

# Aspen

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CULTURE/CHARACTERS/COMMENTARY

## TIMES WEEKLY

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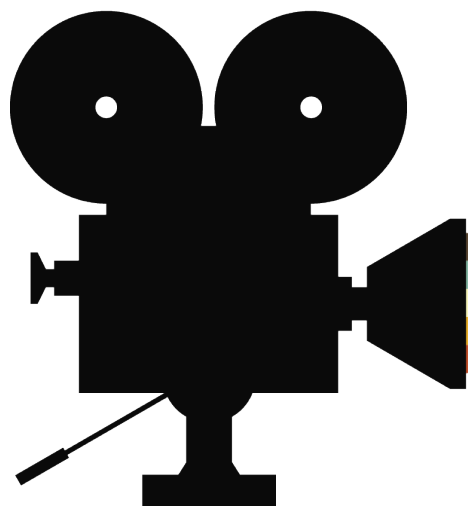
# SHORTS SEASON

## CURTAIN RISES ON ASPEN SHORTSFEST 2018



# A CINEMATIC ROLLER COASTER

BY ANDREW TRAVERS



WHAT TO  
WATCH  
AT ASPEN  
SHORTSFEST  
2018

**F**ilms and filmmakers from around the world are descending on the mountains for the 27th annual Aspen Shortsfest. This year's iteration of the renowned, Oscar-qualifying showcase for movies under 40 minutes includes 77 films from 29 countries. They range from family-friendly animated titles to challenging and experimental works that announce promising new voices in cinema.

Across 11 programs in Aspen and four in Carbondale, Shortsfest will cover some of the world's best in comedy and drama, animation and documentary. Rather than split programs up by theme or genre, each festival sitting covers a wide spectrum in both style and substance.

"You're going to see a roller coaster taking you into different worlds and styles," says the festival's new director of programming, Landon Zakheim.

Zakheim's first introduction to Shortsfest came on the filmmaker side. A short-film programmer for the Sundance Film Festival since 2008, Zakheim also directed "Another Bullet Dodged," which screened at Shortsfest in 2012.

He and his team have put together a slate of films that includes four world premieres and nine North American premieres, alongside acclaimed and award-winning shorts that have picked up buzz in recent months on the festival circuit.

"Ultimately it's a combination of some tried-and-true festival favorites and award-winners and some new discoveries," he explains.

Among the joys for cinephiles at Shortsfest is discovering emerging talent and breakthroughs. The festival provided early showcases for work by directors such as Damien Chazelle ("La La Land"), Jason Reitman ("Up in the Air"), Jean-Marc Vallée ("Dallas Buyers Club") and Sarah Polley ("Stories We Tell").

For Zakheim and his programmers, who culled the Shortsfest selections from more than 2,500 submissions, such talent-scouting is a rewarding job.

"It's exciting for me to see filmmakers whose early shorts I'm programming go on to make major works of art or blockbusters," Zakheim says. "To think you were a part of getting their early work into the world is very gratifying."

On the following pages are some noteworthy titles coming to Shortsfest. Pick up The Aspen Times for daily coverage and filmmaker interviews throughout the festival.



### 'SAM DID IT'

Aspen: Tuesday, April 3, 8 p.m.  
Carbondale: Saturday,  
April 7, 5:15 p.m.

Actor Dominic Burgess ("Feud") has written, directed and starred in this mad-cap and hilarious 10-minute short about a mortician who is delighted and devastated when his celebrity idol, Alfred Molina, rolls in with a tag on his toe. Molina plays himself.



### 'THE PASSAGE'

Wednesday, April 4, 8 p.m.

Brilliant and absurd, this extended chase sequence follows Phil on the run from hitmen through a series of misadventures around the world. It's produced by the comedy duo Tim and Eric, of "Adult Swim" fame.



### 'THE CLIMB'

Aspen: Wednesday, April 4, 5:15 p.m.  
Carbondale: Saturday,  
April 7, 5:15 p.m.

This is an assured crowd-pleaser for the outdoorsy mountain-town crowd. Made with one continuous shot running for seven minutes, the film follows road bikers Kyle and Mike as they struggle up a hill climb and Mike reveals a secret that complicates the ride.



### 'SOLAR WALK'

Thursday, April 5, 5:15 p.m.

This ambitious animated film by Hungary's Réka Bucsi brings viewers to space to ask the big questions about existence and cosmic order. The Aspen screening marks the film's North American premiere.



### 'INTERCOURSE'

Friday, April 6, 8 p.m.

This Swedish 10-minute short turns its clever, comic eye on gender roles, sex and power as a couple negotiates in bed. Zakheim notes another film, the U.K.'s "Careful How You Go" (April 5, 5:15 p.m.) treads similar terrain and also dissects the thornier intricacies of romantic relationships with dry humor. He expects this pair of films to spark a lot of conversation at Shortsfest: "These may be divisive, but they're certainly very funny."



### 'FAUVE'

Aspen: Saturday, April 7, 5:15 p.m.  
Carbondale: Sunday,  
April 8, 5:15 p.m.

Two young boys roam the outdoors looking for mischief and find more than they're expecting in this Canadian drama by Jeremy Comte. It's a master class in short-form storytelling, packing the emotional arc of a feature into 16 intense minutes and announcing Comte as a major talent to watch. "This is a filmmaker we'll be hearing a lot from," predicts Zakheim.





### 'THE DRIVER IS RED'

Aspen: Saturday, April 7, 8 p.m.  
Carbondale: Sunday, April 8, 7:30 p.m.

An extraordinary true story, told with visionary style, this animated documentary tells the story of Israeli secret agent Zvi Aharoni and how he captured Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Argentina 15 years after the end of World War II.



### 'HOME SHOPPER'

Aspen: Saturday, April 7, 5:15 p.m.  
Carbondale: Saturday, April 7, 7:30 p.m.

The directorial debut of Oscar-nominated actor Dev Patel, boasting a cast that includes Sophie Kargman, Armie Hammer and Thomas Sadoski, this is the highest profile title at Shortsfest. It doesn't disappoint, with an acerbic and darkly comic tale of a woman, her beloved home-shopping network and a shocking turn of events in her seemingly idyllic marriage.



### 'HAIR WOLF'

Aspen: Saturday, April 7, 8 p.m.  
Carbondale: Sunday, April 8, 7:30 p.m.

Like "Get Out," this comedic horror film skewers white cultural appropriation with laughs and biting social commentary. Mariama Diallo's fable is set in a black Brooklyn hair salon that is under attack by zombie-like white folks seeking selfies and braids.



### 'WAVE'

Aspen: Saturday, April 7, 5:15 p.m.  
Carbondale: Sunday, April 8, 5:15 p.m.

This dazzling parable about the crushing toxicity — and the potential for good — in online culture follows a man who wakes up from a coma speaking an unrecognizable language and tries to find his way forward by posting a video of himself on YouTube.



### FAMILY FUN

Sunday, April 8, noon

Seven kid-friendly shorts comprise a program that will run just over an hour and feature animation, stop-motion, talking bears, stories about kids and the world premiere of "Loser Leaves Town," a tale of an 11-year-old luchador wrestler.

### FIELD OF VISION

Field of Vision, the production company founded by Oscar winner Laura Poitras and the team behind the 2016 Shortsfest stand-out "Speaking is Difficult" about mass shootings in the U.S., has landed four muckraking documentaries in the festival that blend art and investigative journalism: "The Earth is Humming," about the effect of earthquakes and tsunamis in Japan (April 5, 5:15 p.m.); "An Uncertain Future," covering immigration authorities' treatment of pregnant women in Texas (April 6, 5:15); "Personal Truth," dissecting the Pizzagate conspiracy theory (April 6, 8 p.m.); and "Nuuca," delving into the dark side of North Dakota's oil boom (Aspen: April 7, 5:15 p.m.; Carbondale: Sunday, April 8, 5:15 p.m.).



## IF YOU GO...

WHAT: Aspen Shortsfest  
WHERE: Wheeler Opera House, Aspen; Crystal Theatre, Carbondale  
WHEN: April 3-8  
HOW MUCH: \$20 (\$15 for Aspen Film members)  
TICKETS: Wheeler Opera House box office; [www.aspenshowtix.com](http://www.aspenshowtix.com)



MORE INFO: Each program will be followed by a Q&A with the filmmakers; the Wheeler will host an opening reception on Tuesday, April 3, from 7 to 8 p.m.; the festival will also present a panel discussion with filmmakers at the Mountain Chalet at noon on Thursday, April 5; a conversation with Shortsfest alumnus and "Monsters & Men" director Reinaldo Marcus Green at noon on Friday, April 6; the panel discussion "Outside the Frame: Getting Your Film Made" with industry insiders at 2 p.m. on Friday, April 6; and "Outside the Frame: Getting Your Film Seen" on Saturday, April 7 at noon; "Apres Screening" events will run at bars in Aspen nightly at 10 p.m.; a "Pop-up Futbol Match" is scheduled for Sunday, April 8 at 3 p.m. in Wagner Park. Full program online at [aspenfilm.org](http://aspenfilm.org).