

Short Cuts: Illinois Filmmakers at 2010 Chicago International Film Festival

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 21, 2010 - 9:37am

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CHICAGO – The short film, once considered the lesser cousin of features, and seen mostly in obscurity, has had a major revival and influence in the age of YouTube. At the 2010 Chicago International Film Festival, the Illinois Short Filmmaker night brought out the best of locally produced film shorts on October 11th.

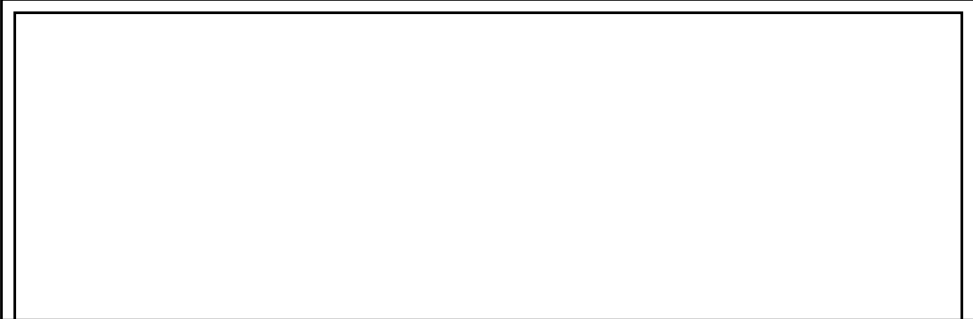
HollywoodChicago.com caught up with seven of the participating filmmakers that night, as they spoke about their particular film shorts.



Illinois Short Filmmakers at the Chicago International Film Festival, October 11th, 2010
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

★ Wenhwa Ts’ao, Director of “Arithmetic Lessons”

Arithmetic Lessons is a devastating study of a Chinese family in crisis, as the mother is dying and her daughter is trapped in an abuse situation with her female caregiver.





'Arithmetic Lessons,' Directed by Wenhwa Ts'ao
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

HollywoodChicago.com: Typically, the Chinese culture is seen as a somewhat repressed patriarchal society, and your film seems to be a breakaway from that notion, is that what you trying to convey?

Wenhwa Ts'ao: Many people wondered why I had a female abuser in the film. What I wanted to say is that child abuse happens in all circumstances. There are many cases in child abuse that are not discussed, it is the women sometimes that can do the most damage. One of the things the caregiver says in the end is 'I want to stay in America' but doing all those horrific things resulted in her leaving anyway. So it was not so much cultural as just being human.



Marie Ullrich, Director of "Faster"

Faster is a frenetic study of the bike messenger, as she maneuvers through the streets of Chicago.



'Faster,' Directed by Marie Ullrich
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

HollywoodChicago.com: Your film had a 'stranger in a strange land' quality to it, what qualities were you trying to give this particular landscape?

Marie Ullrich: I was thinking of the bike messenger world, the street level, as hell and people who were in the offices, rising above, as in heaven. It is kind of a false heaven and the messengers are the ones that communicate between the two levels.



Bradley Bischoff, Director of "Fish Food"

Fish Food meditates on the daily meal, as a girl retrieves the family dinner from a vendor and can't help but look at a live fish in a different way.





'Fish Food,' Directed by Bradley Bischoff
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

HollywoodChicago.com: Several times in the film, various characters gaze upon the fish, almost with a sense of wonder. How did you direct those scenes?

Bradley Bischoff: The reason we didn't want to show the fish was to further the theme of the movie, as when they looked at it was a reflection of sacredness and innocence, something beautiful that you don't want to destroy, because it reminded them of something. I hope when the audience watches it, they're not worried about why they don't see the fish, but what does the fish represent? For the girl, it represents something beautiful and innocent in a chaotic world.



Dean Burdusis, Director of "A Perfect Manhattan"

A Perfect Manhattan is a cause and effect circumstance, as a bartender tries to create the drink in a world where quality doesn't matter as much.



'A Perfect Manhattan,' Directed by Dean Burdusis
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

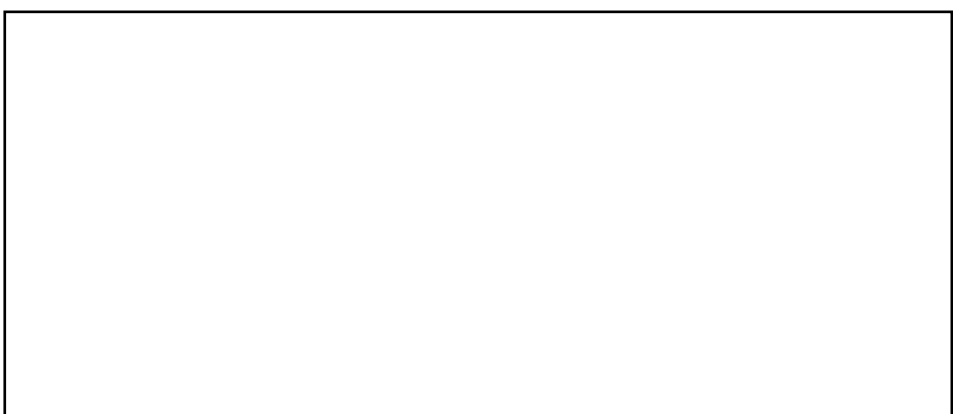
HollywoodChicago.com: What type of statement were you making about the outside world invading the neighborhood bar as it's fighting go upscale?

Dean Burdusis: It was ultimately a tale of desperation. There is a character that believes things should be a certain way, and there is no rhyme or reason in a world where everything is up for grabs. That is what the bartender's frustration was about, that everything is up for grabs and he was helpless to do anything about it. Personally I've been a bartender for a long time, I saw that frustration, of how the history, tradition and method of doing something is disregarded for what is in vogue at the moment.



David Schmudde, Director of "Refuge"

Refuge is a Twilight Zone-type short in several realities, as a man drives across the State of Iowa.





'Refuge,' Directed by David Schmudde
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

HollywoodChicago.com: What is time in relationship to your film?

David Schmudde: That guy drove across Iowa for about 5 hours, trapped in the car with all those thoughts that were possessing him. Even though it was a 17 minute film, the whole narrative took place over many hours, but for him it felt like an eternity.

★ **Todd Looby, Director of “Son of None”**

Son of None is about a Liberian war orphan named Joshua, who seems to be in the middle of every crisis in his refugee camp.



'Son of None,' Directed by Todd Looby
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

HollywoodChicago.com: When you are communicating that refugee camp situation, what kind of feeling did you have when you were there that you wanted to express to the rest of the world?

Todd Looby: The one thing I wanted to convey, an underlying theme, that when kids like that are in awful situation, and need a lot of help in life, is how they help each other, even those with less than they have. Even the lost goat in the story is worse off than Joshua, so taking care of that incident was his way of contributing.

★ **Jack C. Newell, Director of “Typing”**

Typing is a throwback to another time, as two screenwriters work on the next big film on the MGM studio lot in 1939. They are distracted by the incessant typing within the office next door to them.





'Typing,' Directed by Jack C. Newell
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

HollywoodChicago.com: What look and inspiration were you going for to get the feel of the late 1930s in your film?

Jack Newell: We did a lot of research. The film is set in 1939, and we wanted the film to look like it came from that period, but not date it so badly, so we didn't make it black and white. The biggest influence was 'Gone With the Wind,' and how they shot color, and gave it the same aspect ratio of the era. We flashed the film to make it look older and we stretched nylons over the back of the lenses to soften the look. Our camera placement was indicative of the 1930s, but as the film went on we went for a more modern style, so the ending is modern.

CLOSING NIGHT for the 46th Chicago International Film Festival is October 21st, 2010. For more information and to purchase tickets, click on ChicagoFilmFestival.com [17]



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