

# ~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

## Acalanes alum wins award at Cannes Film Festival



Photo Jacqueline Rosenthal

Acalanes alum and "Waves Apart" cinematographer, Jack Lattin (right) and "Waves Apart" director, Josh Greene (left), walk the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival.

By Diane Clayton

As Jack Lattin approached the end of his four years at Acalanes High School, he faced the dilemma that most graduating high schoolers do: what's next?

A self-described math and science kid, Lattin considered pursuing engineering as the "safe route," he said. But as someone who loves movies, had been making short films throughout high school and fondly remembers using his flip camera to film in his neighborhood when he was only 7 years old, he also dreamt of a career in filmmaking.

Film school won out and, as he walked the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year, there was no doubt that he made the right choice.

After graduating from Acalanes in 2018, Lattin went south to attend the University of Southern California (USC) School of Cinematic Arts, considered the best film program in the world.

In his freshman year, Lattin met fellow student Josh Greene and the two have been collaborating on films ever since. In their senior year, Greene asked Lattin to work with him on his thesis documentary, "Waves Apart." Greene served as the director while Lattin was the cinematographer of the short subject documentary.

The 24-minute film is about antisemitism in surfing, particularly in the California surfing history and culture. Greene is a surfer and has personally witnessed, as well as faced, anti-

semitism. He serves as the narrator and interviews other Jewish surfers and surfing experts, learning of their similar experiences.

Lattin credits his years as a swimmer at Acalanes and a junior coach at Lafayette's Sun Valley Pool for helping prepare him to film one of the final scenes in "Waves Apart" when seven surfers paddle out and say a prayer in Hebrew, all while Lattin is treading water, holding his camera and filming the emotional act.

"Waves Apart" has been entered in numerous film festivals and competitions and has received glowing reviews as well as several very prestigious awards. Shortly after Lattin and Greene graduated, the film was a finalist for the 2022 Student Academy Award, sponsored by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as a platform for emerging global talent.

It premiered at the well-regarded Santa Barbara International Film Festival, where it had two screenings and Lattin and Greene participated in a question and answer session. It has been selected to be shown at the upcoming San Diego International Film Festival as well as the Paris Surf and Skate Film Festival. Following its showing at the Toronto Jewish Film Festival, a reviewer wrote, "'Waves Apart' is a short documentary that leaves a deep lingering impression."

Perhaps the most impressive award came from the Cannes Film Festival's Emerg-

ing Filmmaker Showcase, considered one of the most important events on the international film calendar. A jury of agents, producers and industry members presented "Waves Apart" with the award for Best Student Documentary.

As significant as this award is, Lattin notes that "one of the most rewarding experiences with the film is being able to show it in more private screenings," as they did at Lafayette's Temple Isaiah recently. "It's interesting to hear the conversations that take place following the viewings," Lattin says.

Lattin and Greene hope to find a distributor so that "Waves Apart" can reach a wider audience.

"I love documentary cinematography," Lattin proclaims, "because of the improvisational nature of it ... it's you and the camera, very stripped down crew, equipment and it's like you're a fly on the wall. You can be creative in a real time setting, an aspect that has always been exciting to me."

Following their 2022 graduation, Lattin and Greene briefly went in different directions. However, they quickly realized that they both wanted to "develop their own artistic voices and manage both their creative control and their schedules," Lattin explains. So they again teamed up, forming their own film production company, Landport Productions. The company is doing branded commercial projects as well as working on both independent documentaries and scripted narratives.

And Landport just hired their first intern: a fellow Acalanes graduate, Brooke Westphal. Described by Lattin as an educational program where interns can "learn and participate in all aspects of outreach, development and production," Westphal will direct a commercial under the Landport banner this month.

Westphal isn't the only Acalanes alum that Lattin is working with. For the past several years, he has been writing a script with longtime friends and former classmates Kahren Eloyan and Karl-Erik Mills. Lattin describes the movie as a coming-of-age action film that "features a variety of iconic East Bay locations and highlights the area's Armenian community." Greene will produce the film and they are hoping to shoot around the Bay Area within the year.

Lattin hopes to direct films in the future. "What I'm trying to do now," he reports, "is develop skills in all areas because knowing all the jobs and understanding the collaboration process will only make me that much better as a director."

To view a trailer of "Waves Apart," go to: [youtube.com/watch?v=Vw1\\_g6syyWY](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Vw1_g6syyWY).

## The art of birdwatching highlighted in book of poetry



Image provided

By Alison Burns

In 2020, as the world learned to adjust to the COVID-19 lockdown, wild bird seed suddenly began to disappear off pet shop shelves, while sales of birdbaths and hummingbird feeders almost doubled. The rest of the world had discovered what Jim Roethe, long-time member of the Golden Gate Audubon Society, had

known for decades: the BP-lowering, stress-relieving, endlessly fascinating art of birdwatching.

Roethe, a semi-retired attorney, has spent around 50 years hiking and birding in the East Bay Regional Park system, and on Aug. 5 he was joined by a rapt audience at Orinda Books to present "Poetry Takes Flight: Birds of California."

This latest book is Roethe's sixth, and the first to showcase his self-penned poems, which feature alongside the photographs and captions of the 77 birds featured in the book – each of which has been spotted by Roethe either on his NorCal walks, in his Orinda backyard or during the Audubon Society's North Orinda Christmas Bird Counts that he sometimes leads.

Roethe spoke of waking in his boyhood home to the

sound of birdsong and discovering that his morning soundtrack came from the Red-winged Blackbird. Roethe's accompanying video clip, borrowed from the internet, featured a mile of trees, on whose bare branches sat half a million blackbirds in full-throated song, "like a river of birds flowing."

Anna's Hummingbird came next, with a PBS video clip that will probably make it hard to glimpse this demure little bird ever again without recalling the male's kamikaze mating ritual: traveling at 400 times its own length every second, he dives toward his mate so fast that the air produces a sound which the female apparently finds irresistible, lending a whole new meaning to the idea of "speed dating."

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