



MAKING BIG WAVES *ON THE BIG ISLAND*

WAIMEA OCEAN FILM FESTIVAL BRINGS TALENTED
FILMMAKERS TO HAWAI'I ISLAND FOR ENGAGING
TALKS, UNIQUE EXPERIENCES, AND GRATIFYING FUN



PHOTO COURTESY: KOA ROTHMAN AT
TEAHOPO'O TAHITI. IMAGE BY BRIAN BIELMANN

The Waimea Ocean Film Festival has earned the buzz it creates on the Big Island during festival time, which is held in early January at several thoughtfully selected venues. With over 70 films featuring big waves, the ocean, wildlife, adventure and inspiring stories, it's hard not to get excited about watching stunning films on the big screen, in a beautiful setting.

In addition, an array of other activities like the chance to hear from talented filmmakers in a Breakfast Talk, or start the day with sunrise yoga on the beach, makes the event an experience like no other. To learn more about the hype, and take a sneak peek at the upcoming festival, we turn to festival founder and director, Tania Howard.



What is the Waimea Ocean Film Festival and how did it begin?

The festival began as a film series, but quickly grew to a larger event, focused around and for the extraordinary resorts, venues and people we have on the island. Now, the festival brings over 70 films each year to the big screen—the best of the best from around the world—plus filmmaker Q&As, talks, presentations, exhibits and sunrise activities, all mixed with a bit of fun and flair.

When people think of a film festival, they think primarily of films. Would you share a little more about the talks and activities that happen in and around the event?

The films themselves are selected to be engaging—to have that special quality to captivate and hold an audience in its seat. It's very exciting to have the filmmakers themselves, or an expert, attend to answer questions. Being part of the audience during a filmmaker Q&A feels as though you are part of an inner circle, listening to behind-the-scenes stories in that unique and spontaneous moment. It feels very special, and still very personal, to be in the audience as they unfold.

In addition, the Breakfast Talks and presentations, along with the talks around “The Voyager” and other exhibits always provide a rich and wonderful part of the program - perhaps my favorite part. The special presentations from speakers, scientists and filmmakers are a must-see. And, the early morning activities, like the outrigger canoe lessons, provide a chance to watch the first light of day touch the ocean, and see the island come to life, as an invigorating start to the day of talks and films.

Any favorites returning this year?

We always show the Audience Choice winner one more time from the year prior. This past year, we had a tie! As it turns out, the directors of these two award-winning films also happen to be brothers, although one now lives and works in the United Kingdom. A bit of a fun behind-the-scenes story.

This year, we anticipate the return of some of our favorite filmmakers from years prior. Tom Mustill, who many will remember for the hilariously witty stories he told following the screenings of his film, *The Bat Man of Mexico*, should join us again and perhaps give an update as to life in the bat caves. With luck, the two Gaucho del Mar brothers will join us, whose beautiful and poignant surf films have enthralled our audience over the years. We also expect to see one of the executive producers from BBC's Natural History Unit, Jonny Keeling, who many will also remember for his wit, humor and the fascinating stories he told during his Breakfast Talk regarding a film project in Papua New Guinea, which we went on to show last year. Yellowstone filmmaker Eric Bendick returns with a slide show and presentation of the full solar eclipse, which he photographed with the Grand Teton mountain range as a backdrop. And, we can hope that the ever-fascinating Anthony Geffen will join us as well.

This is a very large and intricately woven event. How does it all happen?

The festival comes together through an enormous effort. Thank you for noticing! It's made possible through the support of our patrons and sponsors, plus a fair bit of grit, determination and hard work through the year and all around. We're fortunate to have very talented and hardworking event and tech teams, exceptional resorts and venues to work with and fabulous volunteers in the community. Also, while it's a treat to be able to share these films on the big screen with high-quality projection, we are also fortunate to work with the calibre of filmmakers we do and share this level of film production.

Is there anything you would like to share in closing?

Thank you to everyone who makes it possible. It should be a fun year!

2020 SCHEDULE

Waimea Ocean Film Festival is held January 1 thru January 8 at various venues in Waimea and coastal resorts. Visit their website at www.waimeaoceanfilm.org around December 21 to download a PDF copy of the 2020 Festival Program, which is uploaded as soon as it is finalized and sent to press. Until then, you can download a copy of the 2019 Festival Program as a reference, sign up to receive e-newsletter updates and follow as films and program details are shared on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram through the fall.

Extra-Early Purchase Passes and Early Purchase Passes are on sale through mid-September and mid-November respectively. You can also visit the Festival Booth on Saturdays at the Waimea Town Market (Parker School) through November and December. Or, visit the Festival Hospitality Desk, starting December 29.

What to Expect at the Resort Venues

The resorts here are extraordinary and it is a special treat for attendees to be able to participate in the upcoming activities and viewings at each venue. Be prepared to be wowed and have fun! Many of the details are still being finalized, but here's what to watch for.

Mauna Kea Beach Hotel: Breakfast Talks 'with a view' to take place here Jan. 2, 3 and 4 along with sunrise yoga overlooking the ocean, for an enlivening start to the day. Watch also for possible art exhibits, exhibitions or art tour and specials at the Copper Bar and Manta.

The Westin Hapuna Beach Resort: Possible food tasting events at the Mediterranean-inspired Meridia Restaurant, under the direction of Chef Chris Galindo. Also, watch for pre-fixe early seating theatre menus, for seatings from 5:30pm to 6:30pm, to savor farm-to-table island fine dining before the later evening film block.

Fairmont Orchid, Hawai'i: Watch for the film program to roll out in the plush stadium seating offered at Lehua Theater, downstairs by the waterfall at Fairmont Orchid as well as possible origami classes with Epic Origami founder Bonnie Cherni. Also watch for possible exhibits and special presentations. Watch for festival seating, with tables and chairs set aside for attendees to chat, enjoy lunch from Brown's deli, study the program and plan the day of films or just take a moment to delight in the beauty all around.

Four Seasons Resort Hualālai: Watch for the film program to roll out in the comfort and elegance of the ballroom at Four Seasons—or under the stars at Hoku Amphitheatre once night falls—strolling between venues along tropical garden-lined paths. Also, watch for Breakfast Talks at Moana Terrace above 'ULU Ocean Grill. Watch for a special cocktail or pre-fixe menus at Beach Tree Bar & Lounge or 'ULU Ocean Grill, or festival food on-the-go from the Hualālai Trading Company.

