

Short films in the spotlight at Durban International Film Festival

The University of KwaZulu-Natal's Centre for Creative Arts will host the Durban International Festival (DIFF) from 22 July to 1 August 2021.



A scene from *Al-Sit*, directed by Suzannah Mrghani

The DIFF believes short films are a powerful medium for expression and contribute significantly to the film business. Still, they often do not get the same amount of exposure and publicity as features do.

Many shorts have no doubt been created due to the hope of exploring, learning and building a call-card. Yet, perhaps, underrated as it may be, the short film is the most widely created film style with many great names having begun their careers there. With this in mind, DIFF 2021 spotlights Short Films and their filmmakers with a curated programme.

The festival, primarily virtual, has a live component with short films screening for free across the City of Durban and KwaZulu-Natal at four different venues this year: Alliance Française, KZNSA Gallery and Daily Dosage in Durban and Luthuli Museum in Groutville.



A scene from *Belia*, directed by Eran Hussein

DIFF will announce the exact programme closer to the festival. Here are some films which will be included:

- *Five Tiger*, directed by Nomawonga Khumalo. In the film, a god-fearing woman finds herself in a transactional relationship as she tries to support her sick husband and daughter.
- *A Guide to Dining out in Nairobi*, a Kenyan film directed by American director Hugh Mitton, in which a security guard gets a 10 dollar tip from his wealthy boss and we follow his journey in how far he can make it go.
- *Al-Sit*, a story from Sudan about women, both powerless and powerful, by director Suzannah Mirghani.
- *Lizard* by director Akinola Davies Jr from the UK and a story based on actual events about an eight year old girl who gets ejected from Sunday school services.
- *Belia* from Egypt, director Eman Hussein tells us the story about how a young woman and her friends join a car repair shop as 'Belia' (colloquial Egyptian for apprentices) to learn the craft from the Ustas (craft headmasters). They explore what this relationship creates as it merges labour with everyday life rhythms to open a new space for movement.



A scene from *Five Tiger*, directed by Nomawonga Khumalo

Festival manager and curator, Chipu Zhou, said, “There is a lot to be said about the short film as an economic model's sustainability, but innovative and creative solutions are being sought out and found every day. Over the past several years, many platforms have been created to promote short films and pay the filmmaker for their effort, a trend we hope continues to grow as demand for content increases and as attention spans decrease.”

DIFF has partnered with Argo, a streaming platform and global curator of short films that will showcase ten short films from the DIFF selection, allowing these filmmakers to monetise their craft. The platform works on a revenue-share basis intending to ensure filmmakers have the opportunity to truly showcase their work while entertaining and inspiring the new wave of independent film.



A scene from *A Guide to Dining out in Nairobi*, directed by Hugh Mtton

The DIFF is a member of the Short Film Conference, a body that works with short film festivals globally to promote the short film industry. This year, during the community engagement programme of DIFF, Isiphethu, the SFC Board will present the work they do and how the continent can be part of this movement dedicated to developing the short film space.

In addition, isiPhethu will also be screening several short films as part of their community engagement programme. Covid films will be screened in collaboration with Social Transformation and Empowerment Projects (STEPS). These are films done by individuals across the continent to highlight how the pandemic has affected us in different ways within our own spaces. The partnership with the 48-hour film project, isiPhethu, will culminate in a short film programme that will find its way to the DIFF platforms.

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