



# SHORT FOCUS FILM FESTIVAL 2025

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This year's edition of **Short Focus Film Festival** comes to you at a critical moment in our history – a time when the world is more divided, political opinions are more extreme, and younger generations feel more isolated than ever before. Fortunately, we still have many powerful voices in all corners of the world who refuse to ignore the call to create, express, and share their visions of love and freedom.

Over the last eight years, it has been the mission of Short Focus Film Festival to do exactly this: to bring you stories from the global community that might otherwise go undiscovered; to share wildly original and imaginative independent productions; to provoke thought and inspire healthy, constructive discussion. This year is no different – and yet it feels the most crucial. We hope you will join us again in appreciating the brave, spirited, and courageous contributions from the artists who have shared their work with our festival.

We are continually grateful to the following: Polaroid, Film London, Cinema For All, FilmFreeway, Eventbrite, Close-Up Cinema, the Disasters Emergency Committee, and all the filmmakers, producers, and distributors who submitted their work to the festival.

From **13–21 September 2025**, you will have access to 26 exceptional short films across four programmes, all available via the **FRAME LIGHT** website and Eventbrite. Each live cinema screening is £10, and each online programme is £5. You can also purchase a Full Access ticket for £20, which grants entry to all live events and online programmes.

Voting and feedback forms can be accessed by scanning the QR codes at the beginning of each programme chapter.

**Thank you.**

#### **Festival Curators**

Aya Ishizuka, Dean Archibald-Smith, Giulia Carbonaro

#### **Programme Design**

Dean Archibald-Smith

*\*Close-Up Cinema is wheelchair accessible.*

*\*\*The films in this festival are intended for adult viewing as many contain themes that some viewers may find distressing or controversial. Please read the film programme carefully.*

*\*\*\*All proceeds will be donated to the Disasters Emergency Committee, a charity providing lifesaving aid in Gaza, Lebanon, the West Bank, and Syria to provide Palestinian aid. Learn more at <https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/middle-east-humanitarian-appeal>.*

# FILMS

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# TICKETS<sup>†</sup>

## PROGRAMME ONE

Cinema\* - £10

Online - £5

## PROGRAMME TWO

Cinema\* - £10

Online - £5

## PROGRAMME THREE

Online - £5

## PROGRAMME FOUR

Online - £5

## ALL ONLINE

Programmes 1 - 4 online - £15  
(available for the duration of the festival)

## FULL ACCESS

Weekend cinema pass + Programmes 1 - 4 online - £20

*\* Live programmes run from 2:00 - 4:00 pm at Close-Up Cinema*

*† All tickets are available from Eventbrite.*



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# PROGRAMME ONE

Vote



Cinema | 13 September  
Online | 13-21 September

## THE BALLAD [CHRISTOFER NILSSON, SWEDEN/FRANCE, 2023]

Programme One | 13 mins 13 secs



In a moment of weakness, an exhausted food delivery boy makes the fateful decision to stage a spontaneous rebellion, an action that develops into an uncomfortable, escalating standoff between social classes in contemporary Sweden. *The Ballad* is a wry and satirical observation of modern life and social constructions through the lenses of disparate cultures.



INSIDE  
[MAHTAB PISHGHADAM, IRAN, 2024]  
Programme One | 9 mins 34 secs

10-year-old, Mahyar, is the star of the boy's soccer team. When they are recognised at a big match, their eligibility to play for the team is questioned. Director, Mahtab Pishghadam, draws on her own childhood experiences in this tender portrayal of gender policing in sport.



TAINTED BY THE VISUAL  
[LAURA CALZADA, UNITED KINGDOM, 2024]  
Programme One | 8 mins 08 secs

*Tainted by the Visual* is a short experimental documentary that explores how the experience of sound changes throughout the process of vision loss, using visual and aural language to interpret the subjective experience of blind individuals. The film uses part of a recorded conversation with visually impaired sound artist, Andy Slater, and uses images in a way not to try and simulate his experience but to understand it.



## CATS

[DANILO STANIMIROVIĆ, SERBIA/SWITZERLAND, 2025]

Programme One | 13 mins 41 secs

Shot in stark black and white, *Cats* follows a young, lonely boy in Zurich, living in a household slowly unraveling under the weight of unspoken resentments and rigid expectations. Amid the oppressive atmosphere of domestic tension, the boy finds an abandoned kitten. As he nurses the fragile creature back to health, a quiet bond forms between them – one of mutual need and unspoken understanding. Through this fragile friendship, the boy begins to navigate the harsh realities around him.



## THE TEST

[HSIEH MENG HAN, UNITED KINGDOM, 2024]

Programme One | 11 mins 49 secs

*The Test* explores the layered, often absurd experience of immigration – a journey that extends beyond the “Life in the UK” test into the daily realities and microaggressions endured by immigrants. By following our protagonist, I-Ling, through the process of the test, we uncover the deeply repressive feeling of life within a system that can appear indifferent, or even hostile. This is not merely her story, but the experience of countless others navigating similar paths.





### SKIN DEEP

[HECTOR BELL, UNITED KINGDOM, 2025]

Programme One | 18 mins 39 secs

Ethan's girlfriend Georgia begins to develop a rash that appears to be linked to Ethan's sense of shame pertaining to his lack of openness and secret sexual behaviours. Is it merely a coincidence or is there something more powerful at play? Hector Bell's darkly comic, psychosexual drama, *Skin Deep*, is a thought-provoking exploration of modernity, identity, love, and shame.



### IN THE CLOUDS

[ALEXANDRA BAHÍYYIH WAIN, UNITED KINGDOM, 2024]

Programme One | 13 mins 41 secs

Sara, a six-year-old Iranian refugee, sneaks out with her sister to explore their new London estate, but strange encounters blur the line between reality and imagination in a world shaped by loss. *In the Clouds* is a poetic and haunting study of loss and memory utilizing a magical realist language to heartbreaking and cathartic effect.



**THE LAST DANCE**  
**[HAYDEN MCLEAN, UNITED KINGDOM, 2024]**

Programme One | 16 mins 40 secs

*The Last Dance* offers a poignant and nuanced portrayal of the Windrush generation, capturing a rarely seen side of Black British life. Set against a backdrop of personal and communal crisis, the film unfolds as a moving tribute to Black love, resilience, and unity. Through richly drawn characters and moments of heartfelt intimacy, it reveals a community bound not only by shared struggle, but by deep affection, joy, and unwavering solidarity.

# PROGRAMME TWO

Vote



Cinema | 14 September  
Online | 13-21 September





**CONCRETE SUMMER**  
[JACOB WATSON, UNITED KINGDOM, 2024]  
Programme Two | 13 mins 41 secs

A student project by Manchester University alumnus, Jacob Watson, on a budget of just £75, *Concrete Summer* is a fascinating documentary that explores the misunderstood sport and community of fixed-gear racing in Liverpool.



**SPIDER-ZAN**  
[MARYAM KHODABAKHSH, IRAN, 2024]  
Programme Two | 12 mins 45 secs

As an Iranian female filmmaker who has experienced and grown up in similar circumstances to the main character, Negar, in her film *Spider-Zan*, Maryam Khodabakhsh's primary concern has always been to hold a mirror up to the previous generation. She aims to provide them with an opportunity to gain self-awareness, make improvements, and open a window of hope for the next generation. *Spider-Zan* is certainly powerful enough to do just that.



**IN ANOTHER LIFE**  
**[AARAN MCKENZIE, UNITED KINGDOM, 2024]**

Programme Two | 6 mins 22 secs

In the aftermath of a broken relationship, a couple confront unresolved emotions during one final conversation, discovering that sometimes love isn't enough to keep two people together. Written, shot, and directed by Aaran McKenzie, *In Another Life* offers a delicate and pensive take on the pain and reality of a breakup.



**CHICKEN BROTH SOUP**  
**[DENİZ BÜYÜKKIRLI, TURKEY, 2024]**  
Programme Two | 18 mins 37 secs

While examining the corpse of a man believed to have died of a heart attack, a doctor notices unusual symptoms. Suspicious, he refers the body for forensic analysis. But just as the truth begins to surface, an unexpected revelation forces the doctor to make a life-altering decision about the woman's fate and possibly his own. *Chicken Broth Soup* is Deniz Büyükkırlı's debut short film, which she wrote and directed.





**FOUR HAVE A JOLLY GOOD TIME**  
**[JOSEPH BOWLEY, UNITED KINGDOM, 2024]**

Programme Two | 12 mins 32 secs

Set in late 1940s post-war Britain, *Four Have a Jolly Good Time* follows the surrealist journey of four strange children as they set off on an adventure across the idyllic British countryside in search of a secret hideaway. Dick, Roger, Sarah, and the youngest, Fran, are trying to make the most of their last days of the summer holidays but, not all is what it seems as they get further and further from home. During the adventure, their carefree reality is brought into question through an encounter with a young black child forcing them to reconsider their existence.



**BUG**

**[ALI MASOUMI, IRAN, 2024]**

Programme Two | 6 mins 07 secs

A family of three has recently moved into a new home, and their young daughter explores it with wide-eyed curiosity. But when a small cricket unexpectedly appears, what seems like a harmless visit takes a darker turn – especially following the father's unsettling reaction. The child's innocent perspective begins to shift, transforming a simple moment into something far more disturbing.





### A SHORT TRIP

[ERENIK BEQIRI, ALBANIA/FRANCE, 2023]

Programme Two | 17 mins 19 secs

Klodi and Mira, a young Albanian couple, decide to marry Mira to a Frenchman for five years in exchange for money, in order to obtain French nationality. They will then have to choose the right husband for her, and learn to detach themselves from each other.



### A FILM ABOUT FASCISM

[PAIGE LEVY, UNITED KINGDOM, 2024]

Programme Two | 14 mins 52 secs

*A Film About Fascism* explores this beginning phase in the microcosm of a film set, digging into how easily one can be made to look like an enemy when cast in a certain light. The film probes into the complex interplay of art and power, the power dynamics that exist in the making of art, and the power it holds to affect the world around us.



A person is silhouetted against a window with white curtains. The person is looking out the window, which is partially open. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the window. The overall mood is contemplative and artistic.

# FLTV

The best short film streaming platform.

[www.framelight.org/fltv](http://www.framelight.org/fltv)



# PROGRAMME THREE

Vote



Online | 13-21 September



LOYAL

[SARA CHIA-JEWELL/ANTONIS PAPAMICHAEL,  
UNITED KINGDOM, 2023]

Programme Three | 9 mins

Arlo gets coffee from the same cafe everyday. One day, she tries a new place, and her barista catches her betrayal. *LOYAL* is a comedy about coffee and community, told through a suburban diasporic lens. The film was commissioned by Talkies Community Cinema, a non-profit organisation bringing locals together through cinema.





**NOW THAT YOU'RE BACK**  
**[SETH HOPE BARNARD CHODZKO, UK, 2024]**

Programme Three | 14 mins 05 secs

After the suicide of a childhood friend, Connor and Liam are reunited by the difficult task of choosing their friend's burial clothes. *Now That You're Back* is a quietly inquisitive film that attempts to explore why men are almost three times more likely to die by suicide in England than females, whilst raising mental health awareness on the whole.



**SHIVTOWN**  
**[HILLEL BEN ZEEV PERLOV, ISRAEL/FRANCE, 2025]**

Programme Three | 24 mins 44 secs

*Shivtown* is a documentary that retraces Perlov's journey as a young photographer confronted with the harsh realities of his country's politics during his three-year compulsory military service. In an artillery base in the Negev desert, armed with a film camera, he documented his daily life in an attempt to find a glimmer of hope in the midst of imposed brutality.



## MEMORY

[RIYADH HAQUE, UK, 2024]

Programme Three | 3 mins 23 secs

An experimental documentary reimagining the childhood recollections of a Jersey inhabitant, Margaret, through the intimate lens of the director's British-South Asian background by channelling his own family's generational diasporic experience and sisterhood. The cast is comprised of the director's own family reconstructing Margaret's memories on 16mm Kodak film.



## GOODNIGHT LADIES

[ALEX MATRAXIA, UNITED KINGDOM, 2024]

Programme Three | 20 mins 40 secs

Under the floodlights of a London drag bar, three intertwined tales unfold: a seasoned drag queen is confronted by the arrival of a young new star; a young couple try to save their relationship despite their secrets; a washed-up actor meets with his agent in the hopes of a comeback. As the night progresses, these disparate stories are threaded together by the shared pressures of performance, pride, and second chances.

# PROGRAMME FOUR

Vote



Online | 13-21 September

CLAY

[FILIPPO MIRA, UK, 2025]

Programme Four | 9 mins 6 secs

A homeless couple living out of their car is offered a chance at quick cash until their hope shatters along with their priceless ceramic pot. With the ever-domineering threat of her boyfriend looming, Hayley must conceal the incident and devise a new plan. *Clay* is a slice-of-life drama rooted in the aesthetics of social realist cinema, exploring the quiet crisis of youth homelessness and the emotional toll of inequality.





**CLOSENESS**  
**[ALEKSY ROMAN KOSTKA ZAWADZKI, POLAND, 2024]**  
 Programme Four | 6 mins 30 secs

*Closeness* is a film that attempts to capture the essence of human connection in a way that feels both intimate and universal, observing how it shapes us, how it feels, and how fragile it can be. This project is a deeply personal, one for Zawadzki, yet one that will resonate with anyone who has ever yearned for genuine closeness.



**A PLACE UNDER THE SUN**  
**[VLAD BOLGARIN, MOLDOVA, 2024]**  
 Programme Four | 19 mins 59 secs

Set in 2000, a talented pianist and his 8-year-old son struggle to find a place to sell vegetables at the biggest market in Moldova. When the father seems to give up under the burden of his precarious existence, a gesture from his son brings new hope. *A Place in the Sun* is a heartwarming story of a family doing their best to keep their dream alive and stay together in the face of adversity.



**EVERYONE HATES MY DOG**  
**[JAN BAROSS, UNITED STATES, 2025]**  
 Programme Four | 3 mins 30 secs

“All my neighbors hate my very small but aggressive dog so, in order to not have them hate me too much as well, and as a filmmaker, I interviewed them and let them vent about my dog. I think its pretty funny.” 82-year-old, artist, novelist, and filmmaker, Jan Baross, gives us a wonderfully funny documentarian account of her dog, Tasmania, through candid interviews with her neighbours.



**THE NARRATOR**  
**[MOHAMMAD PAIDAR, IRAN, 2025]**  
 Programme Four | 20 mins 06 secs

*The Narrator* tells the story of a girl whose father is waiting for a heart transplant. However, the helicopter carrying the donor heart crashes, and the heart goes missing. The narrator wants to help the girl, but interfering in the story is against the rules of the narrator’s world. This is an imaginative and playful comedy from a filmmaker with an evident passion for the art of storytelling.



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