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Lamorinda Theatres Make Strides toward Digitalization

By Sophie Braccini



Wells Fargo gives \$10,000 to CAIFF, from left: Joan Edelson, Charlotte Holden, Derek Zemrak, Sherry Shahrooz, Edy Schwartz, Judi Kanter, Julie Novak, Vincent Townsend, Jay Ingram, and Steve Hitchcock
Photo Sophie Braccini

Last December, Lamorinda Theatres -the New Rheem and Orinda Theatres-embarked on a quest for funding in order to convert to digital projection. They had a deadline of April 2012 to start the process. The owners of both theaters, the California Independent Film Festival Association (CAIFFA) explained that major studios will stop distributing the traditional 35mm films by the end of this year; if CAIFFA wants to continue to offer block-busters movies, it has to purchase the equipment at \$70,000 a machine, one for each of the seven screens.

Thanks to GLL Real Estate Partners, owners of Theatre Square and the walls of the theater, Orinda will have its three screens equipped in the fall. In Moraga, fundraising efforts have produced enough for one digital projector and CAIFFA President Derek Zemrak is confident that the continuing campaign will allow the Association to purchase a second one in time to benefit from some financial return from the movie studios.

"We are very grateful that GLL understood that they were making the right investment for their property by purchasing the digital equipment," said Zemrak. "The effort they have made in the Square to attract the right businesses is in the same line with having a cinema here that will continue to offer the newest releases. It makes good strategic sense." CAIFFA needs to have 50 percent of

each theater equipped in order to get the virtual print fees back from the movie producers.

In Moraga, the fund raising effort conducted by Charlotte Holden, Judi Kanter, Edy Schwartz and Shari Simon has allowed CAIFFA to purchase its first digital projector that will be installed mid-August in the middle theater on the second floor. "It is an operational decision to install it there, because we usually move the movies upstairs," said Zemrak. "The next objective is to raise enough to equip the main theater."

On July 12, Steve Hitchcock, Territory Manager for Wells Fargo, gave a \$10,000 check to CAIFFA to contribute to the Digital fund. "We are here to help out the arts and the community," he said. "Most of our donations are focused on non-profits that help the underserved population, but a small portion goes toward the arts, and Derek has done a lot for the arts in Lamorinda."

The donation was secured by Judy Kanter who sits on the San Francisco's Symphony Board with Wells Fargo executives.

The August 25 Moraga Funfest - a family-friendly, all-day event featuring live performances, special screenings, activities and games - will be the next big fundraising event for the digital equipment. "The line-up includes Juice Box Heroes, the local Moraga dads who rock out to familiar tunes with parodied kid-friendly lyrics," said Stephanie Kusinski of Creative Acorns, "and the live band phenomenon will continue into the evening with an acoustic performance by Jay Whitlatch of Aspect, edgy and eclectic sounds from Dream Posse, Kiki Stack & Friends, and local rockers." The large empty lot next to the theater will house carnival games, kid friendly activities, crafts and famous food-trucks.

For details about the FunFest, visit MoragaFunFest.com. For more information about the theaters and to become a member, visit lamorindatheatres.com.

CAIFFA Names New Program Director

The California Independent Film Festival Association (CAIFFA) named Joanne Foy as the new Program Director for the 15th Annual Festival. Foy is currently a board member for the Association and has been a key contributor to the success of all the annual festivals during the past 10 years. "Joanne has expressed her desire to get deeper into the daily operations leading up to the festival and has the Association's full support in her new and expanded duties" said Derek Zemrak, president and founder of CAIFFA.

"My passion for film festivals goes back to the start of Sundance when they screened films in the library. I look forward to taking CAIFF to the next level and making CAIFF known as the film festival to see the 'Best of Best' independent films from around the world. I have begun a strategic alliance with the Palm Springs ShortFest, the Cannes Film Festival and the Seattle International Film Festival," said Foy.

"I have worked with Joanne for the past two years since the festival came to the Rheem Theatre. Joanne has

worked every job related to CAIFF, which brings an invaluable asset to our team," said Edy Schwartz, Community Liaison to the Rheem Theatre. "Along with her experience, she has her passion for Independent Film and her knowledge of the importance of community involvement for the success of the festival."

For more information pertaining to the next festival, scheduled November 8-11, visit the California Independent Film Festival website at www.caiff.org.

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