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Still Begley after all these years

Earth Day, Short Films and Ed Begley Jr.

BY CHRISTIAN KALLEN • September 17, 2025 23



SOLAR ED Actor-environmentalist Ed Begley Jr. on the roof of his Studio City home. He'll be coming to Healdsburg for an appearance at the Healdsburg International Short Film Festival on Sept. 27.

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"The first Earth Day was 1970," recalled actor Ed Begley Jr. "At that point I was 20 years old and I'd lived two decades in the horrible smog of Los Angeles. It wasn't a fiction, it was a fact, how dirty the air was. And I asked the people who were organizing it, 'What's your plan for Earth Day and what are you going to do with the other 364 days?'"

"They said, 'We're going to clean up the air; we're going to clean up the water.'"

"So I said, 'Sign me up.'"

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The Healdsburg Tribune



Begley has carried that commitment through for the past 50-plus years – driving electric cars or biking, recycling and eventually becoming vegan. His lifelong commitment came from lived experience: the lung-wrenching agony of trying to breathe in heavy smog, the dirty sea water from the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill and the Cuyahoga River catching fire that same year.

Even as his acting career developed and grew, Begley – who turns 76 this week – continued to promote the “green” lifestyle, hosted the television program *Living With Ed* with his wife Rachelle Carson, and wrote two books including *Ed Begley, Jr.’s Guide to Sustainable Living* (“Straight talk from Hollywood’s eco-nerd,” raved *Outside Magazine*).

Now a third book, *To the Temple of Tranquility...and Step On It!*, is on the shelves, more a memoir (with a few surprising name-drops) than a how-to. But the actor admitted it is a “kind of sneaky environmental book, if you will have it, talking about finding some serenity in your life and becoming more satisfied in the material world as a result.”

It includes background stories about some of his roles in *St. Elsewhere*, for which he was nominated for an Emmy six times, as well as *Portlandia*, *Six Feet Under* and literally hundreds of other TV shows, all the way back to *My Three Sons* in 1967. His movie credits are almost as long – from *Elvis* to *She-Devil* and *This is Spinal Tap*. The book includes a bit of tea served on his friends and neighbors in Hollywood, including Marlon Brando, Jack Nicholson, Michael Richards, Meryl Streep and Carrie Fisher. Yet there is also self-aware insight about his drinking and other addictions, which he managed to kick at last.

Begley will be appearing at the Raven Theater on Sept. 27 (6pm) to sign copies and take questions on any relevant topic. “I hope people will ask questions about the environment, that’s very dear to me,” he said. “And my work as an actor and what’s in the book and dealing with Parkinson’s, whatever. There’s nothing that’s off the table.”

Judge Begley Jr.

His appearance is part of the annual Healdsburg International Short Film Festival, for which he is once more a judge. His friendship with co-founder Pamela Demorest over the years has made it possible. Demorest said, “I met Ed back when I was an actress in L.A. We hung out in the same circles of theater and film people, many of whom I still stay connected with.”

Make no mistake, Begley knows his filmic arts. When asked about some of his past roles – which included a recurring part on *Better Call Saul* – he went off on show creator Vince Gilligan, citing the opening sequence in the preceding *Breaking Bad* shot for shot.

“You see a desert sky ... then you see a pair of pants flying through the air, and a motor home zooms right past,” he said. “Then you’ve got a low-rider car with the back window shot out, and there’s a bunch of shell casings on the ground in the foreground. You know, what does that mean?” He didn’t stop there, but continued on for awhile, until he caught himself.



FILM FEST FLAGS Announcing the 2025 Healdsburg International Short Film Festival.

“I like visually appealing films. I certainly like that,” he emphasized. “And then if you get to that good level of storytelling, you can have a good hook to the movie and get people interested in what’s happening. And that takes some doing in 2025.”

Begley has served on the HISFF jury panel for four years, and though this is the first time he’s “headlining” a festival event, it won’t be his first time in the Healdsburg area. Actor Jeff Kober, another member of the film jury, will also be in town. Virtual judges, screening from afar, include Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan, SNL talent and voice actor Laraine Newman, Chicago storyteller Cindy Caponera, Kristina Motwani and Kathia Sanchez-Aldana.

“You know, I love films,” Begley said. “I love the film festival and I can’t wait to see all the wonderful folks that come up there. It’s a great crowd.”

Ed Begley Jr.’s booksigning appearance (for his *To the Temple of Tranquility...And Step On It!*) will take place at 6pm on

Saturday, Sept. 27, at the Raven Performing Arts Theater.

Other festival highlights include the Friday, Sept. 26, “Kick-off Soiree” at 6:30pm (at the Healdsburg Center for the Arts Gallery at 130 Center St.), and a “Red Carpet” screening at the Raven at 8:15pm. Additional block screenings will be held at the Raven on Saturday, Sept. 27, at 11am, 1pm, 4pm and 8:15pm. Sunday screenings are at 1pm and 4pm. The Screening Finale and Awards Ceremony will be held at 7pm.

Details and tickets at [healdsburgfilm.com/2025-tickets-schedule](https://healdsburgfilm.com/2025-tickets-schedule).

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CHRISTIAN KALLEN

Christian Kallen has called Healdsburg home for over 30 years, and has worked in journalism since the Santa Cruz Good Times was started. After a career as a travel writer and media producer, he started reporting locally in 2008, moving from Patch to most other papers in Sonoma County before joining the Healdsburg Tribune in 2022.

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