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Jewish Film Festival Comes to Orinda

By Cathy Tyson

SEE A FILM. SEE THE WORLD.



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were chosen.

First there was the California Independent Film Festival at the New Rheem Theatre in Moraga - then just recently the Orinda International Film Festival, and starting next weekend the East Bay International Jewish Film Festival makes its debut at the Orinda Theatre. Film buffs may be wondering if Lamorinda is the new cultural hub of the East Bay.

This film festival has grown from humble beginnings in 1995, "We started with one weekend at one venue," said Riva Gambert, Director of Community Programs for the Jewish Community Foundation, "Now we're up to four venues and more than fifty screenings." Organizers are calling it the largest Jewish cultural event in the Contra Cost/Tri-Valley area - seeking to educate, engage, encourage dialogue and promote pluralism. Venues include CineArts in Pleasant Hill, the Jewish Community Center in Walnut Creek, the Vine Cinema in Livermore - and for the first time ever - the Orinda Theatre. With films from across the globe including Argentina, Belgium, France and beyond it's easy to see why their motto is "See a film, see the world."

Gambert explains that Orinda was chosen due to the level of interest, and as a way to host screenings closer to home. "Audiences want entertainment, but are also very sophisticated, we looked for a balance," she said of the shorts, documentaries and features that

Kicking off the festivities in Orinda on March 12 at 7:00 p.m. is The Matchmaker from Israel, in Hebrew with subtitles. It's a mixture of comedy and drama set in the summer of 1968 when a teenager from Haifa falls in love with an American girl who is full of talk about women's rights, free love and rock and roll. Following "The Matchmaker" is "Naomi," a suspenseful, psychological mystery with some adult content at 9:30 p.m.

On Sunday, March 13, films run all day long starting at 9:30 a.m. with the family-friendly "Little Traitor." Other films being screened that day include "Lebanon," winner of the prestigious Golden Lion Venice Film Festival award, also nominated for an Oscar and winner of the Discovery Award at the 2010 European Film Awards; and the Israeli award-winning "The Human Resources Manager" - a tragic-comedic story that unfolds along a journey from Jerusalem to the snowy mountains of Romania.

Closing the show on Sunday is "Gay Days," also from Israel, which documents a revolution in the fight for equality for the LGBT community from 1985 - 1998. Personal stories and archival material chronicle an extraordinary change in cultural attitudes.

Check the festival's website for show times for all films that will be screened in Orinda and at other venues. The first screening of the festival is a Dutch film, Bride Flight, on March 5 at CineArts in Pleasant Hill. Go to www.eastbayjewishfilm.org for a complete schedule, or call (510) 318-6456.

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