

Nicole Delma Honors Air, Land, And Sea

HIFF environmental film category lands at Tutto il Giorno

By Bridget LeRoy
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On Thursday, May 16, an event at Tutto il Giorno in Sag Harbor will offer up a screening of “The Serengeti Rules,” an Air, Land, and Sea inspired dinner, and a discussion featuring local environmental experts including East End naturalist and writer Mike Bottini and Edwina von Gal of the Perfect Earth Project. The evening has been put together by Nicole Delma, who founded the Air, Land, and Sea category for the Hamptons International Film Festival.

“Air, Land, and Sea was founded in 2016 when I approached HIFF to see if they would be willing to start a category for environmental film,” Delma said. “After spending a couple of years volunteering and serving on the board of a local environmental organization, I kept coming back to the notion that film has a way to inspire and transform people in a way that other mediums do not.”

HIFF’s Executive Director Anne Chaisson “and the entire HIFF team have been incredible allies,” Delma said. “Anne even connected me to Edward Norton, who auctioned himself off for a private surf session in support of the category back in 2017.”

Directed by Nicolas Brown, “The Serengeti Rules” follows the findings of five international scientists, who, in the 1960s, set out into the wilderness with an insatiable desire to learn more about the balance of life on earth — and, in the process, redefined our understanding of ecosystems around the world. The film features interviews with these five pioneers of modern ecology theory, and how their findings may help combat the effects of climate change. Of course, there is also gorgeous photography from some of the most exotic and remote places around the world.

“The film was originally screened

to multiple sell-out crowds at the 2018 festival,” Delma continued, “and we wanted to offer an additional screening at the request of several environmental leaders and filmgoers who felt it was one of the most compelling, relevant environmental films of our time and needed to be seen by more.”

Delma returned to the point of how film is one of the most powerful and emotional ways to enlighten and educate. “Through film, you can reignite the inner naturalist that smolders inside each of us and spark the curiosity to learn more, do more, and generally be more connected with our planet,” she said. “When immersed in incredible cinematography accompanied by inspirational narrative and beautiful music, it is hard not to walk away with a sense of ‘Go, Planet!’ and feel awakened and alive.”

Crisis Of Conscience

Delma was raised in the Pacific Northwest, where, she recalled, “playing in tidal pools and regular trips to the aquarium were just part of the lifestyle and the curriculum.” Her journey to a career in marketing and film included a stint on the television reality series, “Survivor: Pearl Islands.” Although she was the first one voted off the island, she said the experience was invaluable.

During “Survivor,” she said, “I was in the field in Panama for eight weeks being filmed by four cameras 24 hours a day. I was so mystified by the scale of the production and the editing and directing process that I think I lost sight of the \$1 million prize and focused my time on aligning with the production staff rather than on making the alliances I needed to win the prize.”

FOND Group, her company, was founded during Hurricane Sandy,



Georgica Spooner, Jesse Spooner, Indigo Spooner, Nicole Delma-Spooner. Independent/Richard Lewin

“when I experienced a crisis of conscience, as the director of email marketing for a major U.S. retailer, whose hands were completely tied, to send out a message that would have had tremendous impact to help those afflicted.” She resigned and went to work for Arianna Huffington as a consultant with a focus on wellness.

Huffington handed Delma the book, “Fearless,” and told her “to pursue whatever it was that moved me. Since that day, I’ve spent the last eight years consulting on projects and for brands that I felt I could influence positive change on and this has allowed me the flexibility to also pursue side endeavors such as founding Air, Land, and Sea,” she said. FOND Group, along with Susan and David Rockefeller and The Elkes Foundation, fund the program, but “we need more support, both in terms of sponsors but also in terms of businesses willing to host films, and filmgoers willing to support those screenings,” she said. “I see great environmental film as a critical catalyst in the same way a Warren Miller film can pump you up about snow and gravity before ski season, or a surf film can stoke you before a session on the water.”

Critical Species

“Gabby Karan De Felice and her mother, Donna Karan, have been exceptional to work with throughout this process,” Delma said of the Tutto il Giorno event on the May 16. “Their interest in community and in sustainability is sincere and is having a tremendous impact on Sag Harbor and beyond. The space is

stunning and could not be more appropriate for a screening,” she said.

“The Serengeti Rules” focuses on the notion of “keystone species,” and the event at Tutto il Giorno will as well. “Mike Bottini can speak to the phenomena of local keystone species, how the term is sometimes misunderstood and how human impact has influenced such species in our area, like the fiddler crab or ribbed mussel,” Delma said. “Edwina von Gal can tie this in nicely with her work to help homeowners, landscapers, and designers to move to more natural forms of lawn and landscape. This is particularly relevant as the actions we take to eradicate ticks or kill weeds directly hurt the ecosystems and compromise the keystone and other critical species.”

Lastly, she said, “Mike and Edwina both have a number of local projects they can suggest where local citizens can get involved as volunteer scientists and observers. This is especially important as it ties in to the theme of the film, in that we are all naturalists at heart and don’t need to abandon that calling just because we didn’t choose environmental careers. Our goal again is to excite people about our planet, give them hope and inject them with the curiosity to get back in touch with their natural selves. Simply by being more observant, more aware of our surroundings and our connection to our natural environment, we will net out a positive impact,” she said. “I’m certain of this.”

Tickets are available at <https://www.goevent.com/HIFF/e/AirLandandSeaScreeningSerengetiRules>.

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