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Four must-see documentaries at this year's CAIFF

By Derek Zemrak

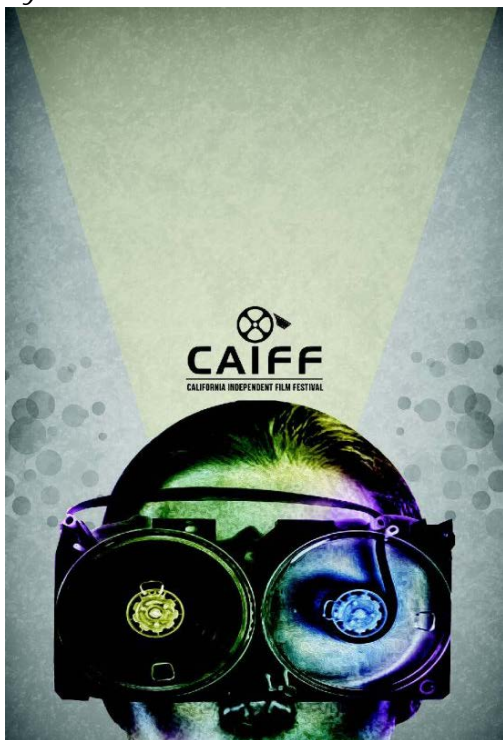


Image provided

Lukather, Chaka Khan and Eric Burdon, and scenes from "The West Wing," "Wonder Years," and "Thirtysomething."

Aug. 27 - Rheem Theatre - 7:45 p.m.

Nourishment for the Japanese Soul "Itadakimasu"

Happiness is found at the dinner table by children who are exceptionally healthy and strong from eating "Washoku," which is based on traditional wisdom and knowledge and the concept of "food is medicine." This is the first documentary in the world that spotlights traditional Japanese cuisine, Washoku, which has acquired UNESCO heritage status, but is not sushi that commonly appears in the media or "gourmet meals at fine dining establishments." The Westernization and globalization of traditional foods around the world are proceeding at an accelerated pace. Ethnic groups are quickly losing their traditional cuisines. Washoku, the traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, is no exception.

Aug. 28 - Rheem Theatre - 6 p.m.

"Angels in Our Midst" - WWII American nurses in the Normandy Invasion and European Theater

A documentary film that gives voice to the memories of American nurses in the D-Day invasion and beyond. What it took for these women to enlist in the Army, how they lived, and how they were changed by their experiences are some of the questions explored in this film.

These women - thoughtful, funny, courageous - put a human face on war and offer a point of view not always captured in films about World War II.

I have interviewed women across the U.S. who were nurses during World War II. In my interviews, I have come face to face, in the words of Tom Brokaw, with "the greatest generation." I am convinced that these women's stories should not be lost, that we must capture them while there is still time and, most important, that we must keep their memories alive.

These angels give us a glimpse of the realities they confronted in the war; the heart-wrenching experiences they faced and how they dealt with them. Their stories are a testament to their compassion, pluck and resolve, qualities that, in good times and bad, renew our faith in humankind.

The 21st California Independent Film Festival starts this Friday, Aug. 24 at the Rheem Theatre with the World Premiere of "The Salzburg Story." Over the weekend, Aug. 25 and 26, the festival will be held at the Orinda Theatre. It returns to the Rheem Theatre at 6 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 27 through Aug. 30.

People often ask me: "What should I see?" That is a difficult question because all the films accepted into the festival are the cream of the crop of more than 350 films submitted for consideration.

Here are four documentaries that should not be overlooked:

Aug. 25 - Orinda Theatre - noon

"Up to Snuff"

Millions of people have been touched by his music, yet few know the journey, hardships and triumphs of American musician and composer W.G. Snuffy Walden. In "Up to Snuff," friends and collaborators share personal stories, laughs and insights about this generous soul who overcame the excesses of rock and roll to find success as one of the most beloved composers in television history. Infused with Snuffy's music throughout, the film features luminaries from television, film and music, including Aaron Sorkin, Martin Sheen, Tom Arnold, Timothy Busfield, Fred Savage, Marshall Herskovitz, Steve

In today's world, when our daughters (and sons), our sisters, our women friends, are going forward in an uncertain world - when Wonder Woman recently captured our imagination - it is heartening to listen to these women tell it like it was, with humor and candor.

"Angels in Our Midst" may encourage us to don our capes and go forth, inspired by these gutsy and plainspoken women.

Aug. 30 - Rheem Theatre - 7:30 p.m.

"Child, Disrupted"

As a society, are we in danger of raising a generation of children disrupted by the overuse of technology? Through interviews with experts in the fields of neuroscience, occupational therapy, addiction, psychology, and sociology, we uncover the reality behind fears about the effects of screen time on our children.

Get your film festival tickets online at www.caiff.org or at the Rheem and Orinda Theatre box offices. See you at the festival!

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