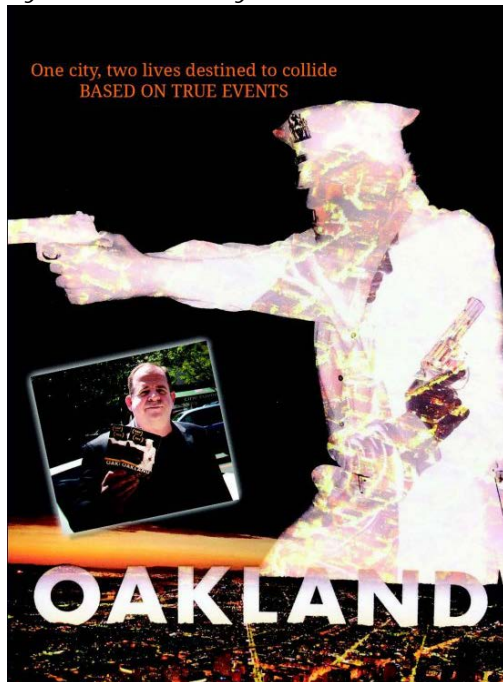


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## Film Festivals offer late summer entertainment in Orinda

By Sora O'Doherty



The screenplay, "Oakland," will be read on Aug. 24.

Vegas in seven days in a suit. Following the film, there will be an Opening Night After Party at Cine Cuvee and the adjacent CAIFF tent.

CAIFF is organized by Derek Zemrak, owner of the Orinda Theatre and Cine Cuvee, who is also a film producer and director, a concert promoter, and senior vice president of a Danville-based real estate holding company. Zemrak will co-host the opening reception with Lindsay Pirkle, owner of Theatre Square's Republic of Cake.

From the Aug. 23 opening ceremonies, to the closing ceremonies on Aug. 31, CAIFF will offer a wide range of feature length and short films telling a wealth of different stories. Some of these stories come from the far reaches of the world, others from our own backyard.

On Aug. 24, at 11 a.m. during the Screenplay Finalist Readings and Discussion, attendees will hear from Andrew Koponen, author of the screenplay "Oakland." Koponen is a former Oakland police officer who left the force after being involved in the friendly fire shooting of a fellow officer and later in a shooting of a carjacking suspect. The widow of the officer killed hired Johnnie Cohran's law firm and the city of Oakland settled the case for \$3.5 million. Koponen, who had been a new officer at the time, suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. While not focusing on the shootings, Koponen hopes that by telling his story he can help others to deal with PTSD. Koponen has dedicated the last 10 years as a peer counselor for current emergency responders struggling with PTSD. The Screenplay Finalist Readings and Discussion is a free event that Koponen will attend.

Also on Aug. 24 will be the kids' program, which is not just for little ones but also for the young at heart. This program includes a selection of four short films for children: "A Big Mission,"

"The Most Magnificent Thing," "Treasure Nest" and "Miikshi the Meek Sheep in The Cosmic Potato." Other short film programs will focus on local filmmakers and female directors.

Feature films offered during the festival include: "General Magic" on Aug. 24 and 26, a multi-award-winning documentary that shows the side of Silicon Valley you never see - a tale of how a great vision, a grave betrayal and an epic failure changed the world. "The Wake of Light" on Aug. 24 is a romantic drama about a young woman slowly losing hope while caring for her aging father and their broken-down farm, and "Making a Deal with the Devil" is a fascinating and dramatic tale of a behind-the-scenes plot developed by the FBI as they work secretly with the mob to eradicate corruption and crime in the United States.

With the temporary closure of the Rheem Theatre in Moraga, this year's California Independent Film Festival will take place largely at the Orinda Theatre, except for the closing film and celebrations, which will be in San Francisco. The 22nd annual CAIFF will this year also host the Lamorinda Arts Council's ShortDocs Showcase on Aug. 25.

Organizers promise a fabulous lineup this year celebrating independent filmmakers from around the globe, and a new generation of amazing talent. Dramas, comedies, documentaries, musicals, screenplays, thrillers, shorts and animated films will all be showcased. An all-access pass admits the holder to all events and includes a T-shirt, or tickets for individual events are available. There is also a special offer for the closing films and events on Aug. 31 in San Francisco.

CAIFF opens with a welcome reception at 6 p.m. Aug. 23 in the Orinda Theatre lobby, with opening remarks at 7 p.m. by Shorty Rossi, the former star of "Pit Boss," a reality series (now canceled) on Animal Planet and the owner and talent manager of Shortywood Productions, a company that works with little people in the entertainment industry. The first film, "7 Days to Vegas," which airs at 7:30 p.m., is inspired by a true story about Hollywood big shots who will bet on anything. The film focuses on a bet that led the protagonist, Vincent Van Patten, to attempt to a walk from Los Angeles to Las

For a list of all of the featured films, descriptions, times and tickets, please go to <https://www.caiff.org>.

#### Fourth Annual Lamorinda ShortDocs Film Fest

By Sora O'Doherty

For the first time, the Lamorinda ShortDocs Film Festival will be hosted by the California Independent Film Festival. ShortDocs will be shown at 11 a.m. Aug. 25 at Orinda Theatre. Tickets are \$10 in advance online; a limited number of \$15 tickets will be available at the door.

Lamorinda ShortDocs is a short documentary film competition open to filmmakers of all ages within the Lamorinda community of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda. Films are six minutes or less, are G-rated, and are judged in four categories by age: Elementary School, Middle School, High School, and Adult. Finalists in each category have been selected and those films will be screened publicly at the festival. One winner in each age group will be selected and announced at the festival, where an audience student film favorite will also be awarded.

This year, ShortDocs will present 17 short films created by local filmmakers. All the elementary school finalists are from Glorietta Elementary School in Orinda. The films are: "A Doctor's Journey" by Lauren Schultz and Kimia Jowharchi; "Emu Movie" by Carly Tesch; "Keep Calm and Use Less Plastic" by Nina Segall and Shawn Smith; "Girls Will Change the World" by Olivia Szeman and Addi Willingham; "Time for Temple" by Samantha Reidenbach; "The Galapagos" by Liam Singleton; "Lego My Movie" by Owen Windhurst; and "The English Diaries" by Myra Gakhar and Moksh Gakhar.

Middle school finalists are "A Fish Tale" by Caleb Elkind, Orinda Intermediate School; "Service Dogs" by Brooke Parker, Orinda Intermediate School; "Taking a Stand by Refusing To Stand" by Allegra Ciarlantini, Stanley Middle School; and "The Pollution Project" by Neve Abcari, Stanley Middle School.

High school finalists are: "The Student Body" by Joel Braunstein, Acalanes High School and "Sojourn to the South" by Josh Fleming, Campolindo High School.

Adult finalists are "Straight Outta Moraga" by Chloe Goyette and Hind Abdelouahid; "Tori's Celebrating 40 Years of Service" by Walter Yamazaki and Miriam Storch; and "Ripples in the Water" by Natalie Wheeler.

Tickets may be purchased online at <https://www.caiff.org>.



Derek Zemrak, co-founder of the California Independent Film Festival Photo Sora O'Doherty

Reach the reporter at: [sora@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sora@lamorindaweekly.com)

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