

# Festivals celebrate culture, film



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**T**his weekend, Sept. 26-27, Pacific islanders from across the country will be attending the 21st Annual Pacific Islander Festival, known as PIFA, at Ski Beach in San Diego. Themed “Heroes of the Pacific,” the event will feature over 100 food, craft and information booth vendors. It is probably the largest gathering of Pacific Islanders on the U.S. mainland.

The two-day schedule of events kicks off with the traditional conch shell call, or “kulu,” and chanting. Singers, dancers, and musicians representing Guam, Hawaii, the Marianas, Samoa and Tahiti will grace the stage and entertain the thousands of people expected to attend this free event.

The festival is organized by the Pacific Islander Festival Association. Its website states its primary purpose is to promote charitable and educational projects, and to provide educational and cultural resources to everyone, with emphasis on the indigenous people of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. The mission is also to actively participate in the promotion and perpetuation of the traditional cultures, ancient historical data, language, attitudes and values of the indigenous people of Oceania. This volunteer organization has an executive board of directors with representatives of all the regions. It also provides scholarships and hosts the annual Miss PIFA competition.

The Guam Visitors Bureau and our FestPac Diaspora team will be at PIFA promoting the Festival of Pacific Arts in Guam next year. GVB will



be marketing the VISIT GUAM 2016 calendar of events along with the recently launched “Only on Guam” campaign. Meanwhile, several FestPac delegates selected to represent Guam as part of our diaspora will be there to raise awareness of FestPac and take the opportunity of the huge crowds to do some fundraising.

Over the years, many Guam companies have had a presence at PIFA and this year is no different. Crowns Guam and the Tymeless Brand will surely catch the attention of our Chamorros overseas, as will other Guam booths and wares. Good luck to everyone and congratulations to PIFA on your 21st Festival. Please support our diaspora team at the FestPac booth!

Meanwhile, here at home, we will be treated to the 5th Guam International Film Festival, September 26 through 30. Spearheaded by the Muña brothers, Don and Kel, along with JD Iriarte and a score of volunteers, close to 60 films will be screened at the Agana Stadium Theaters. Previous media releases state over 200 submissions were received from 33 countries. Local film, full-length features, shorts, documentaries and mu-

sic videos will be featured. It will be a film binge to the nth degree!

During her visit here in March, SPC culture adviser Elise Huffer met with our Visual Arts Committee and spoke of an ongoing Pacific film mapping project. She was very excited about the potential of partnering the various film festivals in the Pacific, including GIFF.

The Festival International du Film Documentaire Océanien in French Polynesia will be hosting its 12th edition in April 2016. In its first year, the Nuku’alofa Film Festival will be held in Tonga and then there is the Pasifika Film Festival in Sydney, Australia, in its second year that will be relaunched this November.

Film is a very powerful platform and FestPac can be the venue to provide this networking opportunity. We have a proven event in GIFF. We have a community of filmmakers and we have cultural content that the world is hungry for. I am looking forward to GIFF and am excited to see what we will feature in film at next year’s FestPac.

Have you been on the FestPac website recently? Thanks to the efforts of the FestPac Marketing Committee, the site has been refreshed with a new look and will be more dynamic and robust. Please log on to [www.guamfestpac2016.com](http://www.guamfestpac2016.com) and give us some feedback. The traffic on the web has increased and we anticipate it and our Facebook page will be the main communication stream with the participating countries. So like us on Facebook and Twitter also! These social media streams will serve as our united voice of the Pacific!

*Monica Okada Guzman is chairwoman of the Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities Agency.*