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Movies

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European directors show off their shorts

DEBORAH NICOL • FOR THE DESERT POST WEEKLY • SEPTEMBER 20, 2007

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Can one glimpse cinematic greatness in less than 30 minutes? Cinema 16 attempts to answer in the affirmative with two discs that challenge a format often relegated to an obscure Oscar category.

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With the European Short Films set, film lovers may view established filmmakers in the raw. Not only do the shorts provide a hint of the directors during experimental stages, but commentary tracks reveal their methods and criticism of their own work. However, these shorts are anything but amateur.

Brilliant and seamless animation blends a fantastical world with real figures in "The Man Without a Head" by Jan Solanas, previously and unmistakably a cinematographer. Solanas says of the medium, "Short films are one of the last real places for artistic freedom." In regards to balancing time and the flexibility for his own creativity, he states, "I spent four years to do it, but I did it without compromise."

A director who never lacks in creativity, Jan Svankmajer, delivers his 13th of 24 short film efforts in 1971's "Jabberwocky." With stop-motion images as nonsensical as the poem itself, he taps into the imaginative value of the shorts medium.

With "Wasp," Andrea Arnold presents a gritty view of the UK that would be later explored in "Red Road." Lynne Ramsay ("Morvern Callar") also explores a troubled UK setting in "Gasman," a peripheral view of the meeting of a father's two families.

Social commentary dives deep with Roy Andersson's much-acclaimed "World of Glory," which begins subtly in the modern day with a Nazi-style extermination. The film represents Sweden in 1990, which Andersson felt was akin to World War II-era Germany.

Bálint Kenyeres impresses with an amazing single long take that had to be filmed within a 20-minute window in order to earn the title, "Before Dawn." The attempted escape of immigrants is a powerful story despite a lack of dialogue.

These 16 shorts provide some of the best examples that size truly does not matter.



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'CINEMA 16: EUROPEAN SHORT FILMS'

The Special U.S. Edition of "Cinema 16: European Short Films" is available in stores Sept. 25.

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