

Santa Clarita International Film Festival Ends 5th Year with Premiere of 'Respect the Duck'

SANTA CLARITA, CA, UNITED STATES, December 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Santa Clarita International Film Festival Closes 5th Year with World Premiere of DocuDrama Respect the Duck

The Santa Clarita International Film Festival (SCIFF) will conclude its milestone 5th annual festival with the highly anticipated premiere of Respect the Duck, a bold new docudrama filmed during the 2023 festival. Capturing the real-life chaos, creativity, conflict, and community behind the scenes, the film offers an unfiltered look at what it truly takes to bring a festival of this scale to life.

Shot guerrilla-style with seven different cameras, Respect the Duck follows the SCIFF team as well as key industry and community leaders, revealing the drama, the hard work, the setbacks, and the triumphs that define the festival experience.

As Founder and Executive Director Lisa deSouza—who also serves as writer, director, and co-producer of the film—explains, SCIFF has a mission that extends far beyond showcasing films. “This festival has become so much more than just a festival,” said deSouza. “It is a voice for our marginalized community; it is a challenge to the status quo, all while using art to shift boundaries and mindsets in the 3rd largest city in Los Angeles County.”

DeSouza shared that taking on the documentary was a creative challenge unlike any she’s tackled before. “It was exciting to test the boundaries of filmmaking with this project,” she said. “I have always believed in working with talented people—telling them what we are trying to accomplish and then letting them go find great moments that help tell the story. It means you truly have to trust the people you work with to find you some ‘magic.’”

She added, “I have written and directed a ton of projects for film and theater, and this was hands down one of the most challenging. You try outlining what you want to capture so you have a through line, but it quickly takes on a life of its own. Suddenly, you have all these amazing subplots, and you realize you’re sitting on something different—but so much better than what you originally expected.”

Co-Producer Chris Studenka, who worked alongside cinematographer Justin Rose, echoed the intensity and ambition behind the project. “When Justin and I were approached to help make this

film for Lisa, we were excited,” Studenka said. “As past SCIFF participants and filmmakers who’ve been on the festival circuit for dozens of festivals, we understand the challenges of running a successful festival. We wanted to help capture everything that goes into making a great one. With Lisa’s vision and her willingness to open herself up to literally filming everything about it, we believe the film will showcase a mere slice of the insanity—with all of the emotion.”

Closing Night Host Rob Johnston expressed equal enthusiasm for the premiere. “I’m excited to be hosting the closing night ceremony and awards,” Johnston said. “But as an added bonus, I get to see the premiere of Respect the Duck (The Making of the Santa Clarita International Film Festival). It takes a lot of paddling under the water to create a smooth ride above the surface. SCIFF is a beautiful vision—providing a platform for artists of diverse backgrounds to share their stories and make the world a little better and kinder, one film at a time.”

Following the premiere and awards ceremony, attendees are invited to celebrate at the official after-party hosted at Society Pizza.

Josephine Juarez

The Santa Clarita International Film Festival

3109261599 ext.

[email us here](#)

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