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East Bay Jewish International Film Festival opens in Orinda March 1

By Sophie Braccini

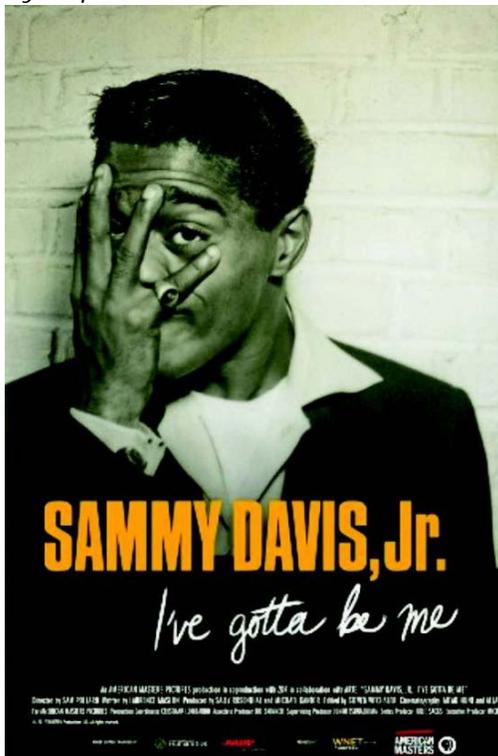


Photo provided

For 23 years the East Bay Jewish International Film Festival has brought American and international movies of higher and higher quality to the East Bay, all with ties to either Jewish culture or to the fight against intolerance. The EBIJFF's films are moving, funny, educational or inspirational - a cultural treat not to be missed from March 1-12.

This year, opening night will be held at the Orinda Theatre with the presentation of the documentary "Sammy Davis, Jr: I've Gotta Be Me" at 7:30 p.m. March 1. The film paints a portrait of the multi-faceted life of this American 20th century iconic entertainer who started life on stage at age 3, never went to school, climbed all ladders of the social hierarchy, transcended the racial prejudices of the time, and walked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., but also supported Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War. Davis was an extraordinary showman with unique talents who craved recognition and authenticity at the same time.

The film, directed by Sam Pollard, is the first movie centered on Davis. It showcases a large number of stars who share their memories of Davis, including actress Kim Novak, who was Davis' lover at a time when relationships between people with different skin color was not allowed in some states.

The movie is also a testimony to this troubled time in American history, with the civil rights movement, still tremendous racist backlash, and the birth of the hippie

generation. The film will take older folks down memory lane, and teach younger ones some history, especially the mistreatment faced by so many because of variable melanin content in the skin.

The other Jewish film festival movies will be shown at the Century 16 Theatres in Pleasant Hill.

Orinda resident Efi Lubliner, who created the International Film Showcase in Orinda, and Jo Alice Canterbury are both on the board of EBIJFF. Canterbury, who is part of the selection committee for the festival, says that she reviews about 100 films each year and she is delighted with this year's lineup, with great movies from Australia, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, South Africa, the UK, and the United States. Tickets for the Orinda showing are \$13 and are available online at eastbayjewishfilm.org.

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