

*Independent films from around the world*

# The 19th Route 66 Film Festival



Online at [filmfestivalflix.com](http://filmfestivalflix.com)  
for viewing December 18-28, 2020  
Program Book (PDF) and more  
info at: [route66filmfestival.net](http://route66filmfestival.net)

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## Route 66 Film Festival Programs

Select these program groups on Film Festival Flix. Release and availability dates are indicated for each feature or group of short films. See the page number after the film title for a film synopsis and director biography (on pages 9-32); films and filmmakers with records in the Internet Movie Database (at [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)) are marked "IMDb"

### Awards Ceremony Live December 26, 2020, 2:00 PM CST Write in the award winners on page 38

#### FOREIGN LANGUAGE FEATURE 1 (subtitles)

**Omar and Us** (*p. 31*), *December 19-20 & 27-28*  
1:42:51; Directed by Maryna Er Gorbach, Mehmet Bahadir Er; Turkey

#### DRAMA FEATURE 1

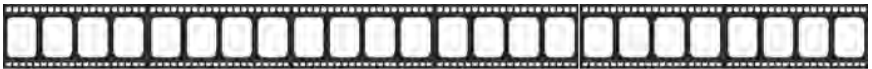
**Tuscaloosa** (*p. 36*), *December 21-22 & 27-28*  
1:41:00; Directed by Philip Harder; USA; Drama

#### FOREIGN LANGUAGE FEATURE 2 (subtitles)

**Aleksi** (*p. 10*), *December 23-24 & 27-28*  
1:24:05; Directed by Barbara Vekaric, Croatia; Foreign Language

#### DRAMA FEATURE 2

**Love is not Love** (*p. 26*), *December 25-26 & 27-28*  
1:34:26; Directed by Stephen Keep Mills; USA; Drama



## SHORT FILMS I, December 18-19 & 27-28

### **Fall to Fame (p. 15)**

8:42; Directed by Brian Sutow & Jessie Mills; USA; Drama

### **The Helping Hand (p. 19)**

10:18; Directed by Brenden Hubbard; USA; Debut Film

### **Age of Bryce (p. 9)**

9:49; Directed by David Feagan & Brian Elliott; USA; Comedy

### **Alina (p. 11)**

25:58; Directed by Rami Koeih; USA; Drama

### **COVID Room (p. 12)**

8:11; Directed by Patty Babin; USA; Made in Illinois

### **Skin Deep (p. 35)**

7:15; Directed by Justin Giddings & Ryan Welsh; USA; Comedy

### **An Acquired Taste (p. 9)**

10:35; Directed by Robert Petrie & Claire Cohen; USA; Debut/Student

### **In Sync (p. 20)**

5:01; Directed by Eddie Shieh; USA; Comedy

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## **SHORT FILMS 2 (subtitles or no dialog), December 20-21 & 27-28**

### **Changing Room (p. 11)**

23:00; Directed by Atefeh Rahmani; Iran; Foreign Language

### **The News (p. 30)**

23:18; Directed by Lorin Terezi; Albania; Comedy, Foreign Language

### **Punishment (p. 33)**

10:54; Directed by Jalal Veisi; Iran; Experimental, Student Showcase

### **Quit (p. 33)**

14:24; Directed by Sina Ghoamnejad; Iran; Student Showcase

### **Echo (p. 14)**

7:08; Directed by Barzan Rostami; Iran.; Animation, Student Showcase

## **SHORT FILMS 3, December 22-23 & 27-28**

### **Fig (p. 16)**

10:45; Directed by Rami Cohen; USA; Horror, Comedy

### **Louie (p. 24)**

22:51; Directed by Robert Biggs; USA; Made in Illinois

### **Meanwhile at the Abandoned Factory (p. 29)**

16:08; Directed by Michael Cusack; USA; Animation

### **Rosie (p. 34)**

9:32; Directed by Veronica Barbosa; USA; Made in Illinois

### **Night Birds & Ghost Crabs (p. 30)**

5:30; Directed by Robert Sickels; USA; Documentary, Experimental

### **The Garage (p. 17)**

20:20; Directed by Daniel McMellen; USA; Drama

Interested in becoming a reviewer who selects films - or otherwise involved in the Route 66 Film Festival? Talk to a board member. We welcome new reviewers, board members and special project or festival volunteers!

## **SHORT FILMS 4 (subtitles), December 24-25 & 27-28**

### **Make My Day (p. 27)**

23:04; Directed by Kirstin Reppas; USA; Student Showcase

### **The Rotation (p. 34)**

6:40; Directed by Hazhir Az'adi; Iran; Animation, Student Showcase

### **Dry Leaves (p. 14)**

9:23; Directed by Ali Sohail Jaura; India; Foreign Language

### **The Heavy Shadow of Crow (p. 19)**

11:51; Directed by Behnam Asadolahi; Iran; Experimental

### **Lake of Happiness (p. 23)**

29:56; Directed by Aliaksei Paluyan; Germany Foreign Language

### **Pedal to the Metal (p. 31)**

3:05; Directed by Ben Acevedo, Andrew Benson, Sabrina Demers; USA; Animation

## **SHORT FILMS 5 (with subtitles), December 26-28**

### **Malakout (p.27)**

11:08; Directed by Farnoosh Abedi; Iran; Animation; No dialog

### **Triquetra (p. 35)**

22:16; Directed by Richard Soderholm; Sweden; Foreign Language

### **Kaddish (p. 22)**

14:24; Directed by Razid Season; USA; Student Showcase

### **Pirabok (p. 33)**

19:56; Directed by Ferman Narin; Turkey; Student Showcase

### **Midnight Movie: Magnum Opus (p. 29)**

12:48; Directed by Myriam Khammassi; Tunisia; Student Showcase

### **Diminuendo (p. 12)**

3:28; Directed by Henrike Lendowski; USA; Environment Category

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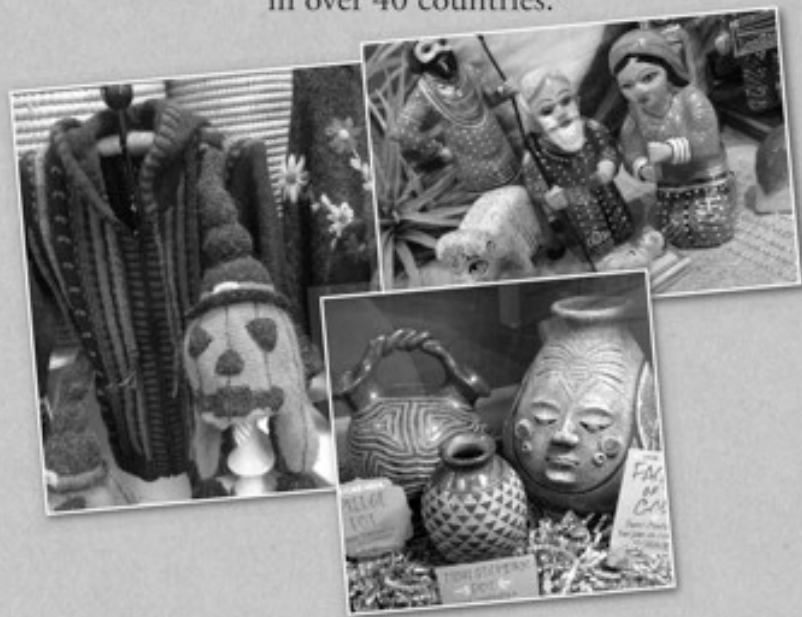


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## Welcome from Siobhan Johnson, Festival Director



Welcome to the 19th Route 66 Film Festival. Each year we select films to provoke thought, elicit laughter and tears, bring a different point of view to global issues, and just entertain. This is our first all-online festival!

As Festival Director since 2014, I remain impressed by the high quality films submitted for consideration each year. This year the Environment is our special category; concerns about the changing climate and its consequences dominate the news and concern us, We hope you enjoy this year's festival. We remain committed to bringing independent films from around the world to Springfield. Enjoy the journey!

## Film Descriptions & Filmmaker Biographies

### An Acquired Taste (Short Films 1)

**Directed by Robert Petrie & Claire Cohen, USA, Debut Film, Made in Illinois, 10:35**

A young chef prepares an elegant meal for his girlfriend, but both have secrets to reveal.



### Age of Bryce (Short Films 1)

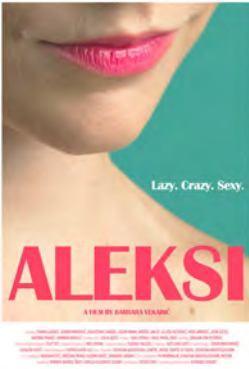


**Written by Brian Elliott, Directed by David Feagan and Brian Elliott, USA, Comedy, 9:49**

Smothered by an adoring, over-protective mom, 12-year-old Bryce Yancy Paul (Bip) is pushed to the brink of pubescent revolution. It's time to ripen. Bloom. Break the shackles of parental paranoia. It's the Age of Bryce. Sometimes a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do. IMDb

**David Feagan and Brian Elliott**





## Aleksi (Foreign Language Feature 1)

**Written and Directed by Barbara Vekaric, Croatia, Foreign Language, Comedy, 1:24:05**

Living under her parent's roof and control, Alekski ignores the pressing responsibilities of adulthood by indulging her impulses with various men in her life. Shot on the beautiful Croatian coast, *Aleksi* is a realistic indie-style dramedy about “the second coming of age” and figuring out life goals on the brink of one’s thirties. Since its international premiere at South by Southwest in 2019, the film has screened at over 50 festivals, winning 20 awards. IMDb



**Barbara Vekaric** is a filmmaker known for the feature film *Aleksi*, that had its international premiere at South by Southwest, Texas in March 2019, and since it has screened on over 50 festivals worldwide, winning 20 awards. Barbara also wrote and directed a dozen short films, including First Lady of Dubrava and Mouth of Truth. IMDb



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## Alina (Short Films 1)

**Written by Nora Mariana, Directed by Rami Kodeih, USA, Drama, 24:58**

As Nazis separate children from their parents in the Warsaw Ghetto, a gang of women risks everything to smuggle their friend's three-month-old baby to safety. Inspired by true events. Starring Alia Shawkat (*Arrested Development*, *Search Party*), Edin Gali (*Mad Men*), Rebeca Robles (*Better Things*), Erika Soto (*Vida*), and Mark McCullough (*Logan Lucky*). IMDb



**Rami Kodeih** is an LA-based writer/director. His award-winning narrative shorts and documentaries have screened worldwide, most recently in the Director's Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival. He is an alumnus of the Sundance Feature Film Program and Berlinale Talents. He's currently developing a feature film with XYZ Films (*Mandy*, *The Raid*) and Scythia Films (*The Witch*), and a TV drama inspired by his experiences as an immigrant and displaced child of war, for AMC Networks and Participant Media. IMDb



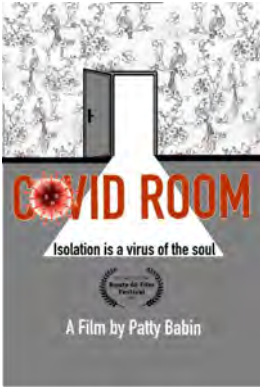
## Changing Room (Short Films 2)

**Directed by Atefeh Rahmani, Iran, Foreign Language, 25:00**

A teenage girl in Iran is a model unbeknownst to her traditional and religious father. At her sister's wedding, her father finds out about her job. The girl, who has spent her income to help her sister get married, realizes that her sister has exposed her to her father. The father scissors her long hair, but she tries to continue her career with her new style.



**Atefeh Rahmani**, Education Manager at Hilaj Film School, is an official member of the Iranian Short Film Association (ISFA). She has been a script supervisor, and assistant director, and has directed four short films screened in various festivals worldwide. She is now working on a documentary.



## COVID Room (Short Films 1)

**Written & Directed by Patty Babin, USA, Horror, Drama, Made in Illinois, 8:11**

A mandatory stay at home order from the coronavirus results in a horror of isolation, loneliness and PTSD for a woman abandoned by her husband.

**Patty Babin** is an actress, known for *Chicago P.D.* (2014),

*Lifelines* (2015) and *Market Value* (2017). IMDb



## Diminuendo (Short Films 5)

**Directed by Henrike Lendowski, USA, Student Film, Animated, Environment Category, 3:28**

Diminuendo visualizes the detrimental effects plastic waste has on marine life and the environment from an emotional point of view. Through visual metaphors, the viewer is guided through sceneries that get more and more covered by plastic. To emphasize the contrast between the natural world and the plastic

world, the animation is done entirely with ink on paper, except for the plastic, which stands apart from the oceanic life in bright digital yellow. The two parts are united through the pulsing paper texture that shines through the semi-opaque yellow as a constant reminder of the underlying life it covers. But there is room for change. In the end, it is never too late for a helping hand.

**Henrike Lendowski** is an animator and illustrator working in both analog



and digital art. She has an M.F.A. in Animation and Digital Arts from Pratt Institute. Her work addresses cultural, social and political issues, like environmental pollution and protection of endangered species. She loves illustration, printmaking and music, and she works with many techniques and materials, incorporating music to create a seamless entity. Of German descent, Henrike currently lives in New York City, using her skills to create thought provoking visual experiences.



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## Dry Leaves (Short Films 4)

**Directed by Ali Sohai Jaura, India, Foreign Language, 9:23**

Zahida arrives at a home for the old, believing her son will take her back after a week. Hesitant and apprehensive, she meets Farhat, who is full of hope but as the story unfolds she realizes that the future might be different from her expectations. IMDB

**Ali Sohai Jaura** is an Independent filmmaker from

Karachi, Pakistan who likes stories with emotions. He explores different styles of storytelling in his films. In 2015, his debut short film *Prohibited* won numerous International awards around the globe. In 2017, he made a travel short film *Arz e Pakistan (Land of Pakistan)* about Pakistan's Northern Regions; it won at tourism film festivals around the world. It was honored in 2018's top 10 tourism films by CIFFT (Comité International des Festivals du Film Touristique). His short film *Nanu Aur Main* (Grandpa and I), about grandparent relationships, was selected by South Asian film festivals of USA in 2018. IMDB



## Echo (Short Films 2)

**Directed by Barzan Rostami, Iran, Animated, Foreign Language, Environment Category, 7:08**

The story of echo is about understanding and perception of wildlife and environmental abuse and its consequences on the human race.

**Barzan Rostami** was born in May 1992. He grew up in

western Iran in the mountainous region of Kurdistan. In his teens, he started to engage in the arts, studied computer engineering and later became familiar with animation, and began making short films and promotional videos. Later he studied theater. IMDB





## Fall to Fame (Short Films 1)

**Directed by Brian Sutow & Jessie Mills, USA, Drama, 8:42**

Following his first grammy nomination, a young, gay rock star is confronted with the painful price of his ambition. IMDb

**Brian Sutow** is an LA-based playwright, director, screenwriter, and a Helen Hayes Award winning producer. His first feature film, *Vengeance*, is currently being packaged by Myriad Pictures. He is a former Kennedy Center Playwright in

Residence and O'Neill Visiting Playwriting Fellow. His work as a screenwriter includes dozens of commercials, the original comedy pilot *A Bowl of Cherries* (finalist in the 2006 Chicago Comedy TV Pilot Competition), the short film *The SunnySide Singers*, the commissioned pilot *The Vamps* (Cartoon Network/Adult Swim), the documentary series *ReDiscovering Oklahoma!*, and many web-series. IMDb

**Jessie Mills** is a professor of theatre at Pomona College and a professional director. She directs, adapts, and devises theatre, opera and film in national and international venues, including the



Spoletto Festival in Charleston, SC, The Lincoln Center & The Ensemble Studio Theatre in New York, The Goodman Theatre & The Grant Park Orchestra in Chicago, and The Sala Beckett Institute in Barcelona, Spain. She holds graduate degrees in direction from Carnegie Mellon University and performance theory from Northwestern University. Beyond her work as a director, her scholarship and publications center around ensemble-theatre and comedy-as-community. IMDb

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## Fig (Short Films 3)

**Directed by Rami Cohen, USA,  
Horror, Comedy, 10:45**

Years ago, when Jason was a kid, he knew he could always count on one person to have his back, his imaginary friend Fig. Fig was Jason's best friend and surrogate mother, until one day when she took things too far standing up to one of Jason's bullies. That's when Jason's real mother banished Fig and left Jason broken and unprotected. Now Jason is an adult and Fig is back. She's unleashing her pent-up rage on Jason's enemies. Jason is ill-equipped to handle this. Everyone always told him Fig was imaginary, but he must figure out a way to stop Fig. IMDb



**Rami Cohen** has lived in Los Angeles and worked as a writer and director for over a decade. Rami's TV credits include *The Office* and the *Sarah Silverman Program*, his film script *Revenge of the Jocks* was sold to Warner Bros. Rami has contributed writing to films including *Tropic Thunder* and *Get Hard*. He writes and directs high-end corporate videos for clients like Progressive Insurance, Dell Computers, and US Foodservice. Fig is Rami's first short film. IMDb

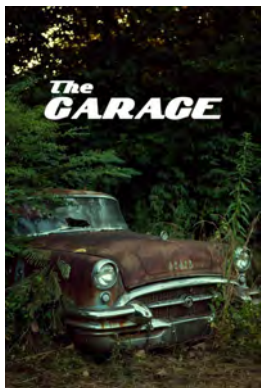


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## The Garage (Short Films 3)

**Directed by Daniel McMellen, USA,  
Drama, 20:20**

A summer job changes everything for a young man in Indiana.

**Daniel McMellen** grew up in Mission, Kansas. At 16, Dan started his filmmaking career working for ABC's Monday Night Football and editing commercial



spots for local television stations. At 18 he wrote, produced, edited and directed *L'dor V'dor* (From Generation to Generation), a historical documentary about a local Synagogue, told by children.

Dan studied film production at the University of Kansas Theater and Film Department, where he honed his skills producing and directing over 60 student films. Dan's comedy short film, *Fine Dining*, won the Kansas City Film Jubilee's Best Collegiate Film and Best Screenplay award and the KAN Film Festival Best Overall Film award.

While in Kansas, Dan became the Production Manager of the independent feature film *Roads & Bridges*, produced by legendary filmmaker Robert Altman, who brought Dan to Los Angeles to oversee post-production. *Roads & Bridges* won the San Diego Asian Film Festival Best Dramatic Narrative Feature award and the Grand Jury Prize Award at the Cinemanila International Film Festival.

Recently Dan directed, wrote and produced his first feature film, *Noble Things*, starring the late Michael Parks, and the film debut of country music legend Lee Ann Womack. The film won numerous awards and gained theatrical distribution.

Dan currently lives in Los Angeles, where he works as Supervising Producer, Editor and Director for television and film. IMDb



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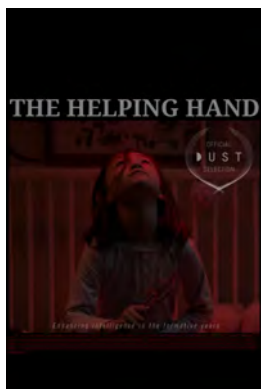
## The Heavy Shadow Of the Crow (Short Films 4)

**Directed by Behnam Asadolahi, Iran, Experimental, 11:51**

In a dry, flat desert, five bare humans grow from under the soil and a crow guides the people – a strange thing indeed.

**Behnam Asadolahi** is a film graduate of the Kosar Art University in Aradabil, Iran. He

has been making films since 2009 and involved in sound editing for over 30 short and feature films as well as TV productions. He has made three short and one animation films, work which has won several awards at various film festivals around the world.



## The Helping Hand (Short Films 1)

**Directed by Brenden Hubbard, USA, Debut, 10:18**

From the Academy Award winning team behind *Curfew*, *The Helping Hand* explores the ties between technology and a growing family. With a new baby at home, young parents adopt a hi-tech monitoring system. Will it be an answer to their woes or have they invited a monster into their home? IMDb

**Brenden Hubbard** is an award-winning filmmaker, director and producer. He has managed productions and festival runs for various films since 2012, including the 2013 Academy Award winning film *Curfew*, as well as the subsequent feature, *Before I Disappear* (IFC Films). He has since been involved with over 60 productions including the winner of the 2015 Sundance Jury Award, *Oh Lucy!*, *Cul-De-Sac* (2016 Toronto International Film Festival), *The Vanishing of Sidney Hall* (A24, 2017 Sundance Film Festival) and his directing debut *The Helping Hand* which screened at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival and is distributed through Dust. Hubbard studied audio engineering at Temple University and has toured internationally with bands including Stellastarr\*, Father John Misty and Dr. Dog. IMDb





## In Sync (Short Films 1)

**Directed by Eddie Shieh,**  
**USA, Comedy, 5:01**

A young couple walk a fine line while thriving in an open marriage until they catch each other breaking their own rules. IMDb



**Eddie Shieh** is a twin dad by day and filmmaker at night. His fraternal twin boys were born in 2017. Eddie directed the semi-finalist play *That Kid*, written by Jane Willis for the 2016 Samuel French OOB Short Play Festival. His screenplay *La Grippe* shortlisted at the first European Sundance Screenwriting Lab, Italy in 2015. He was a finalist nominee to the 2014 Fox Global Directors Initiative fellowship and a Grand Prix Finalist with his short film *Tu e Eu* at the 2011 Academy Qualifier Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia in Tokyo, Japan. On occasion, he predicts weather with his surgically repaired joints (no app yet). IMDb

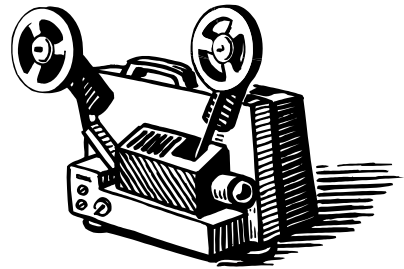
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## **FILM FESTIVAL**

A journey through Independent Films from Around the World



## Kaddish (Short Films 5)

**Directed by Razid Season,  
USA, Drama, 14:24**

In 1943, Akiva, a young Ashkenazim risks a journey through Miechów in Poland to fulfill his obligation to honor his dead mother on the anniversary of her death. He is arrested by Nazis and finds a known elderly Rabbi in Nazi custody. The rabbi, who has lost his entire family in the Holocaust, is hoping to escape Poland for the Promised Land. They escape from the Nazis. The Rabbi accompanies Akiva to his mother's grave, and performs a Jewish ritual. IMDb



**Razid Season** is an independent filmmaker. He earned an MFA in Film from CUNY. Razid was a recipient of the US State Department's filmmaking scholarship in 2015, under which, he made a documentary called *Battle For Speech* (2015). That year he received a full scholarship from the University of California, San Diego to study International Relations & Pacific Studies at the graduate level. At the Bangladesh Film Institute he edited its biannual film journal, *The Moving Image*. He received a number of awards for his films—*Rules* (2014), *Maze*

(2017) and Best Narrative Award from ISA 2018 Los Angeles. His MFA thesis is a Holocaust drama-thriller film called *Kaddish*. He is interested in making films that deal with humanitarian issues, and he wants his films to speak, represent, and fight for minority communities whose voices aren't heard in the mainstream media. IMDb



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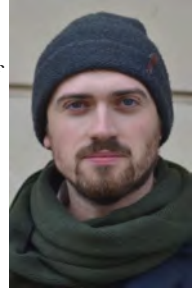
## Lake of Happiness (Short Films 4)



**Directed by Aliaksei Paluyan, Germany, Foreign Language, Drama, 29:56**

In a small Belarusian village where time seems to stand still, Jasja, a 9-year-old girl, has to deal with her mother's death. Her father decides to send her to an orphanage. But one day she decides to run away, home. IMDb

**Aliaksei Paluyan** was born in 1989 in Baranovitchi, in the Republic of Belarus, at that time a part of the Soviet Union. He graduated in



2012 from the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radio-electronics with a degree in engineering and informatics. In 2012, Aliaksei became interested in cinematography, and started studies at the Art Academy Kassel in Visual Communication, specializing in Film and Television. He works as a director of documentary and fiction films. His first creative documentary, *Country of Women* won an award in the prestigious ZagrebDOX Film Festival. *Country of Women* was shown at MakeDox and Kassel Documentary Film and Video Festival. IMDb



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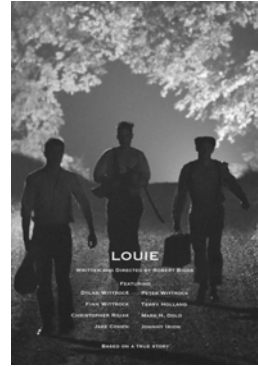
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## Louie (Short Films 3)

**Written and Directed by Robert Biggs,  
USA, Made in Illinois. 22:51**

In 1958 an old man, summoned by his long-estranged brother, crosses the prairie in a pickup truck to hear a haunting death bed confession. While in 1910 Louie, Peck and Peeler crash through the woods, bent on skinny-dipping in an abandoned gravel pit. They catch a hobo going through their pockets on shore, tackle him, shove him around and accidentally kill him. Louie lies to his older brother Roscoe about that night and leaves with his two friends to keep the secret safe. 48 years later a dying Louie needs to come clean. IMDb



**Robert Biggs** is a veteran of Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Ensemble, Shakespeare & Company of Lenox, MA, among others, playing varied roles and wearing many hats. He wrote music and lyrics for *The Adventures of Mutt and Jeff* for Steppenwolf and created *Bosun's Knot* and *The History of Comedy, Part IV* while at Shakespeare & Company. In 2008 Robert founded Outcast Café to produce his musical *The Dick and the Rose*. It premiered at Scotland's Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2011 and

played the New York Fringe Festival in 2012. His films include *Continental Divide*, *Severance*, *Speck's Last*, the documentary *One Year's Crop* (Best Documentary, Embarras River Valley Film Festival 2013) and *Coyote Girl* (Best Experimental Picture, Boston International Film Festival 2016). IMDb



### The Rainbow Writer



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## Love is not Love (Drama Feature 2)

**Written & Directed by  
Stephen Keep Mills, USA,  
Drama, 1:34:26**

Early December, New York City, and everyone is on the hunt for love. Why? Because they haven't found it - and because they haven't found it, they make it into a myth and chase the myth instead. That is not love in this romantic drama of fantasy, fate, and yearning. IMDb



**Stephen Keep Mills** left the Yale Drama School in the spring of 1969 to join the Guthrie Theatre, then appeared with many US and Canada regional companies. He performed in *The Shadow Box*, *Story Theatre*, and *Metamorphosis* on Broadway and in several Off-Broadway houses including The Roundabout Theatre and The Public, where his performance in Vaclav Havel's *A Private View* earned him a Drama Desk nomination. His television credits

include guest-star roles in over 25 episodic shows and *Movies Of The Week*, and regular roles on "Flo" and the Sci-Fi series "VR-5."

In the late 1990's, Mills began directing and producing his own written works on stage, gaining critical notice with *SquareOne* in LA, and an Ovation Nomination for his adaptation of *A Christmas Carol: The Ghost Story of Christmas*, which he directed in collaboration with DeafWest Theatre in American Sign Language. In 2003, he produced and acted in the film of his play *Hotel Lobby*, and thereafter cast himself full-time as a filmmaker. He made his directorial debut with the 15-minute 2005 film *A Cigar at the Beach*, which screened world-wide in 166 festivals, winning 47 awards. He followed up with a 2008 short, *Liminal*, that accumulated 84 festival screenings and 30 awards. Mills is a member of Academy Award Winner Bobby Moresco's Actors' Gym and is included in Del Weston's (AOF) Top 100 Indie Filmmakers In The World Part 1. He is mortally coached by the "living" ghost of Stella Adler. "Love is not Love" marks Mills' first feature as director. IMDb



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## Make My Day (Short Films 4)

**Written & Directed by Kirstin Reppas, Switzerland, Student Showcase, 23:04**

Reto, who decidedly has enough troubles of his own, drives a teenage runaway home to Italy. IMDb

Born in 1994 in Boston, **Kirstin Reppas** earned a major in Arts and Spanish in Zurich in 2012. After internships at Swiss film production companies and a



further training course in filmmaking NYFA, Los Angeles, she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Film at the Zurich University of the Arts, and studied at the University for the Arts, Sciences, and Communication in Santiago, Chile. Besides her own projects, Kirstin works as an editor, assistant editor and translator in Zurich. IMDb

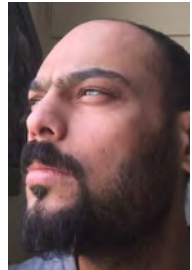


## Malakout (Short Films 5)

**Written & Directed by Farnoosh Abedi, Iran, Animation, 11:08**

Music was his passion. Love was his masterpiece. A piano player tries to bring his wife back to life, but the deal awakens the devil inside him. IMDb

**Farnoosh Abedi** is a director and writer, known for *Malkout* (2020), and *The Old Tree* (2014). IMDb



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## Meanwhile, at the Abandoned Factory... (Short Films 3)

**Written & Directed by Michael Cusack, Australia, Animation, 16:08**

Meanwhile, at the Abandoned Factory... celebrates the heyday of cliff-hanger TV serials. Can our intrepid reporter find her way out of this classic dilemma? IMDb

**Michael Cusack** was born in Manchester, UK and moved to Adelaide South Australia when

he was 11. His first major award was an Australian Film Institute Award in 1985 for the short film *Waltzing Matilda*. With his Producer, Richard Chataway, he established the animation department at the South Australian Film Corporation. Michael's career included direction of both high end television commercials and award winning short films. IMDb



## Midnight Movie: Magnum Opus (Short Films 5)

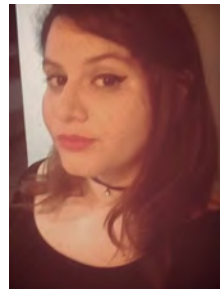


**Written & Directed by Myriam Khammassi, Tunisia, Student Showcase, Thriller, 12:48**

In his quest for the perfect sculpture, aiming to reproduce the human body and especially the flesh, Slim, a sculptor, will go as far as kill to create the perfect exposure, the perfect mix between pulp and clay. IMDb

After starting a career in communication and web marketing, **Myriam Khammassi** followed her dreams and

became a filmmaker. "Writing and directing movies is like giving birth, it's all about magic!" IMDb







## The News (Short Films 2)

**Written & Directed by Lorin Terezi, Foreign Language, 23:18**

A newly married woman lives with her in-laws while her husband works in the neighboring country, Greece. One day he discovers a corpse and the whole small town faces in a battle to get coverage on national television.

**Lorin Terezi** is an Albanian author, mostly known in his



country as a Theater Director. He directed *Tirana 100Km*, a short film selected in more than fifty International Festivals, and *Limelight* (2016). *The News* is his second short film coproduced by Mailuki Films. IMDb



## Night Birds & Ghost Crabs (Short Films 3)

**Directed by Robert Sickels, USA, Experimental, 5:30**

In pairing experimental imagery with interviews in which people from all stages and walks of life discuss the gamut of that which keeps them awake at night, *Night Birds and Ghost Crabs* documents those lonely late night moments we share with so many others the world over.

**Robert Sickels** has been obsessed with movies since he saw *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* at a Seattle drive-in when he was three years old. This fixation with all things cinematic led to his PhD in film studies at the University of Nevada. He is a father, an independent filmmaker, a prolific writer & editor, a baseball junkie, a foodie, a semi-professional mixologist, hopelessly addicted to pop culture, and the founder of Big Whiskey Studios, specializing in micro-documentary projects with engaging personal narratives. Sickels's films have screened widely in the US and abroad. He is a Professor in and the Director of the Film & Media Studies Program at Whitman College, where he teaches Film History and Filmmaking classes. IMDb





## Omar and Us (Foreign Language Feature 1)

**Directed by Maryna Er Gorbach & Mehmet Bahadır Er, Turkey, Drama, Foreign Language, 01:42:51**

Ismet is a Turkish soldier, who was on duty at the border as a Commander of the Coast Guard and recently got retired. Now as a civilian, he struggles to communicate with his family and people surrounding him. His only son abandoned him and left to the U.S. And now his wife wants to join

her son, too. After suddenly becoming neighbors with two Syrian refugees (Omar and Mariye) at his house near the Turkish-Greek border and the humane experience he has to live through, he now has to face his prejudices and his political view. IMDB



**Mehmet Bahadır Er** graduated from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University's Cinema-Television academy with a bachelor's degree. There he learned from Berlin "Golden Bear" awarded director Metin Erksan about cinema theory, from Duygu Sagiroglu about script writing and from Memduh Ün about movie production. His movies received awards from Antalya the

Golden Orange Festival, Adana The Golden Boll Festival, Ankara Film Festival, Ifsak, Istanbul Independent Movies Festival, International Bosphorus Film Festival and Sony Entertainment. His films appeared at international festivals. He co-directed his debut movie *Kara Kopekler Havlarken* (Black Dogs Barking - 2009) with Maryna Er Gorbach. They have co-directed movies ever since. Mehmet Bahadır Er is (EFA) European Film Academy member IMDB



## Pedal to the Metal (Short Films 4)

**Written & Directed by Ben Acevedo, Andrew Benson, and Sabrina Demers, USA, Animation, 3:05**

What if the road to a rock concert was as exhilarating as the concert itself? Join two super fans, Brock and Roxy, as they race through a rock-and-roll themed desert to see their favorite band before the stadium fills up!



**Ben Acevedo**, born in 1997, grew up in the suburbs of central New Jersey, obsessed with *Batman: The Animated Series* and Nintendo characters. He made comic books about favorite characters with his dad.

Seeing *The Incredibles* in the theater on his birthday was a life-changing experience, cementing his love for animation and action films. He became aware of online creators of animated shorts on YouTube and Newgrounds, which inspired him to make animated content. After many art and film studies classes, he hoped to work in the entertainment industry. He found Ringling College of Art and Design, the perfect fit. He aimed to create work blending cinematic action with humor and heart. He learned about the effort required to make animated content – and how collaborative animation is.

**Andrew Benson** was born on April 7th, 1998 and lived in Baltimore, MD almost his whole life. He grew up watching the classic traditionally-drawn Disney animated films and cartoons, including *The Lion King*, *Shrek*, *Scooby-Doo*, *Spongebob Squarepants*, and *The Simpsons*. At five, his family took him to Disney World. He gave his kindergarten class a report with pictures. He drew many more, and attended Ringling College of Art & Design, where he learned that filmmaking, not just animation, is a very collaborative process. At GKV, a Baltimore-based advertising agency, he created two animated advertisements and assisted with the company's promotional video. On graduation, he will be an Art Intern with Firaxis Games.

**Sabrina Demers** is a 23 year old Director/Animator who grew up in suburban Massachusetts. New England culture inspired her; she always drew and watched movies, wanting to be a filmmaker after seeing *Jaws*. She studied art and writing for film in high school, and was passionate about drawing and art. She chose a career in animation out of love for storytelling and handheld animation. Films that influenced her were *Prince of Egypt*, *Harry Potter*, *Avatar* and *Narnia*. She wants to reach people, inspire them, teach them and entertain them. As a creator, it's the best work I could have ever chosen and the fact that I get to be a part of the next generation of filmmakers is a dream come true.





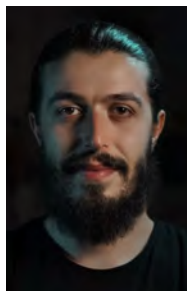
## Pirabok (Short Films 5)

**Written & Directed by Ferman Narin, Turkey, Student Showcase, 19:56**

Hatice lives in the field with her two children and lives hand to mouth. One day, the shepherd of the village, Recep, is killed by Pirabok. After this incident, families of children send them from the village. Hatice and her children, who are alone in the village, face the curse of Pirabok. IMDb

**Ferman Narin** was born in Diyarbakir in 1995 and completed his education at

Diyarbakir Vali Ünal Erkan Primary School and Namik Kemal Vocational High School. In 2016, he started undergraduate studies at Mersin University Faculty of Communication-Radio Cinema Television Department. He edited many short films and commercials and worked as an assistant director in various projects. *SOYKA* is Ferman Narin's first short film. He is currently studying at the Radio and Television Department of Mersin University. IMDb



## Punishment (Short Films 2)

**Directed by Jalal Veisi, Iran, Experimental, 10:54**

A soldier who is in love with a girl is imprisoned in the archives of the garrison.

**Jala Veisi** is Director of Operations at Arna Films.



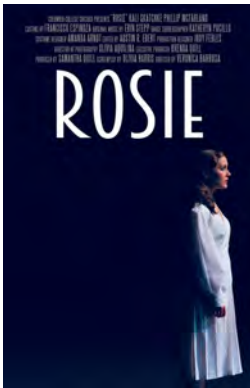
## Quit (Short Films 2)



**Written & Directed by Sina Gholamnejad, Iran, Foreign Language, 14:24**

Sina Gholamnejad is a director and actor, known for *Breaking News* (2016). IMDb



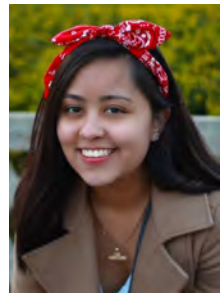


## Rosie (Short Films 3)

**Directed by Veronica Barbosa, USA,  
Made in Illinois, 9:32**

Rosie and her husband, Edward, are sweethearts of the vaudeville stage. Away from audiences, Edward emotionally abuses Rosie. She decides to sew a dress to make her stand out and help her gain independence. One night, Rosie makes a mistake. Believing their routine is messed up, Edward berates Rosie in front of the audience - and blames the dress. Rosie must decide to stay or leave. IMDb

**Veronica Barbosa** is a director in Chicago. She started studying TV Production at Curie High School on Chicago's south side, and enjoyed TV production and sports broadcasting, but craved the storytelling element of film. She loves all aspects of filmmaking, especially producing and directing while studying cinema arts at Columbia College. She directed *Remember Me* and *Liberation*. She's influenced by the struggles and triumphs of people and cultures. She hopes to make inspiring movies, as a successful Mexican/American female director/producer. IMDb



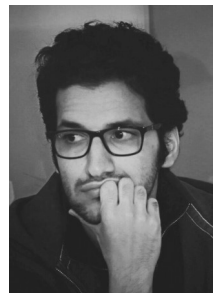
## The Rotation (Short Films 4)

**Written & Directed by Hazhir As'adi,  
Iran, Student Showcase, 6:40**

Because two tribes are warring to claim the sun in the sky, the sun annihilates and a volcano erupts. The two tribes now dead, a new sun is made, by the volcano's lava. After several centuries, humans again battle to claim the sun in the sky. IMDb

**Hazhir As'adi**, born in 1992 in Sanandaj, Iran, has an M.A in Dramatic Literature and

graduated from the Iranian Youth Cinema Society. A screenwriter, director, storyboard designer, editor, and distributor of short and feature films, he also produced two short animated films *Blows With The Wind* (2017)" and *The Rotation*. In many national and foreign festivals, he won more than fifteen awards. IMDb







## Tuscaloosa (Drama Feature 1)



**Written & Directed by Philip Harder, USA, Drama, 1:41:11**

1972. Vietnam war protests and racial tension is sizzling in the late summer heat of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Billy Mitchell (Devon Bostick, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*), a recent college graduate, spends the summer working on the lush grounds of an old world mental institution run by his psychiatrist father (Tate Donovan, *Rocketman*). Billy falls in love with Virginia (Natalia Dyer, *Velvet Buzzsaw*, *Stranger Things*), a patient who is possibly crazy, or perhaps she is the only sane person Billy has in his world. Billy's best friend Nigel (Marchant Davis)

becomes involved with a radical civil rights activist (YG) against Tuscaloosa's power elite, which includes Billy's father. Billy is torn between Nigel, his father and his cronies, and Virginia who is planning her escape with or without Billy. IMDb

**Philip Harder** has directed numerous commercials and music videos for clients including Apple, Sprint, The Gap, Target, Advil, Gerber, NHL, Disney and Hewlett Packard. His music videos include Prince, Foo Fighters, Incubus, The Script, CSS, Nada Surf, Rob Thomas, Liz Phair, Babes in Toyland, Macy Gray, Hilary Duff, Low, Cornershop, Trampled By Turtles, Pulp, The Cranberries, Barenaked Ladies, Matchbox Twenty, Afghan Whigs, all of which feature Harder's visual experimentation and energetic style.



Harder has earned several top distinctions including an MVPA award for Best Alternative Video, MTV Awards video nomination, SXSW short film award, and a nomination for MVPA's Director of the Year. His dance shorts have earned numerous awards including the Jury Award at the Dance on Camera Festival at Lincoln Center New York, and Best Experimental Film Award at the Brooklyn International Film Festival.

Harder's cinematography credits include the 2016 feature "Yoko The Cherry Blossom", shot and distributed in Japan, dir. Gen Takahashi, "Snow," nominated for a Spirit Award and "Low Movie" which premiered at the Lincoln Center, New York. His most recent documentary film is "A Work In Progress: Albert Milgrom's Cinema Journey" (2018). IMDb





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## About the Route 66 Film Festival:

The festival began as a project of the Reel to Real Film Club at LincolnLand Community College. Inspired by Roger Ebert's film festival in Champaign, the club used a \$10,000 grant from LincolnLand to hold the film festival in 2002 at the old Esquire Theater, and workshops for students at LincolnLand.

The first festival was held on two weekends, in conjunction with the Route 66 Mother Road Festival from which it took its name. Bruce Campbell, star of *Evil Dead* movies and TV's *Burn Notice*, was a special guest, as was Martin Milner and the Corvette from his TV show *Route 66*.

LincolnLand did not continue to sponsor the festival, but founder Linda McElroy (with volunteers) hosted festivals in 2003 and 2004 at the Hilton Hotel, soliciting films from schools across the country. Filmmakers attended from across Illinois, and from New York and California.

Festival entries increased with the advent of internet solicitation and submission. From 2005-2011 the festival was a three-day event at the Hoogland Center for the Arts, with films submitted from all continents except Antarctica. Linda McElroy stepped down as director and a 6-member board has organized the now 2-day festival since 2012, when it was held at the Legacy Theater. From 2013-18, the Festival was held at the theater adjoining the Capital City Bar & Grill. In 2019, the Route 66 Hotel & Conference Center was both the Festival host and official lodging site. Tom Szpyrka was Festival Director from 2012-13, Siobhan Johnson has served in that capacity since 2014.

The Route 66 Film Festival is proud to introduce Springfield audiences to films from throughout the world and to provide an audience to new and veteran filmmakers. Those interested in becoming board members and volunteers may contact [route66filmfestival@gmail.com](mailto:route66filmfestival@gmail.com).

We welcome online reviewers/evaluators, festival staffers, sponsors and donors.



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- ◆ Théa Chesley -- Communication and Marketing
- ◆ Christine Samoore -- Director at Large
- ◆ Crissie Trigger -- Director at Large
- ◆ Lana Wildman -- Director at Large, Popcorn Goddess, and M.C.

## **2020 Film Judges**

- ◆ Théa Chesley
- ◆ Jeffrey Giberson
- ◆ Siobhan Johnson
- ◆ Linda McElroy
- ◆ Mindy Pastrovich
- ◆ Donna Pleshe
- ◆ Rosanne Russillo
- ◆ Christine Samoore
- ◆ Crissie Trigger
- ◆ Lana Wildman
- ◆ LeAnne Withrow

## **19th Annual Festival Posters & Ads, Program Book**

Design and layout by The Rainbow Writer

## **19th Festival Graphic Illustration**

Christine Samoore

## **And the Award Winners Are...**

**Best Animated Film:**

**Best Foreign Language Film:**

**Best Comedy:**

**Best Made in Illinois Film:**

**Best Environmental Themed:**

**Best Student Film:**

**Best Drama:**

**Hugh Moore Best of Fest:**

**Best Experimental Film:**

**Audience Favorite:**

**My personal favorite:**





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