, Sy, Zach and Katy, and retired in Lafayette. "My wife really liked the schools here; that was what drew us to Lafayette," said Mayall.

"We did all those growing up things: Sy was a pitcher, and I was one of those parents that was always on the edge of being asked to leave; Katy played water polo; and all three of my children did the summer basketball camp at Saint Mary's."

His children are grown now - Sy lives in Dallas and works for American Airlines, Zach is an auto mechanic in Maui, and Katy is an attorney in New York City - and Mayall and his wife are enjoying their retirement, but as always, he has a creative project in mind.

Mayall has a script, "That Night," the story of a 20-year high school reunion and the culmination of a 20-year grudge after a bad break up.

"I have had and am having a good life," Mayall wrote. "It's not been that much different than the way I imagined it ... that night."



Lafayette filmmaker Phillip Mayall accepts award for Best Action Film.

Lamorinda Slow Food Event at Moraga Herb Farm

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"Making food takes time," says Lucas-Alcalay, "and it's turned into a burden for a lot of us. But it can be fun, and when you grow your own food you get more inspired to cook it, and it tastes so much better than what you find at the store."

Lucas-Alcalay says that she involves her children and that as they taste what is being prepared their palates develop. "That's why I like herbs so much," she says. "You can take the same roasted chicken, but if you switch the herbs you have a completely different dish, it's not compli-

cated, but it takes time."

The mother of two school age children comes from a family of growers; her parents are vinticulturists in the Santa Barbara area. She's chosen to grow in her own garden to be able to integrate family and business life. As far as distribution is concerned, she sells at events, on the web (hollieshomegrown.com) and in local farmers' markets, meaning that Lucas-Alcalay gets up very early during summer months to harvest and sell herbs of the day at the market.

Besides teas, dried aromatics and

flowers, she makes herbal culinary salts, herb infused olive oil, herbal bath salts, healing salves, lip balm and candles. She is working on a new concept to pair her family wine and herbs.

The Slow Food event will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. July 20 at Hollie's Homegrown in Moraga and is a potluck. Participants are asked to bring one dish for six to seven people featuring one of their favorite herbs. The cost of the event is \$10; children under 10 are free. To register, visit slowfoodeastbay.com.

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