

# DC Shorts Film Festival 2009

## Media Coverage

### Articles

**The GW Hatchet**, 9/17/09 – “Short Films, Big Ideas” by Joshua Hock. Examines DC Shorts commitment to the Filmmaker.

**The Hoya** (Georgetown University), 9/08 – “DC Shorts Showcases Work of Local Artists” by Emily Gates. Takes a look at the human side of DC Shorts Film Festival.

**Roll Call**, 9/10/09 – “Short and Sometimes Sweet Films Kick Off Today” by Casey Hynes. An in depth article on DC Shorts Film Festival.

**Washington Jewish Weekly**, 9/9/09 – “Bringing Guantanamo military tribunals to life ‘The Response’ at DC Shorts Film Festival” by Aaron Leibel. Highlights Sig Libowitz and his film playing at DC Shorts.

**MetroWeekly**, 9/10/09 – “Shorts Stuff” by Tom Avila. Talks with Jon Gann about DC Shorts.

**DiamondbackOnline**, 9/9/09 – “Short and Sweet” by Lauren Cohen. Discusses DC Shorts and one of its films with Jon Gann.

**NBC Washington**, 9/9/09 – “Film Fest: Short and Sweet” by Carissa Dimargo. Shares all the details about DC Shorts.

**The Washington Post**, 9/4/09 – “The DC Shorts Film Festival, Briefly” by Lavanya Ramanathan. A quick quote from Jon Gann and a glance at some of this year’s films.

**The Examiner**, 9/1/09 – “DC Shorts Film Festival is Long on Entertainment” by Marsha Dubrow. Profiles DC Shorts and highlights films.

**OnTap** – “Shortcuts: For the Love of Shorts. Films That Is” by Connie Poole. Presents an overview of the DC Shorts Film Festival and profiles some of the local filmmakers involved.

**OnTap** – “DC Filmmakers’s: Making the Cut” by David Nuttycombe. Lauds DC Shorts for its focus on filmmakers and showcases directors featured in the festival.

**Roll Call**, 2/5/09 – “He’s Making D.C. a Film Town” by Tricia Miller. Examines the origins of the DCFA and DC Shorts.

**MovieMaker Magazine**, Fall 09 – “Coast to Coast, Eight Great Fests” DC Shorts segment by Andrew Gnarre. DC Shorts is named on of “Eight Great Fests” by MovieMaker magazine.

**The Independent**, 11/25/08 – “Funding the Festival Fantasy” by Jericho Parms. A look at how the DC Shorts, Teaneck and Slamdance film festivals got their start.

### Listings

**Washingtonian**, 9/10/09 - Highlights DC Shorts at the top of it’s Where & When newsletter.

### Radio and Television

**News Channel 8**, 9/9/09 - Jon Gann appears on Let’s Talk Live to talk about DC Shorts.

**WAMU 88.5 FM**, 8/14/09 – Metro Connection segment on the history and future of the DC Shorts Film Festival.

**WAMU 88.5 FM**, 8/12/09 – Interview with Jon Gann on Metro Connection.

**Comcast Local Edition**, 7/09 - Jon Gann appears on Comcast Local Edition.

### Websites and Blogs

**DailyCandy DC**, 9/10/09 - Suggested checking out DC Shorts.

**Going Out Gurus**, 9/09 - Promote DC Shorts in a Washington Post online chat.

**DCist**, 9/09 – Includes DC Shorts in its daily schedule.

**Fab Empire**, 9/10/09 - Features DC Shorts.

**K Street Kate**, 9/09 - Suggests DC Shorts.

**Capitol Rundown**, 9/10/09 – Enjoys the DC Shorts Film Festival.

**Stylecaster**, 9/09 - Mentions DC Shorts.

**CreativeDC**, 9/9/09 – Amanda mentions DC Shorts.

**DC This Week**, 9/19/09 – “DC Shorts are on the Horizon” Posting by Jade Floyd highlights DC Shorts.

**GoingDC**, 9/09 – Suggests DC Shorts.

**Penn Quarter Living**, 9/8/09 - Reminds about DC Shorts coming up this weekend.

**WeLoveDC**, 8/19/09 – Don promotes Jon Gann’s appearance on WAMU’s Metro Connection to discuss DC Shorts Film Festival.

**The District**, 8/19/09 – Jordan promotes DC Shorts.

**ReadysetDC**, 8/19/09 – Announces ticket sales for DC Shorts.

**StudentFilmmakers.com**, 1/3/09 - Call for entries for DC Shorts.

# The Washington Post

## DC Shorts Brings Fun to Film

By Lavanya Ramanathan

DC Shorts begins Thursday, and this year the festival of short films will cast a considerable shadow, with more than 100 films showing at two theaters over eight days. To see them all, you would have to sit through 10 screenings each the length of a feature film, so we've compiled a DC Shorts primer: a shortlist (forgive the pun) of six movies that epitomize the spirit of a short (even though a couple clock in at more than 20 minutes).

"A lot of feature films, if you cut out all the superfluous stuff, they're really shorts," says filmmaker Jon Gann, founder of the festival. Shorts, he says, are "films that cut the fat. They get down to business quickly."

-- Lavanya Ramanathan

### **Pigeon: Impossible**

**PLOT:** A particularly annoying pigeon causes a Secret Service agent to lose his characteristic cool.

**SHORT TAKE:** Writer and director Lucas Martell's first attempt at animation was a five-year project that yielded only six minutes of film. The 3-D animation and witty hijinks, however, are pure Pixar-esque gold. Bonus: It's set in Washington with recognizable landmarks in the background.

**SEE IT:** The film is part of Showcase 1 on Thursday and Sept. 12-13; the free Family Showcase on Sept. 12; Animated and Experimental Shorts on Sept. 14; and Showcase 10 on Sept. 16.

### **Beware of Bear**

**PLOT:** A nature photographer on assignment in a small village is warned not to venture out, lest he come face-to-face with a killer bear haunting the town.

**SHORT TAKE:** At 20 minutes, this Greek offering from Victoria Vellopoulou takes its time weaving a tale with twists and, more important, a fully developed story.

**SEE IT:** Part of Showcase 2, this short will screen Thursday and Sept. 12-13 and as part of World Showcase: European Shorts on Sept. 16.

### **In the Name of the Son**

**PLOT:** A Bosnian Muslim who has lost a friend in the Bosnian war moves on, only to find himself confronted years later in Los Angeles by a Serbian with a heart-wrenching request.

**SHORT TAKE:** Director Harun Mehmedinovic grew up in Sarajevo during the Bosnian war, and his 25-minute film, released in 2007, has picked up awards from the American Film Institute and at the Telluride Film Festival.

**SEE IT:** The film is part of Showcase 2 on Thursday and Sept. 12-13.

### **Adelaide**

**PLOT:** A 22-year-old hypochondriac searches for someone she can relate to, and he might just be the guy who doles out her prescriptions.

**SHORT TAKE:** Liliana Greenfield-Sanders's comedy reflects an offbeat, slightly morbid sense of humor that is present in many of the festival's offerings. The ultimate message: Everyone can find love.

**SEE IT:** This movie is in Showcase 4, which runs Sept. 11-13.

### **Boo**

**PLOT:** A young woman, home alone on Halloween, answers the door and finds herself terrorized by a prankster. But is it retaliation for the raisins she has been handing out?

**SHORT TAKE:** This 12-minute morsel (which began life as a student film) is quirky and one of the funniest movies in the festival. And, it wouldn't be a short without a twist, and this twist is a goody.

**SEE IT:** The film is part of Showcase 6 on Sept. 11-12 and Sept. 14.

## Short and Sometimes Sweet Films Kick Off Today

By Casey Hynes Roll Call Staff

There is no overarching theme filmmakers have to follow when they submit their work to the DC Shorts Film Festival. Writers and producers are free to develop whatever content interests them. But according to festival director Jonathan Gann, some common threads naturally emerged this year — and in many cases, this art does appear to imitate life.

Gann said the festival judges have received numerous submissions inspired by the economic crisis, and the ongoing conflicts between Muslims and Jews. And then there is the ever-popular theme of love.

However, "It's not really a happy romantic year," Gann said. "It's a 'this is what I got' year."

Whatever the mood, DC Shorts kicks off today and will run through Sept. 17. Volunteer judges will review the 100 short films accepted for the festival during the weekend showings, and each movie will be rescreened next week. Festival-goers can purchase \$12 tickets to separate showcases, which includes eight to 12 films on a range of subjects, or they can buy an all-access pass to all screenings and receptions for \$125.

Families on a budget can get a real bargain at the Free Family Showcase screening Saturday morning. A series of films, including the kid-friendly "Pigeon: Impossible" and "Doggie Drill Team," will be shown at both festival locations, the Burke Theater at the U.S. Navy Memorial and the E Street Cinema.

The films range from 90 seconds to 26 minutes and are a mix of documentary and fictional material. This year's festival is different from previous ones in that movies are being shown at two venues (the entire event used to be held at the E Street Cinema). Gann said the festival staff has also worked to make it an interactive experience by setting up post-screening question-and-answer sessions between the audience and filmmakers.

Now in its sixth year, DC Shorts has become an established event on the film festival scene. *MovieMaker* magazine named the festival one of the nation's best, and some of this year's participants said they chose to enter because credible sources had spoken so highly of it.

For writer/director Shawn Morrison, all it took was a couple of clicks on his computer screen to know that DC Shorts was something he wanted to be a part of.

"I could tell by the Web site alone that D.C. had their act together," he said. "D.C. has been great. They really care about the format. They're on our side and publicizing for us." Morrison is showing "Forever's Not So Long," an end-of-the-world tale about a guy who loses everything as he faces the prospect of his final moments on earth.

The audience is never told why the world is ending — Morrison said he wanted to leave that question open-ended. Movies about the final days are usually big-budget Hollywood films, Morrison said, and he wanted his to be a character study instead.

"It's kind of nice when you just sort of hint at something and let people's imaginations take over. It adds to the spookiness of it," he said.

Sig Libowitz and Adam Rodgers took a story from the headlines and created a dramatic retelling using transcripts from the trials of Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, detainees. Libowitz said he wanted to show people the complexity of the situation there — the pressures on the military officers running the trials, as well as the stress and confusion endured by prisoners.

Before reading the transcripts in a class at the University of Maryland law school, Libowitz said he "thought I had an understanding of Guantánamo."

"But it's much deeper, and I really wanted to show what's going on," he said.

Libowitz also said the movie was not made with any political motive. "It's just to give an audience the opportunity to see what these tribunals are like," he said.

While festival-goers are treated to creative and diverse films, it also gives filmmakers a chance to appreciate the work of their peers.

"It's inspiring to see how other people work in that format," Morrison said. "You see what another filmmaker does and you get jealous and think about what else you can do."

Visit [dcshorts.com](http://dcshorts.com) for more information and to purchase tickets.

## Short films, big ideas D.C. filmmakers strut their stuff at local gala

Bigger does not always mean better.

That's what area artists proved at the D.C. Shorts Film Festival this week, an annual event that brings together local filmmakers.

"In all seriousness, audiences like films made for shoestrings as much as, if not more than, the blockbusters," said Jon Gann, the founder of the event. "They're different kinds of film."

With the average feature film in Hollywood costing \$35 million a pop, "keep it short, keep it reel" was not only the motto of the festival, but a requirement of those who submitted films. Gann estimated that the more than 800 filmmakers who participated in the event only spent between \$50 and \$100,000 on creating each short.

Held at the historic Landmark E Street Cinema, the sixth-annual festival was originally the concept of Gann who, after attending numerous events during his filmmaking career, said he was growing disillusioned with the atmospheres surrounding other festivals around the country.

"Most had been set up more to be about money, parties, and sponsors than the films being presented," he said.

It was at the Ashland Independent Film Festival in Oregon that Gann realized he needed to bring a new type of show to the District.

"They didn't know what they were doing, but they did it right," he said about the annual Pacific-Northwest showcase.

What Gann created in the capital has become a week-long presentation of original films no longer than 20 minutes. During the premiere weekend, awards were presented to the best of the competition and then each of the selected films were screened for the public based on genre and style.

The most competitive aspect of the festival, however, occurred before any of the shorts were seen in the theatre. When the films were all submitted, they were ranked by a panel of local filmmakers and industry volunteers. If the film

fell within the top 200 submissions, it proceeded to a second round of judging done by a committee of filmmakers and festival veterans.

Gann also created a unique system of response for those who submitted a short based on encouraging them to make strong film projects. When the acceptance or rejection decisions were made, the judges opened their comments and scores to the filmmakers.

But D.C. Shorts allowed festival attendees to do a little judging of their own too. On Sunday night, awards such as Audience Choice, Outstanding Local Film and the Festival Director's Choice were awarded to filmmakers. Prizes included money and gift certificates.

The culminating "Best of the Fest" showcase will take place Thursday Sept. 17 at 7:30 and 9 p.m.