

# Cut and print

Gentle documentary by local filmmaker highlights annual Davis program

By Chris Erickson  
ENTERPRISE CORRESPONDENT

Since its inception in 2004, the Davis Film Festival has featured everything from locally produced shorts to Oscar-nominated documentaries.

This year's festival will open at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 5, at the Varsity Theatre, 616 Second St., Davis. That evening's program will be highlighted by "Encounter Point," winner of the audience award at the San Francisco International Film Festival. The documentary concerns a group of Israeli and Palestinian civilians who risk their lives and public standing to promote a nonviolent end to the ongoing conflict between their peoples.

The festival continues Friday and Saturday, April 6-7, at the Veterans' Memorial Theater, 203 E. 14 St. A portion of the proceeds from the April 7 "Human Rights Night" program will go to Will and Jane Lotter and their organization, Davis Religious Community for Sanctuary.

The festival party will take place from 4 to 6 p.m. Saturday, April 7, at the Davis Art Center, 1919 F St. Diane Patterson will perform, and food and drink will be provided.

Single-event tickets are \$10; all-festival passes are \$35. Tickets are available at Armadillo Music, 205 F St.. For further information, call 759-9448 or visit [www.davisfilmfest.org](http://www.davisfilmfest.org).

As might be expected, the 2007

Davis Film Fest also will include local entries such as "Frank the Barber," a short documentary by Davis filmmaker Jeff Palmer. The 36-year-old director began the project in 1996 in his native New Hampshire, and he finally finished editing it last year.

Technical setbacks, a tight budget and an acknowledged lack of focus caused post-production to drag on much longer than anticipated.

The movie's subject is the late Frank Marchand, a master barber from Rochester. As the film proceeds, Marchand gently recounts his experiences during his 60-year career, from drunken men challenging each other to get mohawks, to the lean years of the 1970s, when men grew their hair out and stopped coming to barbershops.

Palmer decided to make the movie after meeting Marchand in 1996.

"I was out and about one night, running errands or something," Palmer recalled. "I saw the sign in the window that said 'Used Records.' So I went inside, started looking around, and then realized it was a barbershop, too."

He laughed. "What a great combination!"

Marchand was a DJ at a Rochester golf club for 30 years, and he had accumulated thousands of LPs. When he retired from that gig, he brought the records to his barbershop to sell.

Marchand's favorite big band jazz artists — Lionel Hampton, Benny Goodman and Count Basie — provide the soundtrack for Palmer's film.

Palmer initially intended to make a more inclusive documentary, perhaps a Ken Burns-like epic on seacoast barbering. And although Palmer interviewed



COURTESY PHOTO

Filmmaker Jeff Palmer's documentary, "Frank the Barber," is a record of a barber at work: a profession that defined Frank Marchand, standing at far left, whose father and two brothers also were barbers.

many barbers in the area, he eventually focused on Marchand, to create a more cohesive story.

Palmer wrapped up filming and began editing in 1997. Two years later, Marchand died of complications after surgery, at the age of 82.

Computer problems contributed to Palmer's troubles, including a hard drive crash that wiped out his progress. Frustrated and growing tired of the project, he directed other shorts and his first feature-length film. (For more information about Palmer's work, visit [flickerpictures.com](http://flickerpictures.com).)

"I tried to make 'Frank the Barber' happen," he said, "but it never panned out. And so, over the years, it was always that project hanging over my head."

In the fall of 2003, Palmer and his wife, Rebecca, moved to Davis upon her acceptance into the UC Davis School of Veteri-

nary Medicine. He struggled to find a niche in this new art community 3,000 miles from his home state.

"When you're surrounded by friends and people who you can work with, it's tough when that's taken away. You can't just run up to someone on the street and say, 'I make movies, what do you do? Let's make movies!'"

Palmer found work at Ace Hardware, framing pictures, and then at Television Education, editing video. He also got involved at Davis Community Television, where he met Judy Plank, director of the Davis Film Festival. In 2005, his short comedy "Duplicity" was accepted into that year's festival.

Following the completion of "On the Fringe," his first feature-length effort, Palmer finally was ready to return to his old friend. The availability of user-friendly

digital editing systems — and the deadline for this year's festival — inspired him to finish what he began a decade before.

"I needed to have closure. I didn't want people to ask me about it anymore."

After its release, "Frank the Barber" won the Judges' Choice Award at the Filmstream Short Film Festival, sponsored by Artstream Studios in Rochester. Palmer also has plans to submit the film to the New Hampshire Film Expo.

Palmer learned many things over the years, but one lesson is crucial: not to take on too many projects at once. That, more than anything else, held up "Frank the Barber" for so many years.

"I'm really thankful to have had the footage," he said. "It was a real meaningful project for me."

"And it does feel good to have it done!"

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