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California Independent Film Festival

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This new movie is an explosion of colors, sensuality and violence, describing the rise of a female gangster. It is a powerful survival movie, with strong imagery. Not for everyone, but definitely edgy.

In the "sweet" department, CAIFF will feature two French movies. One from France, the unique romantic comedy "Love at First Fight" that won the Art Cinema Award at the 2014 Cannes International Film Festival and Best First Film at the César Awards (French version of the Oscars); and from Québec the delightful "Henri Henri," part "Amélie" and part "Forrest Gump."

"Henri Henri" could also be included in the "movies for the whole family" category, with the excellent Australian movie "Paper Planes," and "Gibby," a local film with its world premiere at the Orinda Theatre scheduled at 7 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 13.

"I already liked the movie when I realized that the producer was from Orinda," says Zemrak. "It has been shot entirely in the East Bay, at a high school in Martinez and a gym in San Ramon. The director is from San Francisco." A tween-delight, "Gibby" incorporates all the must-haves of the genre, with the cohort of mean girls, sports rivalry, plus, as an exogenous ingredient to stir it up and make it unique, a little devil of a capuchin

monkey. "That monkey, Crystal, is probably the biggest star in the movie," adds Zemrak. "It starred in 'Night at the Museum,' 'Hangover 2' and many others." Some of the youngsters are also rising Disney stars such as Peyton Meyer. Other feature films include the psychological thriller "Elephant Song."

The festival also features The Iron Filmmaker Competition, where participants who receive a subject have 24 hours to make a movie. The winners will be shown at 11 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 11 at the Rheem Theatre. And new this year is the Film Scoring Competition. "This group of inspiring composers each scored the same short film with their own original music score," explains Zemrak. "This was our first time, and we received more than 150 submissions." The best submissions will be aired at 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 12 in Orinda.

Shorts and documentaries have also been very well received in Lamorinda. "'Eleven' was directed by a true CAIFF alumni," says Zemrak. "George Retelas was an Iron Filmmaker contestant, then he had a short in our festival a couple of years ago and now he comes back with a full-length documentary." Retelas researched and found many of the men his grandfather served with in his torpedo squad on the Hornet 11 during

WWII. Using actual footage and interviews, Retelas reconstructed their story.

Lafayette native Peter Kepler, who earned a performing arts degree at Saint Mary's College, will be co-starring in the movie "Writer's Cramp," which will be shown at 9 p.m. Friday, Sept. 11 at the Rheem Theatre. The movie recently won Best Feature Film at the Fort Meyers Beach Film Festival and Best Original Screenplay at the Manhattan Film Festival. Filmed entirely in San Francisco and on the Peninsula, "Writer's Cramp" also features Lamorinda actress Annie Scott Rogers, who plays Kepler's mother in the film.

And the festival would not be the same without the shorts, where directors give their all to show what they are about and to prove their mastery. If going to an independent film festival is about opening one's mind and plunging into an adventure, going to see a series of shorts is a perfect choice.

All tickets and many trailers are available on the CAIFF website at caiff.org. The bests of the festival will be played again on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, Sept. 14-16 at the Rheem Theatre. These winners will be announced on the CAIFF website Sept. 10.

Downtown Congestion

Steering committee members recently opted for the public outreach strategy to include two surveys: the first dealing with priorities and issues – to be completed this fall after a kick-off meeting by the city council – and a second survey toward the end of the process to consider ideas and final plans. In addition, the consultants propose two to three joint city council-circulation committee meetings, two to three focused stakeholder outreach events and, of

course, more steering committee meetings.

Consultants are wisely gearing the public outreach strategy to include making effective use of technology and social media to garner a robust response from a wide spectrum of participants.

The final step of the congestion study is to look at preferred solutions and implementation strategies that focus on four goal areas: downtown, BART, Highway 24, and schools.

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The multi-million dollar question is how to pay for actual execution of congestion relief strategies.

Lafayette residents might actually see their tax dollars at work. The Contra Costa Transit Authority is taking up a potential new sales tax measure on the 2016 ballot, according to Coe. "If voters approve such a measure, there could be some funding allocated back to Lafayette to fund, at least in part, projects that result from this congestion study."

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