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Rushes Soho Shorts Festival 2011

By [Alison Frank](#)
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The 13th edition of the RUSHES Soho Shorts Festival took place in London at the end of last month (20th-29th July, 2011). The festival gives awards to short films in 8 competitive categories: Documentary, Animation, Music Video, Broadcast Design, International, Newcomers, Short, and Long Form (for films over 12 minutes but under 30 minutes long). Having received over 1200 entries from 53 different countries, the festival programmers selected 148 films to be screened in competition. The festival also boasts 25 non-competitive categories for shorts that have already screened at other short film festivals around the globe.

This year's winners are as follows (click on the titles to watch the trailer or full film online, where available):

The Documentary Award:

[‘P.S. Your Mystery Sender’](#) (dir. Benjamin Wigley)

The Animation Award:

[‘Dot’](#) (dir. Sumo Science)

The Music Video Award:

[‘Isles’](#) for Little Comets (dir. Aoife McArdie)

The Broadcast Design Award:

[‘The Chase’](#) for Intel (dir. Smith and Foulkes)

The International Award:

[‘Two Laps’](#) (dir. Owen Trevor)

The Newcomers Award:

[‘Worship’](#) (dir. Calum MacDiarmid)

The Short Film Award:

[‘Love at First Sight’](#) (dir. Michael Davies)

The Long Form Award:

[‘Rite’](#) (dir. Michael Pearce)

If you enjoyed these and want to see more, you can find a list of runners-up in each category on the [Soho Shorts web site](#). Or, for a trailer that gives you a taste of the whole festival, check out the [web site of the Institute of Contemporary Arts \(ICA\)](#), where the competition screenings took place. The trailer opens with the Soho Shorts’ ident, a parody of Rank’s famous [man and gong](#).

If you tried out the links to the winning shorts, you’ll have discovered that half of them are available to watch in full. This is one of the great benefits of short films: if you miss them at the festival, you can sometimes catch up online (without breaking any laws). A friend recently recommended [‘Flawed’](#), a film she saw at the St. John’s International Women’s Film Festival in Newfoundland, Canada, and to my surprise I was able to discover this delightful film online.

The other benefit of a short film programme is the element of hope: if one film is disappointing, you know it will be over quickly and the next one may be better. Conversely, when you see a short film you really like, however sorry you might be that it ends so soon, the best shorts give a satisfying feeling of completion. In a shorter space of time, you experience something as valuable as you would in a longer film: a snapshot of daily existence or a relationship, a complete picture of a pivotal moment in a life or a comic situation. The short film combines the skills of the short story writer and the painter of miniature portraits: its compactness makes it more impressive rather than less.

I attended a screening of 6 of the 12 films in the Long Form competitive category, where I was lucky enough to see the winner, Michael Pearce’s [‘Rite’](#), a film about a divorced dad trying to bond with his son. As they go on a day out to celebrate the son’s 18th birthday, it quickly becomes clear that the pair are complete opposites. The ‘rite of passage’ that the title refers to is not what you expect: it is father rather than son who goes through an initiation that day. Although the element of surprise in [‘Rite’](#), as well as its thoughtful character study, made it a worthy winner, my personal favourite from this programme was [‘Mam’](#). Already an experienced actor in British TV and film (notably in *The Full Monty*, 1997), Hugo

Speer has made a masterful directorial debut with this short, which gives a rich and moving portrait of life in a Yorkshire high-rise, beautifully shot and framed in black-and-white. It shows the morning routine of a twelve-year-old boy who has taken on a lot of responsibility, looking after his three younger siblings as well as his drug-addicted mother who lies comatose in bed. This particular morning, though, will be different.

Another highlight was 'Noreen', an absurd comedy about two Irish cops, one old and experienced, the other young and lovelorn. When they come upon an apparent suicide, it is the older cop who hopelessly bumbles everything. The Irish attitude to life's diverse challenges makes for some delightful dialogue. This is the second short film from director Domhnall Gleeson, better known for playing Bill Weasley in the last two Harry Potter films. A proper family affair, 'Noreen' features the director's father and brother, actors Brendan and Brian Gleeson, as the two cops.

All is not lost for these two gems and a host of other undoubtedly excellent films from the other categories: the festival's audience award will be bestowed this evening at 6:30pm, BST. Check the Ruses Soho Shorts web site to find out which film the audience liked best, or follow me on Twitter @alisonfrank



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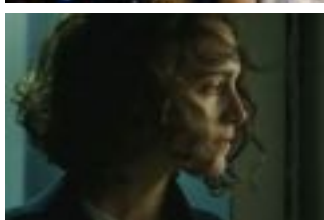
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