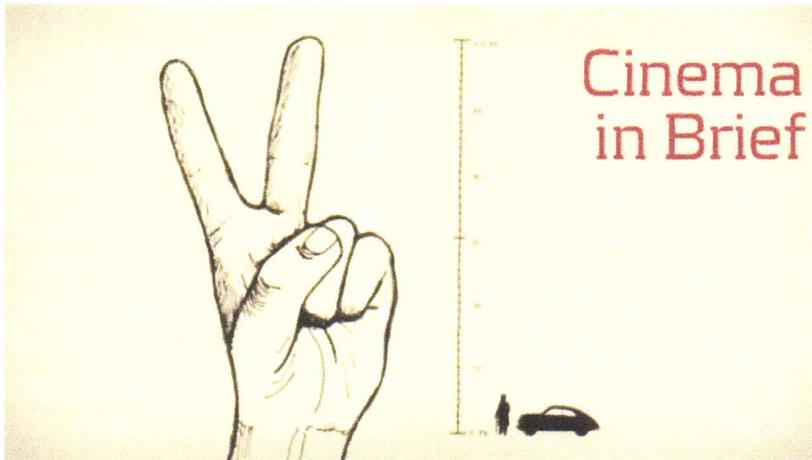


MOVIESTO PODCAST

Cinema in Brief: Publicizing Oscar Shorts

Posted by Sameer Filed in Film January 30, 2008



This month: Canadian short films score big in the Oscar nominations, and an interview with Daniela Syrový of ClutchPR.

As you could tell from the barrage of posts on local media websites last week, this year's [Academy Awards nominations](#) were particularly good for us here in Canada. Accolades came for both [veterans of the Canadian film scene](#) (Sarah Polley) and [relative newcomers](#) (blogTO darling Ellen Page), and Toronto film enthusiasts were lucky enough to have had the opportunity to watch 19 of the nominated films during the [Toronto International Film Festival](#) this year.

The big news, however, is the nomination of two Canadian productions in the category of Best Animated Short Film. blogTO readers have already had the chance to [check out the trailer for I Met The Walrus](#) in Jeremy's post last week, and I've been very vocal about my support for [Madame Tutli-Putli](#) in the past (in fact, [I predicted that Lavis and Szczerbowski's short would win an Oscar back in September](#)), but hopefully the nominations will help bring these two very remarkable films the international spotlight they very much deserve.

Both of the above films were included in [the list of the Toronto International Film Festival Group's Canada's Top Ten](#), and both also screened at the [CFC's Worldwide Short Film Festival](#) last year. Two other films that were nominated in the Live Action Short Film category — Italy's [Il Supplente](#) and Belgium's [Tanghi Argentini](#) — also had their Canadian premieres at the CFC annual event celebrating short film.

All this to prove that Canada may be the most fertile breeding ground for short filmmakers in the world. However, what most people don't see is that in order for Canadian films to garner the recognition they have been getting in the film industry, there's a whole world of publicists and PR agents working tirelessly to make sure each film gets the exposure that it deserves.

The process of publicizing a short film is not an easy one: not only do publicists have to ensure that the film gets entry into festivals and special events, but they need to arrange interviews and meet-and-greets for the media as well. In the end, the publicist has to make sure that the short film — which still, sadly, has less of a draw than feature-length films in mass media — gets seen by the right people.

Writing about short film in Canada, I've been lucky to work with some amazing publicists who have all been phenomenal at their job, and who truly believe in the quality and the value of the films they represent.

I recently had the chance to chat with Daniela Syrový, publicist and founder of [ClutchPR](#), a boutique publicity firm that has done public relations for various Canadian short films as well as a variety of other local and national clients. She took some time to share her thoughts on short film with me:

blogTO: Why is the development of short film important to the future of Canadian cinema in general?

Daniela Syrový: Not only are many of the short filmmakers of today the feature filmmakers of tomorrow, but it is extremely important to foster short film as a genre unto itself because it is an incredibly flexible and creative art form. From an audience perspective, a film goer is capable of getting an incredible range and buffet of Canadian film by sitting in on a screening of short films. Creating a forum for filmmakers to hone their skills is paramount to their growth and evolution. From my experience you do not make a short film for commercial purposes and this makes them extremely valuable and culturally significant. The people creating short films, supporting them, writing about them, publicizing them, finding ways to showcase them are doing it for the love of cinema. They are not important to the future of Canadian cinema they are the future of Canadian cinema.

blogTO: What are the kinds of short film that are more likely to succeed in the Canadian film industry? What are the markers for success for short films in general?

DS: To me a short is successful if it engages the audience and has a strong, tight vision. Often the 'type' of short it is is irrelevant, the success of a short depends largely on the team involved and how committed everyone is to the project. The level of commitment shines through and creates professional and slick projects that audiences are attracted to. This goes for everything from romantic comedies to

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experimental films.

blogTO: What are the challenges you face when publicizing and marketing short film in this country? What are the prevailing attitudes towards shorts in the overall Canadian film industry?

DS: Some of the challenges involved in publicizing short films stem from accessibility. Since there is a lack of regular and easy ways of seeing a short film, there is often a lack of interest from the press. If there is no way for the average person to see a great short film then as far as the media is concerned there is no need to let the public know about the film.

These are generalizations of course and there are many media outlets and journalists that cover shorts for the love of cinema. Shorts also get media coverage so that the public has their ear to the ground about the next great thing in Canadian film.

This is why film festivals are very important; they give the public access to the shorts. During TIFF the shorts screenings have packed houses--there is a demand for them and people love the fresh and innovative material filmmakers are able to offer in a short.

If there is a stigma that exists with shorts it's probably that they are amateur or student work. This assumption is astoundingly false. The films I have publicized have had high production values, incredible scripts and compelling actors. They are slick, extremely professional products on par or better than many features screened at TIFF.

The [80th Annual Academy Awards](#) take place on February 24, 2008, and the show will be hosted by Jon Stewart. Non-short Canadian [nominated films](#) include *Away From Her*, *Juno*, and *Eastern Promises*.

You can watch all (most for now, but they should have links to all of them up pretty soon) the short films nominated in the Best Animated Short category [over on Ticklebooth](#). If all goes well, next month's Cinema in Brief will feature an interview with (hopeful) Oscar winners Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski.

Cinema in Brief is a 12-part look at short film in Canada, with a special focus on the people making, supporting, and watching short film in Toronto. It will appear on the final Wednesday of every month until August 2008.

Previously on Cinema in Brief:

September: [TIFF Shorts](#)

October: [Toronto Short Film Projects](#)

November: [Dementia 5](#)

December: [Recognizing Canada's Shorts](#)

The title image is a still from Josh Raskin's [I Met the Walrus](#). Raskin's short is one of the Canadian short films nominated for an [Academy Award](#) this year.

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Thanks for this article, Sameer. As someone interested in both film and PR, it was very informative. We actually met at Third Tuesday last week. Next time we should talk about film some more!

Posted by: [James McNally](#) at January 30, 2008 12:44 PM

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