



SHORT FOCUS FILM FESTIVAL 2020

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Welcome to **Short Focus Film Festival 2020**. For those of you familiar with our festival, you will notice immediately the less communal surroundings in which you find yourselves. Due to the very unfortunate and unpredictable circumstances caused by the coronavirus pandemic, we decided that this year's festival programme would be streamed online. This was a very difficult decision for us to make, but ultimately one that we felt was sensible both from a health and safety and a logistical standpoint.

Much of this situation was beyond our control, as our chosen venue was unable to guarantee that they could safely open their doors to the public in time for this event. Additionally, many of our audience members expressed caution in regards to public exhibitions and, of course, the safety of our audience is at the heart of our concerns.

Cinema projection and the exhibition of short films is an integral aspect of our company's ethos, and the pandemic presented an unexpected and new challenge for us as a festival, but it was a challenge that we took on seriously and positively.

For us, the most obvious benefit of curating an online programme is that we are able to screen these films to a wider international audience as opposed to a limited, local audience. It also means that we are able to present the films over a longer period than initially intended, again increasing the visibility of this wonderful collection of work.

We are sorry that we could not show these short films on the big screen the way we believe they should be seen, and we fully appreciate your understanding during what is proving to be a profoundly strange and difficult moment for film culture. Nevertheless, we hope that you enjoy the programmes we have curated for you.

For their continued contributions and support, **FRAME LIGHT** would like to acknowledge the following: Sally Roberts, Sam Briggs, Vincent Dolan, Walt Eastfield, Thom Carter, Charlie Greep, Alison Girault, Patricia Watney, Moé Sekiya, Alan Payne and Close-Up Cinema.

Thank you.

Festival Directors: Dean Archibald-Smith & Aya Ishizuka

£ = Each programme costs £2 and, once purchased, is available to view for 72 hours.



= For optimum viewing, it is recommended that you cast the programmes from your smart device or computer to your TV, or connect an HDMI cable.

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PROGRAMME ONE

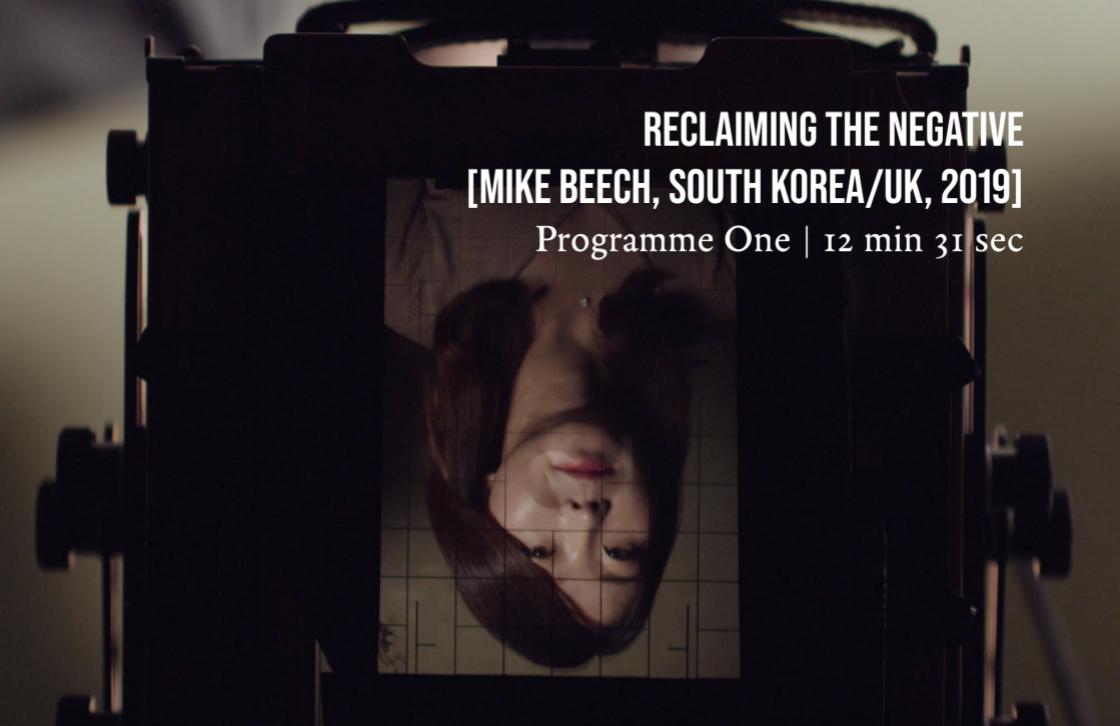
56 min 12 sec



GHOST OF A CHANCE
[MANES DUERR, USA, 2019]

Programme One | 10 min 25 sec

Ghost of a Chance is a snapshot into the relationship of a young working class American couple. The two individuals are bonded together through the expectance of a newborn baby. With different priorities literally racing through their lives, we question whether one man's childhood dream is more important than three people's domestic reality. Manes Duerr's quiet drama is a thoughtful study on the modern American family and the weight of its responsibilities.



RECLAIMING THE NEGATIVE
[MIKE BEECH, SOUTH KOREA/UK, 2019]

Programme One | 12 min 31 sec

Since the end of the Korean War in 1953, roughly 31,000 North Koreans have defected from their home country to South Korea. In 2018, photographer Tim Franco began shooting a series of large format portraits using an unusual technique for a book detailing some of the subject's experiences. *Reclaiming the Negative* is an intriguing and intelligent documentary, which takes highly political subject matter and looks at it through a humanistic lens.

A close-up, profile shot of a woman with long, light brown hair, looking down and slightly to the right. The lighting is dim, creating a somber and contemplative mood. She is wearing a dark blue top.

INFLUX

[DANIEL URIBE, USA, 2020]

Programme One | 3 min 30 sec

A mother finds herself sinking into a violent domestic relationship, until a wave of emotions is awakened within her. *Influx* is a poetic short film that dives into themes of domestic abuse, alcoholism and love, inspired by Leslie Morgan Steiner's TED talk 'Why domestic violence victims don't leave', and by the countless stories of mothers trapped in abusive relationships and compelled by the power of love for their children.

A close-up shot of a young man with curly brown hair, looking intently at a lit matchstick held near his nose. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting. The lighting is warm and natural.

OLD FLAME - A SUPER 8 STORY
[SPENCER HETHERINGTON & JESSE RICOTTONE, CANADA, 2020]

Programme One | 5 min 45 sec

There is something about Super 8mm film that is inherently nostalgic; imperfect and grainy, almost like watching memories played back. Spencer Hetherington and Jesse Ricottone explore this idea with great efficacy in their experimental short *Old Flame - A Super 8 Story*. Told through silent, surrealist vignettes, a young man learns the hard truth that holding onto an old flame hurts more than letting go. With shots reminiscent of Akira Kurosawa's *Drunken Angel* and Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, this student film is nothing short of a triumph.



FANCY A CUPPA?

[LOTTE CASSIDY, UK, 2020]

Programme One | 2 min 41 sec

Forgetfulness is a normal part of ageing. Memories come and go in no particular order. Lotte Cassidy's vibrant hand drawn animation explores the theme of memory in a personal and original way, using minimalist and playful imagery to convey the childhood stories told to her by her grandmother over a cup of tea. *Fancy a Cuppa?* is a deeply warm and heartfelt tribute to a loved one, and a film that is immediately relatable and uplifting.

RIO

[ZHENIA KAZANKINA, RUSSIA/FINLAND, 2019]

Programme One | 22 min



Paulina lives and works in a small hotel in a northern border town with her friend Nadia. The girls are completely detached from and disillusioned by their reality, living in their own make-believe world. Rarely leaving the empty hotel, they perform their strange daily rituals in the hope that someday it will lead them to a miracle. One day a stranger arrives at the hotel. Torn between the man and her friend, Paulina begins to consider who she really is and her life's true purpose. *Rio* is a wonderfully strange and ultimately tragic tale of adolescent ennui, with a magical realist edge that owes as much to Yorgos Lanthimos as it does to Wes Anderson.

PROGRAMME TWO

43 min 30 sec

DEAR MR. BURTON
[MAJ JUKIC, UK, 2020]

Programme Two | 9 min 36 sec



Tim Malloy is a teenager whose life is bleak, misunderstood and full of despair. He spends most of his utterly miserable life in his own made-up worlds of horrific monsters and grotesque stories fuelled by Lovecraftian and Edgar Allan Poe infused nightmares. While avoiding everything remotely sweet, cute and pleasant, he is struck by the one thing that will load his life with all of the above - love. *Dear Mr. Burton* is a charming and whimsical tale about the emotions and growing pains of adolescence.



BELOW THE HILLS

[KATE-LOIS ELLIOTT, UK, 2019]

Programme Two | 3 min 45 sec

Below The Hills follows Natalie and her friend Lucy, as they return to a house from their childhood. Natalie is desperate to feel something; she hopes returning to this house will stir her awake in some way. Eventually she lets go of the house and travels up into the downs. She closes her eyes and takes what feels like the first easy breath she has had in weeks... Kate-Lois Elliott's psychogeographical short is a quiet and poetic reflection on nostalgia, nature and mindfulness.



MICAL

[YEWWENG HO, UK, 2020]

Programme Two | 19 min 49 sec

Based on the inspiring true story of Pat and Mike Jones, an intelligent 7-year-old boy struggles to read and write because he is dyslexic. Only one person believes he can fulfil his true potential - his mother. Yewweng Ho's second directed short, *Mical* is a richly detailed period drama, which delves into a sensitive and much overlooked issue with great depth and authenticity.

A man with dark, curly hair and a beard is shown in profile, looking towards the left. He is shirtless and appears to be standing in a field or on a hill. The background is a vast, open landscape under a clear sky, with a low horizon line. The lighting suggests it is either dawn or dusk, with a warm, golden glow. The man's silhouette is dark against the lighter background.

WE WALK

[MARC LESPERUT, SPAIN, 2019]

Programme Two | 2 min 12 sec

We Walk is a moving piece that considers visually the traumatic experience of what it means to run away from one's roots and become an immigrant. Purposely set up in an undefined country, the main character battles against desolation and torment whilst thinking about his family back home. This two-minute short is a powerfully elegiac portrait of survival, hope and the struggle for freedom.



WHAT IS THE MODERN MANTRA?
[KIT SEBASTIAN, FRANCE/UK, 2019]
Programme Two | 8 min 27 sec

In the middle of August 2019, two days after their debut album release show, music duo Kit Sebastian fly to Tours airport to shoot what they intend to be a promotional film on celluloid Super 8. The film unwittingly becomes both an intimate portrayal of the duo exploring their aesthetic world, and a critique of themselves, their ideas, and their authenticity. The bilingual script drifts between abstraction and realism, serving both as a snapshot of the duo immediately after completing their debut album, and a filmic essay exploring music, language and reality. *What is the Modern Mantra?* is an exuberant visual essay that playfully interrogates the boundary between artifice and truth.

PROGRAMME THREE

49 min 48 sec



GUM

[JACOB REED, USA, 2020]

Programme Three | 8 min 54 sec

In a reality where chewing gum doesn't exist, Anne pitches an idea that could change the world... *Gum* is a fantastically funny short film featuring entirely improvised performances from Suzi Barrett and Rebecca Drysdale. The sketch brilliantly emphasizes the absurd characteristics of this simple and ubiquitous confection, forcing us to reconsider the values of the rituals we perform in our everyday lives.



HOLLOW TOOTH

[SAMUEL KAPERSKI, FRANCE, 2019]

Programme Three | 19 min 36 sec

Jason, who has just completed a military deployment in Mali, returns to his native village. His reunion with his father and the inhabitants of the village is glacial and plunges him into a state of silent suffering, before anger takes over. *Hollow Tooth* is an incendiary drama that sharply observes the psychological and social effects of war.



THE ANIMAL THAT THEREFORE I AM
[BEA DE VISSER, NETHERLANDS, 2019]

Programme Three | 10 min 37 sec

“What does the animal see when it looks at me?” Three animals and a woman coexist in an enclosed space. As they study each other, their own methods of communication create a wordless conversation. We view them in close-up and from various perspectives, with the woman as a solitary species in this universe. *The Animal That Therefore I Am* is an experimental and existential work that interrogates our own perceptions of humanity by displacing our gaze with that of the animal, revealing the true vulnerability of our species and the fragility of the evolutionary framework.



COLORS

[KRISTIAN MERCADO, USA, 2019]

Programme Three | 4 min 24 sec

Black Pumas' music video *Colors* explores the bonds of a young family living in the Bronx. They are displaced after unforeseen circumstances take the family to unexpected places. Despite the challenges facing them, they find joy, hope, and each other. The landscape of the Bronx is celebrated as a beautiful place, and Eric Burton's evocative movements and dance explore the emotions and the shifts we experience in life.



BULLDOG

[KIERAN STRINGFELLOW, UK, 2020]

Programme Three | 6 min 30 sec

After spending the night in a cell, a rough sleeper has a score to settle. *Bulldog* is a smart and gritty drama that challenges the stereotypes associated with homeless people. “There are many myths and stereotypes that people associate with homelessness, the most common being that every rough sleeper is either a drunk, an addict or a convict,” states director Kieran Stringfellow about his film. Using certain cinematic tropes, the film challenges us to confront our basic assumptions about certain sections of society.

A stylized, cubist illustration of a street scene. In the foreground, three figures are walking away from the viewer. The figure on the left is a man in a dark blue suit. The figure in the center is a man in a dark blue suit. The figure on the right is a woman wearing a red headscarf and a long, multi-colored striped dress. They are walking on a light pinkish-grey ground. In the background, there are several houses with flat roofs and chimneys, rendered in warm colors like orange, red, and yellow. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century modernist art.

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