

Media Coverage

Articles

Alexandria Gazette Packet, Sept. 7-13, 2006, "Local Directors Salute Their Shorts," by Greg Wyshynski. Interviews with Northern VA filmmakers Rob Raffety, Emily Skelton, and Gabe Uhr, 4 photos, and "Coming Attractions" schedule of events sidebar <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/article.asp?article=70895&cat=115>

American Word (American University): festival review and interviews with select filmmakers in the print version.

Blip (DCTV newsletter), October 2006, "DCTV Kids VideoFestival—huge success!"

The Georgetown Voice, "D.C. Filmfest isn't 'short' on talent" by Sara Carothers, Sept. 15, 2006. <http://www.georgetownvoice.com/2006-09-14/leisure/d-c-filmfest-isn-t-short-on-talent>

The Hill, September 13, 2006. Interview with Rob Raffety of "Hill Rats" for the "Capital Living" section (by Betsy Rothstein). http://thehill.com/thehill/export/TheHill/Features/CapitalLiving/091306_know.html

ICOMM Magazine: September 2006 <http://www.icommag.com/september-page-9.html>

Il Giornale, article by Mariuccia Chiantaretto on "Ignotus" by Max Bartoli

MovieMaker Magazine: Festival review, forthcoming.

Roll Call, "Salute My Short," in the "Reel Reaction" column by Cassandra P. Foster. Review of "Hill Rats" by Rob Raffety. Thursday, Sept. 21, 2006.

Washington Blade, Sept. 8, 2006, "Keeping it short and sweet" by Greg Marzullo. Article on films with gay themes ("Attack of the Bride Monster," "Available Men," "Dammi il La," "Dirty Mary," "It Ain't Natural," "The Lost Item," and "Scattering Eden"). <http://washblade.com/2006/9-8/locallife/outindc/outindc.cfm>

Washington Jewish Week, August 31, 2006, "Tiny Treasures: Filmmakers to strut their stuff at DC Shorts Film Fest," by Aaron Libel. Article on Jewish local filmmakers Nina Seavey and Judd Fischer, with 2 photos.

Washington Life Magazine: feature article

Washington Post, "Reliable Source," Sept. 19, 2006, brief mention of Mike Gordon's participation in this year's festival.

Washington Spark: feature article, interview with Kim Roberts by Mark Cimino

Listings

Baltimore Sun, "Daytrip Best Bet" with photo, LIVE Section, by Lori Sears

Canadian Arts, the Canadian Embassy's Calendar of Cultural Events, August/September 2006, highlighted listing

DC North, Sept. 2006, Calendar listing

DC Magazine, September 2006: listing and photo

DC Style Magazine: short article and photo

The Diamondback, University of Maryland, Friday, Sept. 15, recommended weekend events, by Courtney Palmer

The Downtowner, Vol. 4, No. 12, Sept. 6-19, 2006, paragraph in the "Arts on Foot" article, plus calendar listing in the "Downtown" section, and listing in the "Calendar" section

Events Update, Cultural Tourism DC, Sept. 13, Weekly Highlights

Hill Rag, Sept. 2006, Calendar listing

On Cue (Actor's Center newsletter): listing in September issue

On Tap Online, featured listing

Penn Quarterly, Vol. 15, No. 1, Sept. 2006, "Arts on Foot 2006" includes a sentence on the Canadian Films

Washingtonian Magazine, September 2006, highlighted "Where + When" listing with photo, by Mary Clare Fleury

Washington Examiner, "Good Day" listing with photo, September 15, 2006

Washington Flyer, September/October 2006, highlighted listing (in the "Catch This" column)

Washington Post, Sunday Source, 9/10/06, "Road Trip: Go Global Without Leaving Home," by Barbara Saffir. Article on "Embassy hopping in Washington" includes a line about DC Shorts Films at the Canadian Embassy

Washington Post, Sunday Source, 9/10/06, Our Picks listing with photo

Washington Post, Fall Arts Preview, 9/10/06, calendar listing

Radio and TV

AARP Movies for Grownups Radio Show, festival review by Bill Newcott

DCTV: Broadcast "Best of DC Shorts 2005" multiple times. Showed DC Shorts 2006 commercial.
Voice of America Television, interview with Jon and Kim, by Siamak Dehghanpour
WTOP Radio: Weekly Picks announcement for the week of September 10 (repeated multiple times in different time slots)
WWTD, TV49: broadcasting promo piece. New TV station: free, analog, non-cable, remotely programmed (from CT) but broadcast in DC from the NBC tower

Catalogues and Programs

Design Within Reach/Adams Morgan catalogue: inclusion in the Upcoming Events catalogue insert
Hello Washington DC: September events listings www.hellowashingtondc.com/PDF_Files/WashingtonDC_Events.PDF
Maunter Project Gala Program: full-page ad

Web Sites and Blogs

About DC/Capital Region web site: article at <http://dc.about.com/od/filmfestivals/a/DCShorts.htm>, plus calendar listing and blog (beginning Aug. 26) with highlighted listing
American Word, American University Web Journal, September 18, 2006, "Short and Sweet: The DC Shorts Film Festival" by Mike Shubbuck. Overview of festival, with information on "The Sky Is Falling," "Artistic License," "Nebulous 3," and "Den Forpagters Hus." <http://www.aidinaction.org/layout/?q=node/29>
AOL CityGuide: article and photo (written by Tracey Melony)
The Chutry Experiment blog <http://chutry.wordherders.net/archives/004723.html>
Colgate in the News web site: reprints Connection Newspapers article, http://vocuspr.vocus.com/VocusPr30/Publish/13876/Forward_13876_1132073.htm
CuDC: Calendar listing
DailyCandy, Thursday, Sept. 14: web listing in the "Weekend Guide" <http://www.dailycandy.com/article.jsp?ArticleId=27009&city=11>
DCist, Sept. 14, 2006, "Time to Stock Up on Popcorn," http://www.dcist.com/archives/2006/09/14/film_festivals.php
DC Government web site: calendar listing
Downtown DC web site: calendar listing
FilmFestivals.com: event listing
Filmmaking for the Poor blog, by Sujewa Ekanayake, "DC Shorts now accepting submissions" <http://filmmakingforthe poor.blogspot.com/2006/02/dc-shorts-film-festival-now-accepting.html>
Gallery Place Living blog: "Get Shorty" article with logo, Sept. 6, 2006 http://gpliving.blogspot.com/2006_09_01_gpliving_archive.html
The Happy Booker, Sept. 20, "DC Short Shorts" by Kim <http://thehappybooker.blogs.com>
Independent Filmmakers Assn. Message Board: event listing
Joe Flood's blog: event listing <http://www.joeflood.com/>
Madame Mayo, Sept. 19, 2 postings, on "Zombie-American" and "A Short History of Sweet Potato Pie." <http://madammayo.blogspot.com/>
Media Blvd web site: event listing
MetrobloggingDC: event listing
MrMovietimes.com: event listing
ProductionHUB.com: event listing
Scene4: review of the festival by Miles David Moore, October 1, 2006 <http://www.scene4.com/>
Shooting People web site: event listing
ShowBizData: "The Scene" listing
Upcoming.com, listing and links
Washington City Paper: festival blog, coordinated and written by Tricia Olszewski; includes video interview with Jon and Kim, profile of Nina Seavey, entry on the party, more. <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/citydesk/?navCenterTop>
Washington DC Convention and Visitors Bureau web site: listing
Women in Film and Video of Washington DC: event listing
Wonkette blog, Sept. 15, 2006, <http://www.wonkette.com/politics/to-do/to-do-the-daily-show-for-a-higher-tax-bracket-200987.php>
Dan Vera's blog, Sept. 15, 2006, entry on opening night screening and party, <http://danvera.typepad.com/>

The Washington Post

Excerpts from various articles

Film Notes

By Christina Talcott

Washington Post Staff Writer

Friday, September 15, 2006; Page WE48

DC Shorts: Culled from nearly 500 entries, the DC Shorts Film Festival presents 94 films from various genres and 18 countries, including 26 films by Washington-area filmmakers, Friday through Sept. 21. Sunday through Wednesday, audiences can catch selected films in "Best of DC Shorts," and Thursday is devoted to LunaFest -- short films by, for and about women; proceeds from LunaFest go to women's health organizations.

The bulk of screenings are at Landmark's E Street Cinema (555 11th St. NW), and tickets are \$12. Midday Saturday, the Canadian Embassy (501 Pennsylvania Ave. NW) hosts two free screenings of Canadian-made shorts. For tickets and information, call Landmark's E Street Cinema at 202-452-7672 or visit <http://www.dcsHORTS.com>.

The District

Thursday, September 14, 2006; Page C13

THE SCENE D.C. Shorts Film Party The D.C. Shorts Film Festival kicks off with an opening party at 9 p.m. -- and we think this might trump Tim Robbins's sold-out appearance at the Amnesty International Film Festival -- it's going to have a red carpet, filmmakers and free beer at Drinx bar and restaurant in Penn Quarter. Tickets to a screening are required for entry; info available at <http://www.dcsHORTS.com>. 601 F St. NW.

Reliable Source

By Amy Argetsinger and Roxanne Roberts

Tuesday, September 19, 2006; Page C03

Phish bassist Mike Gordon debuted his first "experimental" film at the DC Shorts festival Saturday in front of a sold-out audience, a seven-minute animated bit, "Cabin Thing." Alas, the film, about a cabin in the woods magically constructing itself, did not win a prize. Later, he breezed through a festival brunch at Clyde's Sunday and graciously chatted up hyperventilating Phish Heads.

Road Trip: Go Global Without Leaving Home

Sunday, September 10, 2006; Page M05

WHAT: Embassy hopping in Washington.

WHY: Tango dancing, champagne sipping and a session with Freud.

HOW FAR: About 13 miles.

Want to dash around the world without stepping foot on a plane? Pop into Washington's embassies. Though most of the 181 embassies are private realms for bigwigs and their soirees, more than a dozen regularly host exhibits, cha-cha lessons and other public events. Better yet: These events are often free or inexpensive. Even without a special occasion, though, the embassy buildings and ambassadors' residences are worth a gander -- no passport required.

You can also take in the embassies one country -- or event -- at a time (contact each embassy for details). Try starting in Canada. Through Saturday, visitors can enjoy colorful crafts from Alberta, or watch a flick from the D.C. Shorts Film Festival gratis. On the way out, note the building's massive quasi-classical columns, which blend in with the museum-quality architecture along Pennsylvania Avenue.

Canadian Embassy, 501 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, 202-682-1740

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Keeping it short and sweet

D.C.'s short film festival finds plenty of room for gay content in movies under 20 minutes long

By Greg Marzullo

Sitting through overly long movies can be enervating, especially when they're bad. One of the treats of short films, however, is the brevity that leaves you wanting more or happy they're over so quickly.

Beginning on Friday, Sept. 14, and running through Thursday, Sept. 21, the third annual D.C. Shorts Film Festival will be premiering new works at Landmark's E Street Cinema, 555 11th St., NW, and at the Canadian Embassy, 501 Pennsylvania Ave., NW.

With 94 films being presented, the festival director, Jon Gann, hopes to double the attendance of last year. "We sold out all our shows last year," says Gann, 40 and gay. "We had 2,500 people."

The movies run the gamut in subject, including a handful of gay-related material, and two of the gay shorts were created by filmmakers living in the D.C. area.

"It Ain't Natural," directed by Dean Hamer, is a reflection on the effects of hateful rhetoric espoused by religious leaders in the black community. Hamer uses a headline-making homophobic sermon delivered by D.C.'s Rev. Willie Wilson on July 3, 2005 as the film's lightning rod.

"When the whole Willie Wilson story came out, it really caught my attention," says Hamer, a 55 year-old scientist who works at the National Institute of Health on HIV/AIDS research. "Not just because of the remarkable, almost pornographic character of his sermon but also because it speaks to the broader question of discrimination and tolerance and public health in the District."

Audio clips of Wilson's speech are interspersed with reactions from local gay residents, thereby providing gay Washingtonians a rebuttal platform.

The film plays at the festival on Saturday, Sept. 16, at 7 p.m. at E Street Cinema. Each screening time reflects the start of a series of short films shown collectively.

On the other end of the spectrum is what promises to be a campy comedy called "The Lost Item," directed by Robert Blumenthal. In the film, a woman wakes up after a one-night stand to find the man gone and the requisite condom missing in action.

"She does what any single woman would do?" asks Blumenthal, who is straight. "She calls her gay best friend to help."

Blumenthal filmed the short in three days at his sister's condominium in New Jersey, across the Hudson River from New York City. The gay best friend is played by local gay actor Rick Hammerly, winner of the 2003 Helen Hayes award for his portrayal of the transsexual rock star Hedwig in Signature Theater's production of "Hedwig and the Angry Inch."

"The Lost Item" is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 16 at 10 p.m. Other films of gay interest are "Attack of the Bride Monster," showing on Saturday, Sept. 16, at 1 p.m.; "Dammi il La," Friday, Sept. 15, at 7 p.m.; "Available Men," Saturday, Sept. 16, at 7 p.m. and "Dirty Mary," Saturday, Sept. 16, at 10 p.m.

With the exception of "Scattering Eden," which shows at the Canadian Embassy on Saturday, Sept. 16, at 11 a.m., all shows occur at E Street Cinema. Tickets for individual shows, most of which are presented at E Street Cinema, are \$12. The All-Access Pass costs \$100 and includes entrance to all screenings, a ticket to the opening night party at Drinx restaurant, 601 F St., NW, entrance to the screenings at the Canadian embassy on Sept. 16 and a ticket to the filmmaker's brunch on Sunday, Sept. 17, at Clyde's, 707 7th St., NW. The \$150 Priority All-Access Pass includes all the benefits listed above plus reserved seating at all of the screenings, entrance into the LunaFest benefit screening on Thursday, Sept. 21, a special evening of women's short films sponsored by Luna health bars, and entrance to the "Best of" screenings, a series of the festival's top flicks.

Friday, September 08, 2006

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Tiny treasures: Filmmakers to strut their stuff at DC Shorts Film Fest

At 30 seconds, Judd Fischer's film could be considered the haiku of shorts films.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given its length, he is reluctant to provide too many details of Summer 2003 for fear of discouraging people from seeing it.

Set to be screened next month at the third annual DC Shorts Film Festival, Summer 2003 "came about because during that summer, I spent a week at my parents' beach house," says the 33-year-old District resident. "The film deals with what I was thinking about then in contrast to what was going on in the world. It represents both what was going on in my mind and what was going on around me and contains contrasting emotions and feelings."

He has shown the movie to many people, and "they have come away from it with different ideas," Fischer says. He hopes for similar divergent reactions in future audiences, and is thus disinclined to say too much about the film, which might cause people to prejudge it.

The power of the press, however, does squeeze from the reluctant filmmaker that it indirectly deals with war.

A freelance film editor, Fischer traces his love for filmmaking to a course he took as a senior at Colgate University in 1996. "We had to produce a film during the course," he recalls. "I fell in love with it, especially the editing. I found myself in the editing room enjoying myself, and even when I wasn't there, I was thinking about it."

He relished it so much that he decided to try to make a living at it. Fischer had interned for a summer for Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.). He enjoyed the city "but knew that politics wasn't for me."

Ironically, when he came to the area in 1996, he became an intern (and later an assistant editor) for a video production company, whose client was doing ads for Sen. Bob Dole, the Republican candidate for president.

Compared with Fischer's film, Nina Seavey's A Short History of Sweet Potato Pie, which also will be screened at the festival, is marathon-like at 17 minutes.

The 49-year-old Takoma Park resident (whose credits include the Discovery Channel special The Battle of the Alamo; The Story of Polio in America, which was broadcast on PBS in 1998 and won an Emmy Award; and The Open Road: America Looks at Aging, which was shown on PBS in 2005) has been making films for more than 20 years.

Having tired of making "big, earnest films," Seavey, a member of Kehila Chadasha Congregation in Beallsville, says she was looking for a "quixotic" subject, which she found in Sweet Potato Pie.

The film, which deals with three women (one Jewish and two African American) is about "inspiration that comes from food," says Seavey.

"It is about sweet potato pie, which is connected to the African American community, but it is the Jewish woman in the film who is inspired by the pie," she says.

The DC Shorts Film Festival will take place Sept. 14-17, with most screenings at Landmark's E Street Cinema. Two films will be shown at the Canadian Embassy. For further information and tickets, go to www.dshorts.com; for tickets to individual shows, go to www.moviefone.com or Landmark's E Street Cinema box office.

Frail Vessels

By Miles David Moore

On Sept. 14-21 in Washington, D.C., aspiring Ryan Flecks, Jonathan Daytons and Valerie Farises from eight countries competed in the third annual "DC Shorts" Film Festival sponsored by the DC Film Alliance. Founder-director Jon Gann and his staff selected 94 films for the competition from more than 500 entries, and their choices were screened for the public at the Landmark E Street Theater and the Canadian Embassy.

The competition films that I saw—nearly 40 in all—varied substantially in length (30 seconds to about 25 minutes), style, ambition and quality. Nearly all, however, contained something to recommend. Some had a scrappy, Hey-Kids-Let's-Make-a-Movie freshness that overrode any technical roughness. Rob Raffety's "Hill Rats," about the impossible life of a staff director for a zero-IQ Republican congresswoman, had a raunchy good humor any true Washingtonian (and quite a few from outside the Beltway) could appreciate. Gayle Knutson's "If There Were No Lutherans...Would There Still Be Green Jell-O?" was a crowd-pleasing documentary about a small-town Minnesota pastor who becomes the hit of the community through his tongue-in-cheek churchyard signs. ("CAN'T SLEEP?" one typical sign reads. "OUR PASTOR'S SERMONS NOW ON TAPE.") Mike DeChant and Doug Gritzmacher's "Bone Mixers" (which won the Best Local Film award) was a documentary about a group of friends—cutting wildly and delightfully across age and ethnic barriers—who meet every Wednesday night for a rowdy game of dominoes.

Other shorts rivaled Hollywood productions in their polish. Brett Eichenberger's "The Leeward Tide," a poetic ghost story about an old fisherman and his lost love, was notable for the exquisite seascapes captured by cinematographer Patrick Neary. Max Bartoli's "Ignotus," about a medieval Italian knight falsely accused of blasphemy, had more epic sweep in its 15 minutes than some big-budget epics muster in two hours.

The best festivals of short films delight us with their sheer eclecticism, as three standout films at DC Shorts demonstrated. Clay Walker's "The Cole Nobody Knows" was a fascinating portrait of singer-pianist Freddy Cole, Nat "King" Cole's kid brother, who in his seventies has established himself as a formidable talent in his own right. David Chai's

"Fumi and the Bad Luck Foot" was a sweet, pastel-hued cartoon about a little girl who turns her misfortune in life to her advantage. Ethan Persoff and Scott Marshall's "Poodle Samizdat" was a mind-blowing, sometimes shocking piece of free-form computer animation that was outsider filmmaking at its best.

One thing that really impressed me about this year's DC Shorts was the profusion and consistent excellence of the comedy entries. After seeing such films as Eben Kostbar's "Karma Café," David Dean Bottrell's "Available Men," Douglas Horn's "Full Disclosure," Nick Poppy's "Zombie-American" (co-written by and starring The Daily Show's Ed Helms), Stuart Rogers' "Dirty Mary" (Festival Director's Favorite award) and Michael Wohl's "Artistic License" (Filmmakers' Favorite award), any viewer would have to conclude that the future of American film comedy is in safe hands. (A compilation of these films alone, placed in general exhibition, would be a significant art-house hit.)

My favorite film in the festival, however, was "Lucky," a poignant Neo-Realist short by South African filmmaker Avie Luthra. It could be argued that the story—about the bond that develops between an elderly, bigoted Indian woman and a little Zulu boy who has lost his mother to AIDS—ends just as it starts to get going. What Luthra captures on screen, however, is so beautiful, pure and true that I can't imagine the audience that wouldn't respond to it. I think of it as a wonderful short story that would have made a fine novel.

As usual at film festivals, many of the filmmakers appeared at Q&A sessions after the screenings, and it was both fun and enlightening to hear their litany of struggle, snafu and triumph. The films at DC Shorts cost on average about \$30,000 to \$60,000 to make, and just try getting money like that to make a short film with no chance of a commercial run. One of the most revealing comments on keeping costs down was from first-time director Emily Skelton: "All the actors were volunteers," she said, "and I bribed them with beer." Sounds like a plan to me.

September 2006

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D.C. Filmfest isn't "short" on talent

By Sara Carothers

It's been said that the average human has an attention span of 10 minutes. Nevertheless, we're frequently put into situations that require much more patience—say, a two-and-a-half hour movie or a fifty-minute lecture. This weekend, however, D.C. Shorts Film Festival will cater perfectly to this basic human reality.

The annual festival, running this Thursday through Sunday, showcases 94 films, chosen from 495 entries, in 10 different screenings of about 10 films each. The films, ranging from approximately five to 20 minutes in length, represent a mixture of District and international filmmakers hailing from countries like Finland, Israel, Japan, Nepal, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. D.C. Shorts plans to integrate the filmmakers into the weekend as much as possible, and many will be present at their screenings to talk about the films.

Short films often cover many of the same issues, themes and "slices of life" as short stories. Some are set in D.C., including "Hill Rats," by Rob Raffety, a comedy about the lives of two friends who work for members of the opposing parties in Congress. "Un-natural State," by Kirk Mangels, compares D.C. residents to a "lame bald eagle in a cage," referring to the lack of representation in Congress.

Not all of the D.C.-produced films are political though. Local improv group Washington Improv Theatre (WIT) is entering a film entitled "Multiverse," which interweaves stories about two men who daydream about the same girl and end up entering each others' thoughts and blurting out the other's remarks at inappropriate times. The City Paper has deemed WIT the "ten funniest people in Washington," and "Multiverse" has won a number of awards at other film festivals, including Best Picture at the HD Showdown.

The Festival showcases the works of very talented foreign filmmakers, as well as the locals. "Lucky," directed by U.K. filmmaker Avie Luthra, is a story about a young South African orphan with AIDS who builds a relationship with an Indian woman. Losing a shoe in a mosque results in a "life-changing experience" in Sanif Olek's "Lost Sole." In some cases the title

of the film itself draws attention, such as Gale Knutson's "If There Were No Lutherans Would There Still Be Green Jello?" How can we not be intrigued?

Another highlight of the festival is LunaFest, which will take place on Thursday the 21st. Four screenings highlight films made for, by and about women. "Mann ke Manjeeré," directed by Sujit Sircar, tells the story of a woman who escaped a situation of domestic violence, told through the vocal talents of Shubha Mudgal. Other films discuss sexuality, breaking cultural barriers, relationships, sports and women's health.

Most of the screenings are at Landmark E St. Cinema, located on E St. and 11th St. NW and easily accessible by the D6 Metro bus. For more information check out dcshorts.com.

September 14, 2006

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Saluting Their Shorts

Film festival allows local directors a chance to shine in limited time.

By Greg Wyshynski
September 7, 2006

The premise begs for an explanation from Mr. Movie Voice, in his omnipotent and booming tone: "In a world where coffee has been classified as a narcotic...where women overdose in their offices on café mocha...two hardened detectives must chase down the caffeinated crime boss...before it's too late."

An edge-of-your-seat thriller? An indictment of American consumer culture?

"It's kind of an absurd comedy," said "Venti Vice" director Gabe Uhr, who also co-wrote the film. "When you only have a weekend to make a movie, you can't make it too serious."

Like several other entries in the upcoming DC Shorts Film Festival, "Vice" was created in the pressure-cooker environment of the 48-Hour Film Project, which toured through the D.C. area earlier this year. Uhr, who lives in Arlington and works as a video producer for the United Way of America in Alexandria, took part in that project — which challenged film makers to write, produce and film a short movie over the course of a single weekend. He wrote "Venti Vice" with his friend Tom King and directed the 7-minute short. Although his team ran out of time to fully complete their film, they submitted the finished product anyway; "Vice" took home two awards, including an audience award in its competition group.

On Saturday, Sept. 16, Uhr's film will be presented at 4 p.m. at Landmark's E Street Cinema (555 11th Street NW), as part of a screening for the 2006 DC Shorts Festival, billed as the region's only film festival dedicated to showcasing and discussing short films from around the world. Tickets are available for each screening of the festival, which runs from Sept. 14-21 at the Landmark, and there is an "all-access pass" available for \$100.

Kim Roberts, a representative for the festival, said one-third of all the films in this year's competition are by local film makers.

UHR, 29, BEGAN VIDEO work as a hobby about five years ago, cutting his teeth on public access shoots for Arlington

Independent Media and for a sketch comedy program that aired in D.C. and Northern Virginia called The Higgins Show. Soon, he found himself doing commissioned work for Current TV, a cable news network that features viewer-created content. "A lot of my peers at Current are all film school; I was more of a do-it-yourself," said Uhr, who graduated from Robinson Secondary in Fairfax in 1995.

"Venti Vice" is a departure from his usual documentary work, but Uhr said there are similarities. "Storytelling is the root of it. It was interesting that I did documentary stuff [previously], because I never really studied it. I studied English, and was always more of a storyteller. When I do the documentary stuff, I have the story in my mind; it's what you get on tape, and if it's usable, that really determines what the story is. In retrospect, [you think] this is the story I should have been going after," he said.

"Venti Vice" is an example of the sort of fictional work Uhr intends to continue to explore as a film maker. More to the point, he'd like to focus on creating scripted television programs and episodic comedies. For now, he's pleased with how "Vice" turned out — for the most part. "There's always stuff, in the days after, they I was anxious about. But I think that's with any kind of work of art."

LIKE UHR, EMILY SKELTON gained valuable experience with Arlington Independent Media's public access program, worked with a sketch comedy troupe and submitted a film for the 48-Hour Project. Unlike Uhr, Skelton approached the creation of "Peddlers in Peril" with less film direction experience and more from a writer's perspective.

"It's more of an experiment, a challenge for myself. It's one thing to work at a corporate production company. It's much more structured; it's very different. I wanted to see if I could write something that would translate and be funny," said Skelton, 24, who is an associate producer with Video Solutions.

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The College of William & Mary graduate, who lives in Arlington, wrote, directed and produced a 6-minute short that chronicles the battle between an underground bike courier service and Empire Courier, a big corporate giant that wants to monopolize the market.

"It ends with a twist that makes you ponder if competition is worth the fight," she said. "Always have to have a moral..."

Part of The 48-Hour Project was being handed a genre to work in; Skelton's group received action/adventure. "I really didn't have the James Bond guy, and didn't have explosions in the budget," she said. "So we chose bicycles."

Skelton, who finished her film in 50 hours rather than mandatory 48, took part in the project to test her comedic writing skills. She writes, directs and acts for a sketch group called The Couch Potatoes, who are based in the DC area and were featured players at the Comedy Spot.

"Peddlers in Peril" — which is scheduled to screen on Friday, Sept. 15 at the 4 p.m. session at Landmark's E Street Cinema — was almost all scripted; the bits that weren't had Skelton blurt out an outline and have her actors fill in the blanks.

The short was filmed in and around Skelton's apartment building, which provided nearly every locale she would need: a business office, a restaurant/bar, an outside area and her own apartment. She said filming the short built her confidence for future endeavors, as Skelton had to manage crew members with more experience than she had — like the veteran director of photography on the shoot. "It was a very intimidating situation," she said. "I knew what he was doing, but did I know what I was doing?"

So is the finished product funny? "I think so. Although a lot of things are a lot funnier when you haven't slept for 48 hours," she said.

Without James Bond or large explosions, is there enough action? "There was a bike fight." And what, exactly, is a bike fight? "Well, you'll have to see the film."

ROB RAFFETY WAS ANOTHER film maker who learned the ropes with Arlington Independent Media and public access programming. His 9-minute short "Hill Rats" was filmed as a prospective sitcom for a national contest. After it didn't

make the cut, Raffety said his friend Jeff Noble — a former co-worker at a George Mason University-Arlington campus think tank and an actor in the film — urged him to tweak it for the DC Shorts Festival.

The title "Hill Rats" may recall director Kevin Smith's comedy "Mallrats," but Raffety said the comparison is coincidental. "The whole idea of a 'rat' is people who spend an excessive amount of time in an environment," said Raffety, 30, who lives in Arlington. In this case, the "rats" are staffers in their late 20s/early 30s on Capitol Hill. Rob, played by Raffety, is a straight-laced hard worker on a Republican's staff; Don is a free-wheeling staffer for a Democrat. "The idea is that they grew up together, but had different beliefs — they're like the Odd Couple. A classic sitcom paradigm," Raffety said.

The director himself worked for a moderate Republican congresswoman on the Hill, but said the material in the film is bipartisan. "I'm not attempting to achieve any sort of political agenda. I take shots at both sides. It's more about the funny little situations people can get in when they're working in politics. It's a lighthearted movie; not something to skewer liberal or conservative," he said. Like, for example, when the staffers are charged with creating a fundraiser that will make things interesting for some high-rolling donors. They come up with a Dukes of Hazzard-themed event, complete with skeet shooting.

"Hill Rats" is scheduled to screen on Friday, Sept. 15, at 4 p.m. at Landmark's E Street Cinema. Raffety, an adjunct professor at George Mason, is enrolled in a screenwriting class and hopes to continue to flesh out "Hill Rats" as a sitcom or a feature film. Although he doesn't have the film-making experience of some of the other directors featured at the DC Shorts Festival, he doesn't feel that will hinder his progress. "This technology has gotten to the point where it's in the hands of amateurs," he said, "which can be good or bad depending on how you look at it."

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