

Published October 23rd, 2013

## A Festival of Shorts

By Sophie Braccini



Death of a Shadow Photo provided

Short program C, "That's What Friends Are For," delves into friendship, both good and bad, with unlimited imagination and creativity. Drama unfolds quickly in "Black and White Lines" and "Trivial" (a USC thesis film set in Pleasanton), vision sparks from every day remarks in "Animation Hotline," while "Last Call" is sensitive and heartfelt and "Just a Favor" is as gripping as any good dark thriller.

The five films in short program D, "Celebrities," show that stars of the screen can also have self-mocking irony. You feel almost sorry for Gerard Depardieu in his failure to become a salesman in "Frank-Etienne," Lee Meriwether breaks your heart as she relives her past in "Remember to Breathe," and Ian McKellen mesmerizes in "The Egg Trick."

Finally, CAIFF presents the Sapporo Shorts. Out of the 3,000 short films that were submitted to the Sapporo Short Film Festival, 80 were selected. Of those 80, CAIFF selected five unique creations. These movies are all award-winning films from all over the world. Tom Van Avermaet's "Death of a Shadow," for example, is a beautiful, frightening and ultimately romantic tale that develops in the span of just 20 minutes.

As always with these series of shorts, the contrast between films is almost violent. From "Death of a Shadow" to "Letters from Pyongyang" there is a world of difference in terms of space, time and vision. The second is no less interesting than the first, opening a completely different window in the spectators' imagination. The other three are also very personal and interesting. The viewer will need some emotional stamina to take it all in.

Short films are often the launch pad of future talent. Four years ago, CAIFF featured the short "Next Floor," directed by Denis Villeneuve, whose feature film "Prisoners" is currently getting great reviews. Not only does it cost less to make a short, it is also often not financed by studios that will have their own priorities. You get the real voice of the artist. And shorts are also made more quickly, so they can closely speak to present day events.

The five shorts programs will play on different days Friday through Sunday, Nov. 8-10 at the Rheem and Orinda theaters. For show times, more information and tickets, visit [www.caiff.org](http://www.caiff.org).

Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)[back](#)

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