

From Life & Arts:

## Manhattan Shorts



A scene from *Love Child*, directed by Daniel Wirtberg

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The Writers' Boot Camp at Bergamot Station hosted the Manhattan Shorts Film Festival on September 24. This festival, begun 12 years ago with a single truck-mounted screen on a downtown Manhattan street, has expanded into an international event, with ten films screened simultaneously in 173 cities over one week's time.

There was much excitement at the screening over *Mozambique*, a film produced by local organization Venice Arts. This film, by now-17 year old Alcides Soares, was created during a project called "The House is Small, But the Welcome is Big," which involved professionals from the photography and film world going to Africa and giving cameras and instruction to women and children affected by AIDS.

Soares, working with the mentorship of television writer Neal Baer and director Chris Zalla, directed a full-length documentary about his own life and his search for a family. He had lost his parents to AIDS some years after they divorced, and he sought to find his grandparents and younger brother. *Mozambique* is a 14-minute excerpt from the full-length film and shows an already mature approach to personal documentary narrative.

While Soares was the youngest filmmaker represented at Manhattan Shorts, the other nine films, by somewhat older young directors from various countries, also showed much promise.

Julius Onah's *The Boundary*, the U.S. entry, was the most emotionally gripping film, based on a true story about an American family of Middle Eastern background, detained at a U.S.-Canadian border crossing. Daniel Wirtberg's *Love Child*, from Sweden, was an amusing quickie about a little girl's "sibling rivalry" feelings when her parents got a cat that they seemed to love more than her.

Jeremy Clapin's *Skhizein*, from France, an animated short about a man who is struck by a meteorite and experiences a spatial displacement, had been previously seen by this reviewer at the Los Angeles Film Festival, but was more enjoyable on second viewing, although at 13 and a half minutes, it still seemed a trifle long.

*Hammerhead*, by the U.K.'s Sam Donovan, used humor and some suspense to tell the tale of a young boy's confusion about his parents' divorce and his mother's new female lover. Israeli Yehezkel Lavarov's *Lashabiva* portrayed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict via a playground game with real soldiers, a brief, tense film.

Other films included Isabel De Ocampo's *Miente*, from Spain, about a prostitute, her cruel pimp, and her younger sister, to whom she reached out (a lack of subtitles created some confusion for audience members, although the visuals still had dramatic impact); Sandy Widyanata's *Plastic*, from Australia, a funny short about body image; Martina Amati's *A Mare*, a beautifully photographed story of two Sicilian boys out on the water in a small boat; and again from Spain, Jorge Molina's *Parking*, a cautionary tale of what might be termed "parking structure rage."

Audiences at all Manhattan Shorts screenings voted for their favorite of the ten films. The winning film, announced September 29 in New York, was *Skhizein*.

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