



Viva Panama Organization, Inc.

IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CONSULATE OF PANAMA
CELEBRATES

The International Week of Panama



*2017 Ambassador Award Gala
Films from Panama Festival Opening Night*

**August 18, 2017
Hollywood, CA.**

LOUVRE
BANQUET HALL



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and the Americas Festival 2017

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Sharing the Culture of Panama with the World!



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Gala Committee

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Armando Anderson
Hal Laws Landau
Janet Anderson
Maritza Collins
Marlene Sánchez
Melissa Shepherd-Williams
Lic. Raquel Alfaro
Lic. Cynthia Sanjur de Goldstein
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Victor Grimaldo
Vladimir Anderson

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Victor Grimaldo - Executive Director
Ana Teresa Rovetto
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Vladimir Anderson

Grupo Congos Istmeños

Erwin Grifis
Lorraine Grifis
Yolanda Hanson
Argelia Johnson
Jerlin Johnson
Joaquin Wong

Ballet Folklorico Viva Panama

Isabel Sanjur
Jairo Laws
Joaquin Wong
Kiana Valenzuela
Laura Echevers
Loira Ramos
Mario Meléndez
Milly González
René Meléndez
Victor Grimaldo
Spencer Williams



Bienvenidos!

Please receive my greetings and from all of us at VPO!

The Viva Panamá Organization (VPO) is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) entity that has developed diverse programs throughout its 26 years striving to spread the Culture of Panama in California and the world. Every year, VPO celebrates the International Week of Panama in Los Angeles, which was established in 2003 in collaboration with Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. This milestone coincided with the festivities in honor of Panama's Centennial held at the Anson Ford Theater in Hollywood. The event included as special guests the Vice President of Panama, His Excellence Dominador Kaiser Bazán, our Miss Universe Justine Pasek, Consul Fernando Daly, and Gerardo Pinedo from Los Angeles County.

Tonight we gather as a community and as friends celebrating our pride in our people, honoring them with our Ambassador Award, and to proudly continue sharing our culture with the world by re-launching our Film Festival with a new name: "Films from Panama & the Americas Festival" (FFPAF), originally known as Panamanian International Film Festival in Los Angeles.

During these 26 years of sharing the image of Panama with the world, it has been a great pleasure for me creating the foundations and pillars of Viva Panamá; it has been a period of great sacrifices in raising this baby that needs the support of all of us. The African Proverb says that it takes a whole village to raise a child, and that is how I consider this organization, which means that it takes an entire community to raise it and make it stronger. If we, as an entire community take an active role by contributing with our talents, our donations and efforts for this organization, we'll be able to express and display Panama's culture at the level that it deserves.

I sincerely hope that this legacy will manifest through the work of our Board of Directors, supported by the community, to continue expressing pride in being Panamanian. Today, VPO has the chance of bringing new blood and going to the next level, for the cultural benefit of our present and future generations.

I encourage you to consider becoming a VPO member, donating your time and funds, and referring potential sponsors. Remember that all your contributions are tax-deductible and because of your support we are able to generate programs like our Films from Panama and the Americas Festival. Show your pride in being Panamanian by supporting our projects and working with us in the creation of the future Panamanian American Cultural Center. Thanks to all our partners, sponsors, emcees, and artists for your support, kindness and generosity that made this evening a beautiful reality.

Thanks to Union Bank and Lynette Valenzuela; Hollywood Independents, Lic. Raquel Alfaro - General Consul of Panama in California; Lic. Cynthia Sanjur de Goldstein, Vice Consul, and all our Board members, volunteers, supporters and Louvre Banquet Hall.

¡Que Viva Panamá!

Dr. Victor Grimaldo
Founder, CEO & President



CONSULADO GENERAL DE PANAMA

El reloj nos agarra desprevenidos y ha pasado un año más, pero la Organización VIVA PANAMA, nos recuerda que para ellos la promoción de Panamá no descansa. En esta ocasión reconocen el talento de Panameños que se destacan dentro y fuera de nuestro suelo nacional.

Este año la organización destaca el talento fílmico de Panamá y para eso se prepara conjunto a la ya conocida y esperada por todos, Cena de Gala de la Organización; con el Festival Panameño de Cine como parte de los eventos de la Semana Internacional de Panamá en Los Ángeles.

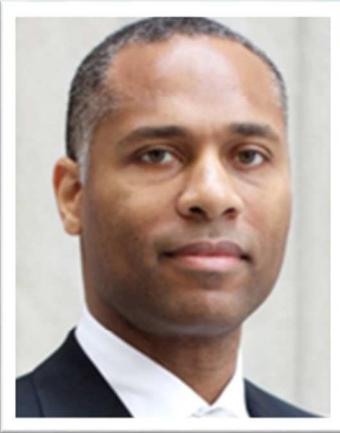
Se postulan receptores del mundo del entretenimiento como los artistas Julio Hanson y Elmis Castillo. Viajamos a la ciudad de Las Tablas al "Carnaval de Panamá" con la presencia del famoso diseñador Horacio Prado, que nos engalanará la noche con sus preciosas creaciones. Y ¿Qué sería de un carnaval sin compás? Sin más que hablar, la organización nos presenta a la hermosa Nikki Campbell, percusionista virtuosa con su ritmo a lo panameño.

Pero para no pensar que todo es fiesta en Panamá, aunque sí nos gusta bastante, nos ofrece el honor de conocer al Pionero en materia Biomédica, el respetado Dr. Guillermo Ameer.

Panamá ha alcanzado un lugar por excelencia alrededor del mundo, con la participación de nuestros compatriotas, haciendo memoria por donde viajan, dejando huellas que cambian vidas, siempre que lleguemos a un confín de la tierra, encontraremos a un panameño haciendo Patria.

Lo felicito Dr. Víctor Grimaldo por su trabajo exhaustivo a favor de la Comunidad Nacional e Internacional, gracias por sus labores en beneficio de Panamá por brindarnos su apoyo. Le augurio muchos éxitos en esta Gala 2017 que disfruten todos una noche placentera saboreando los recuerdos de nuestro PANAMA y la Semana Internacional de Panamá en los Ángeles.

Raquel Alfaro
Cónsul General de Panamá
Los Ángeles, California
18 Agosto 2017.



Dr. Guillermo Ameer

AMBASSADOR AWARD RECIPIENT: BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING PIONEER.

Native of Panama City, Panama, born from a retired Panama Canal employee mother and an ex-US Army employee. Graduated from Pan-American Institute in Panama; he received his bachelor degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Texas at Austin and his Doctor of Science in Chemical and Biomedical Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He joined the faculty of the Biomedical Engineering Department at Northwestern University in 2001 and is currently a professor of Biomedical Engineering. Moreover, he has been appointed professor in the Department of Surgery at the Feinberg School of Medicine.

Dr. Ameer is the Founder and serves as Chief Executive Officer and President of ProSorp BioTech, Inc. and Associate Professor in the Biomedical Engineering Dept. of Northwestern University.

He is co-inventor on 13 issued/pending US and international patents. He is the recipient of numerous awards including: the National Kidney Foundation Young Investigator Award (2002), the only chemical engineer to receive this honor), Technology Review Magazine's Top 100 Young Innovators Under 35 (2003), the Beckman Foundation Young Investigator Award (2004-2007), the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation Early Career Translational Research Award (2005), Illinois Institute of Regenerative Medicine: Stem cell-based vascular tissue engineering Award (2006), Northwestern University Drew Senyei, MD Translational Research Award (2006), the National Science Foundation CAREER Award (2006), and an American Heart Association Established Investigator Award (2007).

Dr. Ameer's research interests include biomaterials, vascular and orthopedic tissue engineering, controlled drug and gene delivery, stem cell engineering and bio/nanotechnology for improved therapeutics and diagnostics. He has co-authored over 100 peer-reviewed journal publications and conference abstracts, several book chapters, and multiple patents issued and pending (+25). Moreover, he is (Co-) Founder of 3 companies: ProSorp Biotech, Vessel Tek Biomedical and Citric Biomedical.

He has served on several scientific review committees for funding research at the state and federal levels and was one of 100 invitees by the National Academy of Engineering to attend the 10th annual Frontiers of Engineering Symposium (2004). Dr. Ameer served as a permanent member of the Musculoskeletal Tissue Engineering study section of the National Institutes of Health. To accomplish his research goals, Dr. Ameer has assembled a team of collaborators, which include: Dr. William Pearce, Chief of Vascular Surgery at Northwestern Memorial Hospital; Dr. Melina Kibbe, Associate Professor and vascular surgeon at Northwestern Memorial Hospital; Dr. Jason Koh, Associate Professor and orthopedic surgeon at Northshore Hospital; Dr. Stuart Sprague, Director of the Division of Nephrology and Hypertension, Northshore Hospital; Prof. Vadim Backman, Biomedical Engineering Department at Northwestern University; Prof. Timothy Carroll, Biomedical Engineering Department at Northwestern University; Prof. Lonnie Shea, Chemical and Biological Engineering Department at Northwestern University; Prof. Igal Szleifer, Biomedical Engineering Department at Northwestern University and Prof. Milan Mrksich, Biomedical Engineering Department at Northwestern University.



Nakeiltha "Nikki" Campbell

AMBASSADOR AWARD RECIPIENT: PERCUSSION VIRTUOSA.

Nakeiltha "Nikki" Campbell is an extraordinary percussionist, educator, and performing artist who has traveled worldwide promoting empowerment through the celebration of African cultural heritage. Born in the Colón and raised in Los Angeles, CA, Nikki found that drumming reconnected her with the African, Caribbean and Panamanian roots that grounded and propelled her mission. Being aware of this heritage made her appreciate and embrace the beauty and diversity of her ancestry.

As of the first time she got a hold of drums, a transforming experience began which compels Nikki's desire to engage with and build community through her art practice. She finds it to be a powerful way to reconnect, share, celebrate, and educate. This journey has created in her a deep respect for the drums. Her persistence, tenacity, and creativity have gained her entry into the music community.

As a drummer who happens to be a woman, in an art traditionally practiced by men, she's committed to supporting and encouraging women of all ages to explore this art form. She studied with local and international artists such as Mamady Keita's TamTam Mandingue Drum School, Kahlil Cummings of Balandugu Kan, Abalaye, Bakra Bata, Aboubakar Kouyate, Robertito Meléndez Latin Percussion School Ensemble, and Afro-Cuban workshops and ensembles sanctioned by Masters of the tradition. Nikki has toured with Les Amazones "The Women Master Drummers of Guinea", Viver Brasil Dance Company, Adaawe, and The Rebirth. She has performed with Stevie Wonder, Miguel Atwood Ensemble, Candy Sosa and many others. She has traveled to Cuba, Brazil, Guinea and West Africa, to broaden her knowledge and musical strength. She recorded in Guinea with Kahlil Cummings in his first album "Inike Baba" with Balandugu Kan. Her recording experience also includes African Drums for the theme song featured film "Let the Games Begin" produced by Aloe Black, as well as for Kendrick Lamar's historic performance of "Alright" at the 58th Grammy Awards.

Nikki performed at the 2005-2009 NAACP Image Awards with Will I AM; the 53rd Grammy Award with Rihanna; American Idol with Janelle Monae & Jidenna; and in Shakira's music video "Waka Waka". She also performed at the World Culture KCET Women in Jazz celebration; and the 4th and 5th Annual Palm Springs Women Jazz Festival. From 2014-2015, Nikki traveled to Panamá to teach West African Drum clinics at Danilo Pérez's Jazz Foundation and the Arnold Walters Foundation during the Etnia Negra celebration. From 2015-2016, she taught and performed West African drums at the 4th and 5th annual Festival de Percusión Centro Americano, at the 13th Panamá Jazz Festival and in 2015 at Bridges of Power (Puentes De Poder).



Julio Hanson

AMBASSADOR AWARD RECIPIENT: ENTERTAINER & EDUCATOR.

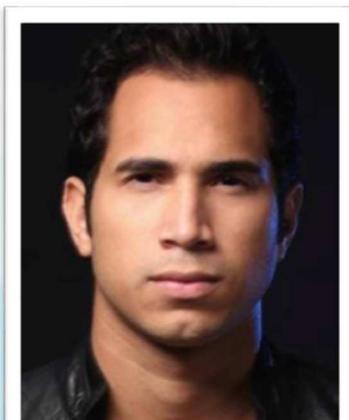
Julio Hanson is proud to celebrate his Panamanian heritage growing up in Inglewood, California, the City of Champions. As a singer, songwriter, actor, dancer, writer, and educator, Julio has delighted many audiences locally, nationally, and around the world. Julio was the first to produce a multicultural performance that won Best Production and Best Choreography at the Spring Sing music competition at UCLA. Julio graduated from UCLA with a Bachelor's degree in Political Sciences with an emphasis in International Relations and studied 6 languages and American Sign Language at Los Angeles Southwest College.

In 2007, Julio obtained his Master's degree in Education and his Administrative Credential at California State University, Los Angeles: as a Categorical Programs Coordinator. Julio attended Cal State University - Dominguez Hills to obtain his Bilingual Cross-Cultural, Language and Academic Development (BCLAD)

teaching credential. He used his language abilities and community resourcefulness as a teacher in the Lennox School District from 1992-1996 and the Los Angeles Unified School District, experiencing all grades K-6.

In 1996, Julio took a break from teaching and sang background for R&B singer and Grammy-award winner Toni Braxton, but he maintained his love for education and raising his two daughters Marilé & Natalia whom he is proud to say, both are college graduates. Julio found time to act in feature films such as American Carol directed by Brian Grazer, Angels and Demons, starring Tom Hanks and directed by Ron Howard. He toured the country with Grammy-nominated singer, Keith Washington, performing on stage as a member of the group Dijenus and recording with Grammy-nominated artists La Ley and Kelis. In 2011, he had a recurring role on the hit TV show RPM Miami on the Mun2 network. Julio had a lead role in Paquito's Christmas at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium., directed by Luis Avalos.

Julio became a member of the Robey Theatre Company, playing the lead role of Paul Laurence in The Magnificent Dunbar Hotel, written and directed by Levy Lee and selected for the National Black Theatre Festival in North Carolina. Julio is currently the Assistant Principal of Loren Miller Elementary School in Los Angeles, member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and proud of his ability to encourage government leaders to work with teachers, students, and parents in the community educational process. Julio continues his passion for songwriting and performing, and is a staff writer for Live Free Magazine. Julio has traveled to over 14 countries meeting individuals that have inspired him to give back to the world community. Julio is proud of collaborating with Victor Grimaldo as a member of Congos Istmeños under the direction of Lorraine Grifis and performed on various occasions with Viva Panama Organization. Julio would like to dedicate this recognition to his mother Yolanda and the memory of his father John Hanson who blessed him with their musical gifts. Julio is grateful to Viva Panama Organization and the entire Panamanian community for this honor!



Elmis Castillo

AMBASSADOR AWARD RECIPIENT: INTERNATIONAL ACTOR.

Born in David, Chiriquí, he spent most of his youth practicing sports, succeeding in school and swimming in many rivers. Trained in acting, TV, directing, producing, modern dance and modeling. He studied hospitality, tourism and cuisine. His artistic career started in 2008 as an extra and obtained a scholarship to study Acting in T.V. and movies at the CEA (Centro de Educación Artística) in México, D.F. He studied TV and Film Acting with filmmaker Frank Spano in Panama and with Jorge Herrera in Colombia. He studied Production and Direction for TV and Films in Panama.

His TV introduction was as an actor, creative and script writer for "Quien T.V.", a satiric and Panamanian comedy program, with Diego De Obaldia. He also worked as co-host of "Pequeños Gigantes" from Medcom TV. He also hosted, co-wrote, co-directed and co-produced "Lo Desconocido", a TV series portraying para-abnormal stories, produced and directed by Zelaya Sitton, broadcasted on primetime by TVN-2 and web.

His acting roles have been diverse: a "Hollywood", a cameraman in "Paradise Lost" (2014), starred by Benicio del Toro y Josh Judgenson; as Victor, the lover in the film "Salta" (2015) directed by José Macias; "Andrés Pimienta" leading actor in the film "Salsipuedes" (2015-2016) directed by Manolito Rodríguez y Ricardo Aguilar, where he portrays a young man who is born in the neighborhood and is sent to study to USA and comes back 10 years later, and is involved in a series of dramatic events. This film won the Premio Sinergia de 2015; it was the official submission of Panama for the 'Best Foreign Language Film' category of the 89th Academy Awards in 2017 and world premiere at the Marché du Film, Cannes Festival 2017.

He had comedy roles as Elvio Lao (a gay journalist), Chacarín (a campesino who faces the cultural clash of the city), Tito Alumino (a crack addict) and Petronilo (a nerd who uses the technology to be accepted by women). Because of all these characters, we has won "Figura Revelación en 2013" conducted by the newspapers Día a Día and El Siglo, and "Figura influyente" en el 2014.

His dancing career started in 2009, when he is enrolled in Instituto Superior de Bellas Artes del Instituto Nacional de Cultura, where he studied Escenic Arts, and trained in classic ballet, modern dance, latin and folkloric rhythms and theater, and participated in the Decameron Hotel dancing crew. He also participated in the modeling field, winner of "Best Body" in Mr. Chiriquí 2007, Mr. Internet in Mr. Panamá 2018. He started his singing career in 2016, produced by Genios Musicales, singing urban genre songs like "Woe woe", "Te Confieso" and "No me digas que no".



Horacio Prado

AMBASSADOR AWARD RECIPIENT: MASTER DESIGNER.

If there is something all Panamanians agree is that the Carnival from Las Tablas represents the top artistic spectacle, where the creativity and the fantasy get together to enhance the wonderful allegories that take us to any part of the planet. These creations are not products of improvisation but from the work of the artist, who transforms a piece of styrofoam into a piece of art. All the spectacular allegoric work starts when Horacio designs on paper, skill that is not easily found in any other designer.

Born in Panama City, Horacio moves to Las Lagunitas, Pocrí, in Los Santos at the age of three, where he spends all his childhood and a good part of his life. In his elementary school years, he used to paint murals and any other artistic work. He remembers clearly that his first design was for one of his high school's anniversaries (Manual Ma. Tejada Roca High School) in the city of Las Tablas. He made his debut as fantasy

designer at age 19, when he created a fantasy costume inspired in a Mayan Princess, which was worn by the queen of Calle Arriba, Isabel Loaiza. He was surrounded of real traditions, such as the making of Polleras (national costume of Panama), cutarras (leather sandals worn in the countryside), chácaras (bags for daily use, made out of vegetable fibers), and arts & crafts, which enabled him to have the ability to create.

Horacio has the recognition and distinction in the Panamanian artistic arena, and his main gratitude is to his dear parents, who with a lot of sacrifices made possible for him to accomplish his designing career, and to the people that helped him to make his work known, those who believed in his talent and work.

Horacio was awarded for two consecutive years as the "Best Fantasy Designer" at The Miss Panama for Miss Universe Beauty Pageant. In 2001, he designed "Princess Zarati" (a native Indian princess) worn by Justine Pasek, Miss Universe 2002. In 2002, he won by second time this prestigious award, and this time, his design called "Saracondé" (inspired on a dance of African background that expresses the rebelliousness of the slaves against the Spanish power); it was worn by Stephanie de Roux, Miss Panama 2002 and won "**Second Best Costume in Miss Universe 2003**".

Nice and humble, Horacio is far away from being an eccentric artist, he is a human being very spontaneous in his deals with people and very sure of what he wants in life. His first thought when he sees one of his designs in the Carnival Parades or worn by the beauty queens, is a strong and sincere gratitude to God, besides his great excitement by seeing his fantasy becoming a reality. He is known year after year, in Costa Rica at the Christmas Festival of Lights, in New York at the Portugal Day Parade, in Honduras at the San Pedro Sula Parade, in Panama nationwide and at the Rose Parade as volunteer. Horacio Prado is a sample of the inexhaustible source of talent and inspiration amongst our countryside people, who can reach the stars as well as he has demonstrated and who now designs for the Universe.

Especial Guest



Rosario Mayela García-Chanis

QUEEN OF CALLE ARRIBA DE LAS TABLAS 2016

Rosario Mayela García Chanis, a 21 year old is known as "Mayela la Unica" - Queen of 2016 Las Tablas Carnaval.

She began as a dancer at age 15 and belonged to dance troops such as Complot, Jazz Dance, and Muñecas del Mambo.

Currently, she's studying Structural Architecture at Santa Maria la Antigua University.



Mistress of Ceremony



Laura Yee

Born in Panama, Laura is a Style Coach and Image Consultant as well as owner of Boutique XL, exclusive for size Plus women.

Laura is a dancer from Complot and Tempo Dance Academy, where she started her career as stylist opening her costume design Factory for dancers.

She has participated in different Mega projects produced by TVN-2, such as "Muévelo" and the first season of "Dancing with the stars"; also conducting two segments in the daily talk show "Buenos Días".

Currently, she is the host of the Metromall Shopping, broadcasted by Mall TV-Channel 7, and soon she will start her Radio program broadcasted by Kys FM.

She started her acting career in 2016 with Julio César Herrera as her acting coach. She got trained in Acting at Centro Integral de Capacitación Artística (Cica by Karl Hoffmann); Acting for audiovisual media with director Dayan Coronado; Psychology applied to Drama Arts with Shaiara Pineau; and Professional Acting with Karl Hoffmann. Laura was the leading actor in the TV series "El Picaflor".

Entertainment

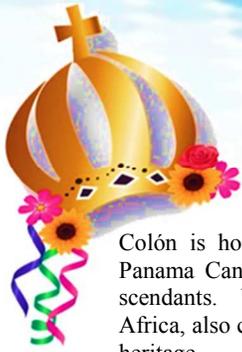


Orquesta La Selección

Orquesta LA SELECCION is a Salsa orchestra that can also play with authenticity other styles such as cumbia, cha cha cha, merengue, boleros, and even bachata. The band is composed of musicians from all over Latin America including Panama, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Peru, Colombia and Mexico.

La SELECCION has a high-energy brand of salsa music that appeals to devoted salsa dancers and Latin music DJ's throughout Los Angeles area. LA SELECCION's contagious rhythms produces an energy that brings back sounds of salsa from the past but with a modern sound.

Representing the music of bands from Puerto Rico such as La Sonora Ponceña, La Solución, Willie Rosario and many others but with our own unique style.



Grupo Congo Istmeño

Colón is home to the northern gateway of the Panama Canal as well as the Afro-Colonial descendants. With the arrival of the slaves from Africa, also came their contribution to our cultural heritage.

The Congo Dance of Panama is the most unique and colorful manifestation of folklore, and celebrates the resistance of Cimarrones, formerly African slaves during the Spanish colonial period who escaped to the hills and rain forests to establish independent communities. The dance has been passed on from generation to generation, and can be seen today in the province of Colon, where the Afro-Colonial legacy remains very much alive.

Grupo Congo Istmeño was formed by the efforts of many Panamanians living here in the United States between Los Angeles & the Inland Empire.



Currently, under the direction of Lorraine Grifis, Grupo Congo Istmeño seeks to share the wonderful history and culture of Afro-Panamanians through dance, music, costumes, and folklore. The Congo tradition is a satire using multi-colored cloths, jewels, and crowns that dates back to the 16th Century when Africans were first brought to the Americas and parodies the life of the kings and queens that ruled over them at the time. Panamanians used this tradition not only to make a mockery of royalty, but to regain some of the dignity that was taken from them. Panamanians are proud to call this tradition their own and are happy to be a part of the Special Olympics 2015.

Ballet Folklórico Viva Panamá



“Ballet Folklórico Viva Panamá” was created in 1991 under the direction of Victor Grimaldo, and it has toured extensively over the years, locally in more than sixty cities in California, nationally, in Texas and Nevada and internationally, in Mexico, Puerto Rico and Canada, providing to a wide variety of audiences the picturesque and joyful traditions of Panamanian folk customs.

Our dance company consists of a group of talented individuals; from diverse professional fields, who enjoy sharing their culture through music and dance. Its main goal is to provide audiences with a high quality sample of the spirit and flavor of Panama. Our repertoire is composed of original pieces approached with a contemporary vision, striving to preserve the originality and authenticity in the rhythms and movements of the traditional dances. Our entire team is committed to meeting those needs and bringing forth the true spirit of the Panamanian people.

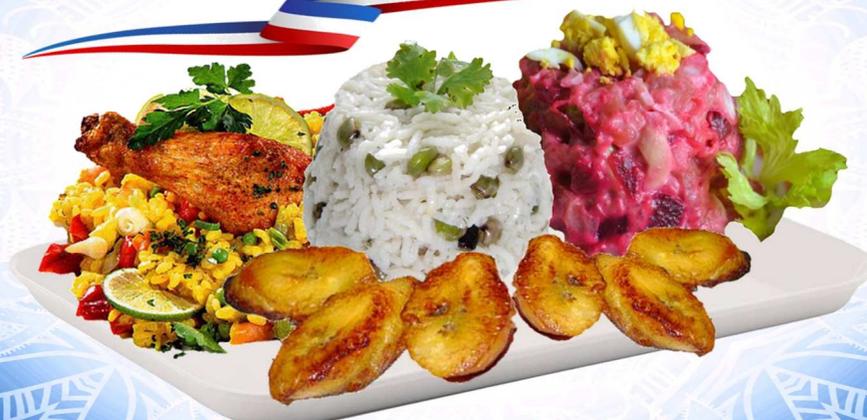
Enjoy the experience



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Viva Panama Organization
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Viva Panamá!

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Amos Lassen
REVIEWS BY AMOS LASSEN.COM

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OPENS NOVEMBER 17
LAEMMLE THEATRES LOS ANGELES

a JORGE AMEER film

OASIS

“WONDERFULLY CAPTURED

Prepare yourself for a film
you will not soon forget.
This is a film that deserves
5 gold stars!”

Amos Lassen
Reviews by Amos Lassen



HOLLYWOOD
INDEPENDENTS

“Magnificent cinematography
presents Panama as a real Oasis,
somewhere where all of us
wish to go when life
doesn't seem like
such an oasis.”

CULT CRITIC
FILM MAGAZINE

THIS IS AN OFFICIAL HOLLYWOOD FOREIGN PRESS VOTING MEMBERS SCREENING FOR 2018 GOLDEN GLOBES CONSIDERATION

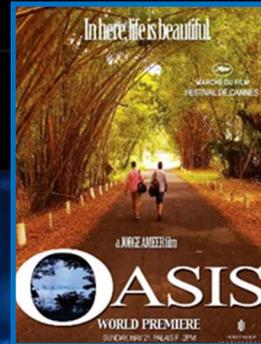
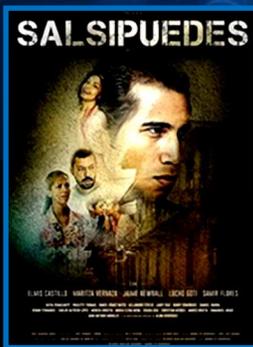
CLOSING NIGHT FILM
FILMS FROM PANAMA2017

GRAUMAN'S EGYPTIAN THEATRE
SATURDAY, AUGUST 19 7:30PM HOLLYWOOD

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representing the harvest of the film industry in Panama.



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Saturday, August 19, 2017
Egyptian Theater, Hollywood.
Filmsfrompanama.org