

# DC Shorts Film Festival 2011

## Media Coverage

### Articles

**Washington Flyer**, Fall 2011- "Short People" by Chloe Thompson. Talks with Jon Gann and discusses DC Shorts.

**Washington Post – Going Out Guide** - Gives four stars to DC Shorts Film Festival and suggests everyone in the area attend.

**Washington Times**, 9/15/2011- "Get Out: Film The Room: Live" by Mike Riggs. Talks about the DC Shorts Film Festival.

**The Hoya**, 9/9/2011- "Festival Is Both Short and Sweet" by Kourosh Shaffy. Discusses the DC Shorts and the events that are to come.

**GW Hatchet**, 9/8/2011- "DC Shorts Film Festival takes over the big screen" by Rachel Milkovich. Shares the details about DC Shorts.

**Washington Examiner**, 9/8/2011- "Take 5 for Sept.9 through 11", by Robert Fulton. Gives the ticket information and special packages for DC Shorts.

**Washingtonian.com**, 9/8/2011- "Short Stories: The DC Shorts Film Festival", by Ian Buckwalter. Ian gives the must see films for the DC Shorts Film Festival.

**OnTap**, 9/2/2011- "DC Shorts: Short on Time, Long on Talent", by Marlene Hall. Talks about the DC Shorts Film Festival and the new films being shown.

**Washington City Paper** - City Pick for Thursday, September 9.

### Radio and Television

**Voice of Russia**, 9/9/2011- Jon Gann was interviewed about DC Shorts.

**Michael Eric Dyson Show**, 9/7/2011- Jon Gann appears on show and speaks about DC Shorts Film Festival.

**WAMU**, 9/7/2011- Highlights the kick off of DC Shorts Film Festival.

Festival Director Jon Gann appeared on **Comcast Newsmakers**

### Websites and Blogs

**KidFriendly DC**, 9/9/2011- Mentions DC Shorts as a great and fun environment for families.

**Borderstan**, 9/12/2011- Talks about DC Shorts and the expected reactions to the films being shown.

**Burke Patch**, 9/16/2011- Tells of the many international films being shown at DC Shorts.

**IndieGoGo**, 9/7/2011- Mentions DC Shorts.

**bt.no**, 9/16/2011- Mentions DC Shorts.

**Bitches Who Brunch**, 9/12/2011- Suggests DC Shorts.

**Jaunted**, 9/7/2011- Gives information on how to acquire tickets for DC Shorts.

**DC DESTINATION**, 9/8/2011- Places DC Shorts in their calendar of events.

**Penn Quarter Living**, 9/6/2011

**InsideNova** - Gives information about the DC Shorts Brazilian carnival.

**WashingtonDC.com** - Promotes the Brazilian Carnival and the DC Shorts Film Festival.

**The Georgetownner** - Briefly mentions the DC Shorts Brazilian Carnival.

**The Pink Line Project** - Suggests DC Shorts.

**Eventful.com** - Mentions the DC Shorts Film Festival and the DC Shorts Brazilian Carnival.

**Washington City Paper** - Gives brief location and time for DC Shorts.

**Brightest Young Things** - Mentions the DC Shorts Film Festival and the DC Shorts Brazilian Carnival.

**WTOP**, 9/1/2011- Highlights ten films that are a must see at the DC Shorts Film Festival.

**CulturalCapital.com** - Added DC Shorts to their list of cultural events in DC.

**What to Bring to America**, 9/5/2011- Mentions DC Shorts.

**Washington Post – Going Out Guide** - Gives four stars to DC Shorts Film Festival and suggests everyone in the area attend.

**DC Metro Mommy** - Mentions DC Shorts

**CultureMob**, 9/1/2011- Promotes DC Shorts.

**Borderstan**, 8/31/2011- Added DC Shorts to their calendar of events.

**Hollywood Official**, 8/24/2011- Gives mention to the DC Shorts Film Festival.

**DC Urban Moms**, 8/31/2011- Mentions DC Shorts

**Penn Quarter Living**, 8/29/ 2011- Highlights DC shorts.

**Social Studies**, 8/11/2011- Talks about contest to win tickets to DC Shorts Film Festival.

**D Guides**, 8/26/2011- Highlights the upcoming DC Shorts Film Festival and detailed information.

**About.com**, 8/29/2011- Rachel Cooper mentions DC Shorts.

**Indiewire**, 8/18/2011- DC Shorts Film Festival and Screenplay competition open up.

**Art202**, 8/16/2011- Discusses DC Shorts and its expansion of 11 days and 4 venues.

**Examiner.com**, 8/11/2011- Highlights how through its popularity the DC Shorts Film Festival has expanded four days.

**The Dressing**, 8/11/2011- Talks about DC Shorts and the new films being shown.

**Washington City Paper**, 7/12/2011- Promotes DC Shorts.

## DC Shorts Film Festival Kicks Off

By Stephanie Merry

Sarah Paulson stars in Neil LaBute's "After-School Special," which is showing at the DC Shorts Film Festival. (Photo courtesy of DC Shorts) Short films are the poetry of cinema. It's not easy to translate emotion and meaning to an audience while still being economical with words and time, so when it works, it can seem almost magical. And Washingtonians will have the chance to wonder "How'd they do that?" quite a bit when the DC Shorts Film Festival kicks off tonight. Through Sept. 18, audiences can catch 145 films from more than 20 countries at venues across town. But with 17 showcases of shorts — all clocking in at 20 minutes or less — it can be tough to figure out what's worth a look. After spending way too long watching previews, I've highlighted some of my most anticipated festival shorts below, each accompanied by a preview so you can judge for yourself.

*(each description was followed online by video trailers)*

Playwright and screenwriter Neil LaBute is a master at making audiences uncomfortable, while simultaneously giving viewers food for thought. His short "After-School Special" touts talented actors Sarah Paulson ("Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip") and Wes Bentley (who will always be known as that creepy kid from "American Beauty" to me).

It's hard to imagine a short about illegally crossing the Mexico-U.S. border could be laugh-out-loud funny, but that's what you'll find with "La Línea (The Line)."

The unique look of "Stanley Pickle" is thanks to a technique called Pixilation, but I prefer to refer to it as a supercool live action-animation mash-up with people instead of clay.

Amid many shorts inspired by love found and lost, "Tattoo" fills a void for suspense fans. This one seems sinister and potentially nightmare-inducing, which should delight the horror-loving crowd.

It's possible that "Worn" seems amazing just because of the Beach House song in the trailer. But the premise also sounds promising — a woman finds it impossible to face her wardrobe because every shirt and dress recalls her sketchy past indiscretions.

You can't glean much from the trailer for "The Strange Ones," but the mysterious aura coupled with the short's selection at both Sundance and SXSW bodes well.

It's got comedy, sweetness and sadness — and that's just during the trailer for "Miracle," which follows a man who finds out some surprising news while getting a vasectomy.

Among the 145 films, there are a few experimental offerings, including "Only in Dreams," which carries the same conceptual air as "Life in a Day." The film is made from found sounds and more than 3,000 images shot on a flatbed scanner.

Apocalyptic science fiction meets comedy during "The Interview," which tells the tale of the last two men on Earth, as one tries to get a job from the other.

Actor-musician Will Oldham stars in the Sundance-selected short "Pioneer" about a man telling his son an epic bedtime story.

"Toy Story" answered the question: What do stuffed animals get up to when their child owners are at school? "Sidewalk Wars" discloses what those little men in the pedestrian stoplights do when no one's looking. And it's a lot more violent.

It seems like Collette and Allen could provide enough fodder for a feature-length documentary, but we'll have to settle for 20 minutes with them. "Two's a Crowd" looks at the couple's unconventional married life — the two live in separate apartments in New York. But when sky-high rent forces them to cohabit, things get even more interesting.

The Tribeca-selected short "Last Resort" fits neatly into the realm of suspenseful drama. After a car-jacking goes awry, a criminal has to make some tough decisions.

"Cataplexy" puts quite the twist on boy meets girl. After a man hires a prostitute (for, um, medical reasons), he realizes the hooker is an old friend. And I thought Neil LaBute would provide the most awkward situation...

# WASHINGTONIAN

## Short Stories: The DC Shorts Film Festival

Ian Buckwalter's picks for what to see at the recently expanded festival over the next ten days

The DC Shorts Film Festival is back with 145 films from 23 nations. Image courtesy of the festival

Washington loves short films. During the run-up to the Oscars, just try to get a walk-up ticket to one of E Street Cinema's screenings of the Oscar-nominated shorts; they regularly sell out even the weeknight screenings. Same goes for the National Archives' pre-Oscar screening of the nominated documentary shorts. This year I witnessed a woman pleading with a security guard to get in after she found out that she was too far back in the line to gain entry, and she was one of dozens of people they had to turn away.

It should come as no surprise then that the DC Shorts Film Festival, which kicks off its eighth year tonight, has quickly become one of the city's premier film events. What it is about this city that makes people so excited for shorts, I'm not sure, unless busy, fast-paced living lends itself well to short attention spans. Whatever the reason, the festival's popularity has allowed it to vastly expand its offerings this year, with 145 films from 23 nations grouped into 17 programs—a significant increase over last year's 97 films in 9 programs. Each of the showcases contains a blend of longer short films, in the 15 to 20 minute range, with extremely short titles sprinkled into the mix, and each also tries to include a good mix of comedies, dramas, and experimental films.

All 17 of those programs will screen over the next three days during the festival's competition weekend. The festival continues after that for another week, re-screening all of the programs and recombining some shorts into specially themed selections. With greater density in the programming, the number of venues has expanded as well. This year, in addition to regular screening locations at E Street Cinema and the US Navy Memorial, there are also screenings at Artisphere in Rosslyn, and the Atlas Performing Arts Center on H Street, Northeast. Non-screening events can also be found at Madame Tussaud's, Gibson Guitar, and Clyde's of Gallery Place.

The Washingtonian had a chance to sample a number of titles, and the overall excellent quality of the random selection speaks to the commitment to quality in the festival's selection process. There are highly polished films, extremely rough films, films with local actors, and films with major stars and hot new names. Up-and-coming indie director David Lowery has an entry, *Pioneer* starring musician Will Oldham (better known by his recorded name, Bonnie

'Prince' Billy), about a father telling his son a bedtime story.

Another film with recognizable names attached is *After-School Special*, scripted by playwright and filmmaker Neil LaBute, directed by Jacob Chase, and starring Wes Bentley and Sarah Paulson. The short is ostensibly about Bentley and Paulson as single parents striking up a conversation at a Chuck-E-Cheese-style restaurant while their kids are playing. It's made some noise at festivals before this for a contrived-but-shocking twist, but everything that leads up to it is a fascinating study in social interaction, complete with the uncomfortable dialogue and situations that LaBute is famous (or infamous) for.

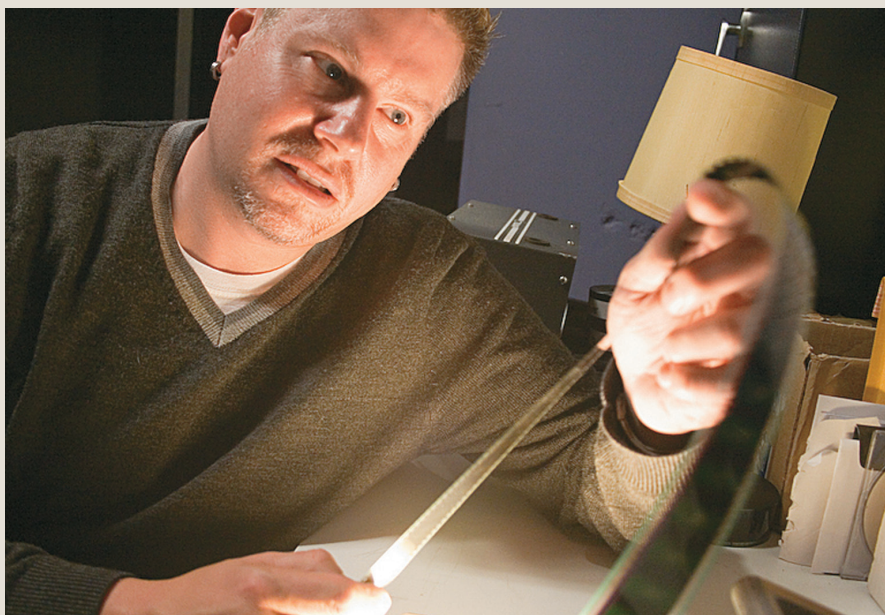
Unexpected twists are often a big part of these films: Short films seem to lend themselves to a pithy setup that allows for quick establishment of a situation before a filmmaker pulls the rug out with that twist. That applied to dramatic situations like LaBute's, or a comedy like Brittney Segal's *George's 40th Birthday*, in which a disgruntled office worker attempts to kill a co-worker, only to find the plan upending in unexpected ways; or the sweet romantic Australian short, *TGIF*, which makes the case that technological communication can have just as much potential for romance as more traditional forms.

I also particularly enjoyed a couple of films about film itself. Not just movies—but film as a physical medium, and one that's becoming less and less common. Physical film is particularly missed at festivals like this, which tend to showcase low-budget independent filmmakers who work almost exclusively in digital these days. Daniel Supanick's *Loading* is an experimental ode to the often frustrating act of loading film into a camera. Colin Foster's *Man With a Bolex Movie Camera* is an examination of and homage to the obsessiveness of filmmakers, depicting a film student who gets a little too technical when trying to make an old-fashioned 16-millimeter sex tape with his girlfriend. Both of these films are from local directors, and there are a number of other local titles available.

There are also animated films, documentaries, and a whole program of family fare to be had, as well as lectures and special events for filmmakers or people with an interest in how things work behind the scenes. There's something for everyone. And, because they're brief, should you find yourself faced with the occasional dud—the pointlessly annoying, but mercifully only one-minute long *Adventure Girls III*, for instance—at least you'll be assured that something entirely different is coming your way shortly.

# Short People

**D.C. Shorts Film Festival** continues to make brevity into high art.



ARMAND EMAMDOJMEH

**J**on Gann, director of the D.C. Shorts Film Festival, doesn't ramble. His mantra? Keep it short and sweet. "Not every book needs to be a novel," he insists. "Not every film needs to be 95 minutes. You can tell a great story in 10." Gann's festival (Sept. 8–18)—the nation's largest short-film festival and the only one of its kind in the Washington area—kicks off its eighth year. It screens films clocking in at 20 minutes or less.

This fall, D.C. Shorts also expands from four days to 11, featuring 150 films in four different venues. The event began with a simple disgruntled phone call to a friend. Gann is a filmmaker, in addition to his full-time job as founder and executive director of D.C. Film Alliance, which strives to connect all local film organizations together as beneficial resources.

After traveling the world to show one of his

own films in 50 international festivals, Gann became disheartened by the festivals' treatment of filmmakers and, along with a friend, decided to start his own in the District.

"Most festivals are about money and partying and big feature films," he explains. "They weren't about the filmmakers."

That sentiment is part of the reason Gann sees the D.C. Shorts as part entertainment, part education for the filmmakers and their audience. The films—the entries topped 1,200 this year—go through a rigorous screening process amid local filmmakers, past audience members and Gann himself, in which they are rated on a numerical score. As a rare addition, filmmakers are then sent their scores at the end of the judging process. Gann fields calls from angry filmmakers who didn't make the cut, but insists it's necessary to showcase the best.

"There's a festival for every film, but your

film is not for every festival," he says.

Why short films? "I think [they are] becoming more popular with the advent of the Internet and YouTube," Gann explains. "The market is expanding, and there's a lot of great content out there once you sift through it."

Although the festival does have some local talent, Gann says the work is mostly international, with countries such as Brazil, the U.K., Spain and Thailand as avid participants. D.C. is a world hub, making it the perfect place for all of these entrants, he says.

Gann explains that the festival isn't just for film lovers—the short flicks (like "The Potential Wives of Norman Mao," below) are great for everyone. Laughing, he says, "The great thing about short films is that even if you're not keen on what you're seeing on-screen, just wait a few minutes. It'll be over very soon."

The "tapas platter" of films, as Gann describes it, is a mix of animation, comedies,



documentaries and narratives. Though, like any proud father, Gann hopes to get the event even more recognition in the coming years. His festival is pending Academy Award approval, which means the flicks shown could potentially go on to win Oscars.

One thing's for sure: The audience loves it. "I always freak out the day before that no one will show up, and then we sell out of everything," Gann jokes. "It really just grows every year." —Chloe Thompson

**Ticket prices vary; all-access passes available. Visit [dcshorts.com](http://dcshorts.com) for festival information.**

took an unusual step: He auctioned off himself. For one week in May, OneVoice held a silent auction called "Robbie for Rent." Schaefer would go to the home of the highest bidder and perform a one-hour private concert.

When one of his board members came up with the idea, Schaefer said, "Yes, of course.

I'm willing to do anything for the mission of OneVoice. But then I thought, 'What if nobody bids?' And I think my mother thought that, too, because she was ready to make the first bid just in case! But the auction turned out to be a pretty fabulous surprise."

After a slow start, as the week drew to a close, the bidding, which had started at

\$500, accelerated.

"On the last day," Schaefer recalls, "it got fast and furious. And at 11:59 p.m., the last possible moment, somebody from Minneapolis bid \$6,177.10. And immediately, the person who had bid just before him said, 'I'll match it.' So we had two winners—and twice as much money for OneVoice." ☺

## DC Shorts Film Festival takes over the big screen

by Rachel Milkovich

Keep it short, keep it reel. The tagline of this year's D.C. Shorts Film festival sums it up – mini films with maximum heart.

Director of the festival Jon Gann said the revamped film showcase has a more tapas approach this fall, allowing viewers to taste a little of everything.

The D.C. Shorts Film Festival is the largest short film festival outside of California, and the third largest festival in the country. Short films of every genre, style, and subject are selected for the event, all sharing a commonality in their abbreviated length.

The festival, featuring 145 films from 23 different countries, will air in four venues in the D.C. area, including for the first time the Artisphere Theater in Rosslyn, Va.

This year's festival was expanded to add four more days, a change in response to the amount of sold-out shows they experienced last year.

During the film competition weekend, from Sept. 8 to the 10, the films will screen in 17 unique 90-minute showcases — all followed by question and answer sessions with the filmmakers.

"I think we've all sat through ninety minute films with just 10 minutes of plot," said Gann. "Now you're seeing nine for the price of one."

The cinematic celebration will also include a program of parties to accompany the films themselves; a celebrity bash at Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, a Brazilian carnival-theme at Artisphere, and a closing bash at the Atlas Art Center.

For struggling artists or those short on cash, there are free family movie screenings, scheduled Sept. 10, 17 and 18. One caveat, tickets must be reserved in advance.

There are free lunchtime movie screenings scheduled Sept. 11 through the 15. Regular tickets are available in advance online for \$12 and available for \$15 at the door.