



For Immediate Release

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Filmmakers Launch Film in Absence of Fiesta

San Jose, California, June 26, 2020—Devotees of Pamplona's running of the bulls will not be making the trip to Spain for the first time in forty-two years due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The city council announced in April that the annual Fiesta de San Fermin would not be taking place in July as it has since the early 19th century.

Since the mid 1900s this local event has grown, largely due to its depiction in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, into one of the world's largest parties. Participants travel, in the millions, from all over the globe to take part in the 8 days of non-stop party.

"The cancellation this year due to COVID-19 comes as a complete shock." Said Stephanie Mutsaerts, who owns Northern Spain Travel, a tourist company in Pamplona. "To those who attend the fiesta every year, the cancellation is almost inconceivable."

One group of filmmakers and journalists from the San Francisco Bay Area, whom Mutsaerts served as a local Spanish producer and coordinator, hope fans will watch their film *¡Fiesta!* online. Shot during 2017, *¡Fiesta!* is a documentary series in two episodes that brings the viewer to Pamplona to let them experience the festival from the comfort of their couch.

"Your film will, with a good bottle of Rioja, be a remedy for my sadness," said American runner Joe Distler in an email to the producers. This is only the second time in 51 years that Distler has missed fiesta.

"We wanted these films to be an immersive experience," said Executive Producer Neal Waters. "We spent June and July of 2017 gathering materials and interviewing the people that make this such an amazing event."

After doing research, Waters discovered that the world-famous party is much more than the drunken bacchanal that is often depicted in contemporary accounts.

"One of my goals was to show the whole story of fiesta, not just the bulls and the wine." Waters said. "Trust me there is a lot of wine but there is also a lot of music, fireworks, religion and other cultural experiences."

Director Gabriel Pout Lezaun grew up in Pamplona, but until joining the production team had very little experience with the fiesta, "when the opportunity to get involved in such a comprehensive project came," said Lezaun, "I couldn't refuse reconnecting with that story."

"With this documentary we have only scratched part of the surface," said Lezaun. "We hope we have found part of the essence that makes each individual fall in love with the Fiesta de San Fermin."

If you would like to experience the Fiesta de San Fermin you can find the *¡Fiesta!* project on Vimeo On Demand at vimeo.com/ondemand/fiesta.

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