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## Oakland International Film Festival begins Thursday

By Angela Woodall  
Oakland Tribune

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"Boys are born but men are made" is the subtitle of "Equinox," a film that's an Oakland product. That makes the two-hour film by Baayan Bakari appropriate as the opening feature for the Oakland International Film Festival that begins Thursday and runs until Oct. 16.

The film revolves around Malachi, a high school senior growing up in the East Oakland hills, who is trying to define his manhood while surrounded by gangsters, pimps and players.

Malachi, played by Oakland native Will E. Chapman, craves respect and the courage he needs to overcome obstacles in his life, including a mother (Melvina Jones) who abuses her disabled husband, Malachi's father, played by Achebe Hoskins.

But Malachi's quest for manhood

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is tested by his family, friends and girlfriend, Tiffany, played by Tatiana Monet.

In the end, he is supported by "Naima," played by Tiara Phalon, and a "rites of passage" program that reflects the filmmaker's decadelong work with The Mentoring Center in Oakland.

Bakari said he wanted to highlight mentors whose work often is overlooked but is vital to communities, such as Der eca Blackmon. Playing herself in the film, Blackmon's character diverts Malachi's sister, "Brandy," played by Jazmyne Young, away from her path of "video vixen" that puts her life in danger.

This is the third film for Bakari, 36, who turned full-time to moviemaking in 1999 after his mother's death as an avenue to influence how young people see themselves

and expand the choices of media. Bakari said he wanted to help fill the void of ideas on the cultural landscape by providing powerful, meaningful stories that still are entertaining.

"I am trying to stomp in there," he said.

The movie was filmed on digital video in about two weeks, Bakari said, using the Bay Area and Oakland as a backdrop to "give the location a life."

Oakland and the Bay Area have a texture — a distinct feeling, he said.

Included are shots of Lake Merritt, the Grand Lake Theatre, the City Center, West Oakland, as well as the Tribune building. The indoor domestic scenes were shot in Bakari's home in Richmond, where he grew up.

With "Equinox" scheduled for 9 p.m. Thursday, Bakari is looking for funds for his next film, "Summer Rain," which he plans to shoot in Oakland and which will combine his love for the art and power of film.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, Bakari said, a movie backed by image and sound "is worth a million."

In addition to "Equinox," opening night includes "Traces of the Trade," a film about the slave trade that spans Rhode Island, Ghana and Cuba. Other offerings come from Latin America, Africa and Europe, including "Charcoal Traffic," the first fictional film shot in Somalia in more than 15 years.

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## If you go

"Equinox" begins 9 p.m. Thursday at the Grand Lake Theatre. For details about the film and its cast, visit [www.equinoxmovie.com](http://www.equinoxmovie.com).

The Oakland International Film Festival runs from Thursday until Oct. 16 at the Grand Lake Theatre, 3200 Grand Ave. Tickets are \$10 per block of movies. Passes for all seven days are available for \$99 to \$250,

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A scene from "Equinox," a feature film opening Thursday at the Oakland International Film...

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