

**SHORT  
FOCUS  
FILM FESTIVAL  
2023**

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



Welcome to Short Focus Film Festival 2023! This is the 6th edition of our annually curated programme of short films. It's an extremely proud accomplishment for us, of course, and we are continuously honoured that filmmakers from all over the world choose this small and modest festival to exhibit their creations. Paradoxically, we feel the need to celebrate and apologise the same point – the proportion of British selections this season is overwhelmingly large.

We apologise because we want, more than anyone, for global stories to be shared, for colourful cultures to be seen, and a diverse range of voices to be heard. The fact is, this year we just didn't receive a significant number of submissions from other territories, and whilst we want to present as much material as possible, we do still aim for a high mark of quality. It is a very difficult balancing act, and we bear scant influence on what we receive. This will be a point of reflection for us – how we market ourselves on a larger and more global scale in the future.

That said, it is encouraging the amount of homegrown talents we are witnessing, telling their own visual stories that reflect on a multitude of diverse themes – gender, race, sexuality, politics, art, society, media, disability... The list goes on. That these liberal ideas are being discovered, explored, and expressed right here on our doorstep should, ultimately, remain a cause for celebration. The films that we received are not only the best films submitted to us this season but are up there with some of the best films we have had the privilege of hosting in any year. We hope you love them as much as we do.

From **16-24 September 2023**, you will have access to 27 fantastic short films across five programmes, all available from the **FRAME LIGHT** website and **Eventbrite**. Each live cinema screening is £10 and each online programme is just £5. You can also purchase a Full Access ticket for £20, which will provide entry to all live events and online programmes. We recommend screen mirroring from your computer or smart device to your TV for optimum viewing, although any device with WiFi and video capabilities will be suitable.

**Thank you.**

**Festival Directors:** Aya Ishizuka, Dean Archibald-Smith

**Programme Authors:** Giulia Carbonaro, Dean Archibald-Smith

**Programme Design:** Dean Archibald-Smith

# FILMS

## PROGRAMME ONE *ls+o*

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## PROGRAMME TWO *ls+o*

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*p 16.* **Picturing Wonderland** (8:24)

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## PROGRAMME FIVE *o*

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*p 40.* **The Lion's Share** (19:01)

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# TICKETS

## PROGRAMME ONE

Cinema\* - €10

Online - €5

## PROGRAMME TWO

Cinema\* - €10

Online - €5

## PROGRAMME THREE

Online - €5

## PROGRAMME FOUR

Online - €5

## PROGRAMME FIVE

Online - €5

## FULL ACCESS

Every live and online programme - €20

Online Programmes 1-5 - €15

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



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# PROGRAMME ONE

cinema | online



**TOMMIES**  
[BRIAN FAIRBAIRN, KARL ECCLESTON, UK, 2022]  
Programme One | 14 mins 51 secs

Georgina Ashton is on edge. It's the last ball of the London season and she has no-one to go with - her husband Robert has suddenly left town and a friend, Fanny Beaumont, has mysteriously withdrawn an invitation to attend the ball with her. Having hastily rearranged to go with another friend, Mrs Willis, Georgina is shocked to find herself face-to-face with the very woman who has so inexplicably snubbed her. *Tommies* is a smart and gorgeously designed period piece from director duo, Brian Fairbairn and Karl Eccleston, that feels oddly in step with contemporary society.



**RAVE**  
**[EMILY MACRANDER, UK 2022]**  
Programme One | 10 min

On a night out, a girl overdoses at an underground rave. Unfolding in reverse chronology, *Rave* traces the events of the night back to the beginning, revealing the intertwining stories of the people involved, including Jade whose night takes an unexpected turn after she finds herself alone. *Rave* is daring, bold, and full of adrenaline without ever compromising on the quality of its highly stylised cinematography.



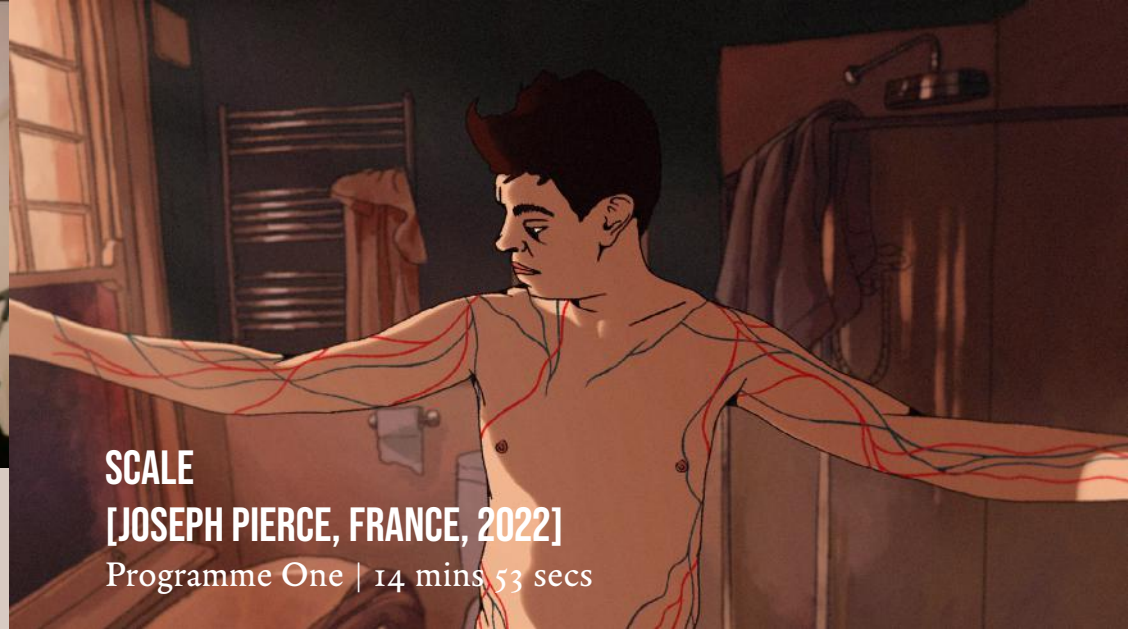
**A PERFECT BALANCE OF ABSOLUTE CHAOS**  
**[CARL WOODS, UK, 2022]**  
Programme One | 10 mins 24 secs

A journey into the mind of Paralympian and British number 1, Rob Oliver, delving into his obsessive desire for podium glory and the personal impact of being milliseconds from success. Mixing cinematic visuals with intimate storytelling, this insightful short documentary shines a light on the dark side of sporting success, questioning the ‘win-at-all-costs’ mentality, and understanding how the pressure-cooker environment of elite sport can create a toxic obsession that puts more than just medals on the line.



**TOW TRUCK**  
[KIERAN STRINGFELLOW, UK, 2022]  
Programme One | 14 mins 15 secs

After impulsively quitting their job, a single parent kidnaps a neighbour's dog to try and win some prize money at a local dog show. With plenty of explosive scenes perfectly balanced out with moments of calm despair, *Tow Truck* is an original and subversive portrait of a dysfunctional but loving family just trying to get by. Noah Granville and Isaac Khan as the mother-and-son duo make for an unforgettable pair.



**SCALE**  
[JOSEPH PIERCE, FRANCE, 2022]  
Programme One | 14 mins 53 secs

Driving along the motorway, Will loses his sense of scale. As his crippling drug addiction deepens, he struggles to unpick the sequence of events that led to his predicament. A hallucinogenic and hypnotising journey into the life and mind of an opioid addict, *Scale* is a stunning adaptation of the homonymous 1995 book by Will Self. Joseph Pierce's animation reaches beyond any camera's possibility, bringing to life Self's most daunting nightmares and visions.





**HARD TO REACH**  
**[DARRYL FOSTER, UK, 2022]**  
Programme One | 13 mins 51 secs

When an anxiety-fuelled mentor takes his disruptive teenage student on a photography trip, an altercation on a train leads to a cathartic exchange that changes them forever. If *Hard to Reach* feels so achingly real, it's because writer, director, and actor, Darryl Foster, puts so much of his own experience working as a mentor for at-risk youth in Birmingham into it. Moving from an urban landscape charged with tension and misunderstanding, to a dreamscape of unchained joy in the middle of the woods, the film brings down the barriers that we build around each other, showing us we're better off for it.



**HEALER**  
**[MCKENZIE LEIGH, CANADA, 2023]**  
Programme One | 15 mins 49 secs

A young woman grapples with the untimely death of her sister, seeking solace in an imagined reality where they grew up together. *Healer* is a delicate, intimate, and heartbreaking portrait about grief, survivor's guilt, identity, and the aches of girlhood. With a style that owes much to many of the female-led films of the late 90s - somewhere between *Practical Magic* and *The Virgin Suicides* - *Healer* is an ode to female empowerment and solidarity in a complex world.

# PROGRAMME TWO

cinema | online



TRAIL

[VINCENT MENARD, CANADA, 2022]

Programme Two | 14 mins 40 secs

During one of his trips into the wilderness, a lone hiker makes a macabre discovery. What starts as a tranquil weekend getaway soon transforms into a fight for survival. A film in which people run around while nature remains still and unmoved by their unfolding drama, *Trail* moves flawlessly between horror and absurdist comedy, delivering a masterful finale that will be extremely satisfying for viewers.





**PICTURING WONDERLAND**  
**[ALFIE ELMS, UK, 2022]**

Programme Two | 8 mins 24 secs

*Picturing Wonderland* is an experimental snapshot of the experience of living with a degenerative blindness. The film explores Maud Rowell's fascinating relationship with the colours of the world around her as well as the use of the medium of analogue photography as a form of documentation and hobby. Shot on 16mm colour film by Finn Boxer, the film incorporates hand-crafted animation techniques by Ana Studios, lighting design by Satu Streatfield, and an original score by Patrick Fitzgerald.



**BOY IN THE BACK SEAT**  
**[SCOTT PICKUP, UK, 2022]**

Programme Two | 12 mins 49 secs

1986. A young boy is left unattended in the car while his volatile father takes care of some business in a dodgy local pub. What could possibly go wrong? Writer-director, Scott Pickup, offers a scarring portrait of toxic masculinity and the disruptive effect of adult violence seeping into the magical world of a child. The delightful acting of the young Jude Cooper-Kelly carries the film through its darkest moments.



**NEO NADHA**  
[MAY ZIADÉ, UK, 2023]

Programme Two | 12 mins 37 secs

Mona, a young woman in London, finds archived photographs of Arab women cross-dressing in the 1920s. Somewhere between her fantasies and her reality, she starts a feverish journey of uncovering lost histories and her own identity. *Neo Nadha* deals with queer and feminist histories of the Middle East, the process of research, browsing and discovering lost archives, and how these can be a portal for the imagination and the realm of inner projections, producing meaning beyond historical truths.



**A MORAL MAN**  
[PAUL WADE/SIMON WADE, UK, 2021]

Programme Two | 18 mins 50 secs

A right-to-die evangelist wrestles with his faith and morality when he is asked to assist in the death of a woman who is not terminally ill. A stellar cast (including the ubiquitous Toby Jones) brings the necessary ambiguity and humanity to do justice to the complex moral and ethical dilemma at the heart of *A Moral Man*. A striking and touching film that is likely to spark many discussions after the end credits have rolled.





**TO DO**  
[SAUL PANKHURST, UK, 2022]  
Programme Two | 3 mins 23 secs

*To Do* is a reflection on the self-improvement industry, explored through the filmmaker's attempts to participate in a guided pseudo-mindfulness exercise. Saul Pankhurst is an experimental filmmaker working within creative non-fiction. His background in analogue cinematography informs a bold visual style that makes use of collage and animation.



**DOMINIQUE PERSONNE**  
[CAMILLE PERNIN, FRANCE, 2022]  
Programme Two | 19 mins 54 secs

Dominique is a 13-year-old girl, shy, and far from being popular. This weekend is the big departmental acrosport tournament, but this morning, Dominique has her period. *Dominique Personne* is a smart and observant drama that boldly addresses the awkward growing pains of teenhood.



# FLTV

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**PROGRAMME  
THREE**

online





**SHE CAME TO STAY**  
[SHIRLEY SNOW, UK, 2023]  
Programme Three | 15 mins 40 secs

Camilla, a middle-aged writer who is in the final stages of her second novel, finds herself offering the spare room in her home to Buggy, a young woman she's never met before. Over the course of a few weeks, the two women navigate the strangeness of sharing a space for the first time, growing increasingly curious of each other. *She Came to Stay* is a gentle and melancholic film about how two people on different journeys can suddenly cross paths, forming a kinship of the heart that's stronger than blood.



**20 YEARS, IT'S JUST A FEW DAYS**  
[SYLVAIN DUFAYARD, BELGIUM, 2022]  
Programme Three | 8 mins 12 secs

The regulars in a café are dreaming of an extremely uncertain future 20 years from now. Some of them, however, seem to be terribly prescient about what could happen. A brilliant, thought-provoking film that is extremely bold whilst maintaining a low-key, timeless look that makes it feel like a precious time capsule from another decade.





**WAVING**  
**[ROLFIN NYHUS/STEVEN BRUMWELL, UK, 2022]**  
Programme Three | 16 mins

An unflinchingly honest portrayal of the devastating reality behind the misunderstood anxiety disorder of OCD, starring Ralph Ineson (*The Witch*, *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs*, *The Green Knight*, and *The Tragedy of Macbeth*) as Charlie. His worst fears seemingly realised, a distraught father takes one last walk through his ruined world.



**MA SAUDADE**  
**[OLIVER BARROS, FRANCE, 2022]**  
Programme Three | 19 mins 05 secs

Summer, 1998. Simon, ten years old, has shut himself away in silence following the death of his mother. While everyone lives to the rhythm of the football World Cup, Simon spends his days in front of the TV watching VHS. His solitary daily life is thrown into turmoil the day Helena rings at his door. Director, Oliver Barros, brings freshness and sweetness to this coming-of-age story, impeccably recreating the atmosphere of a late 1990s summer in France.



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**PROGRAMME  
FOUR**

online



**BEAT**  
**[CHRISTOPHER KARALLIS, UK, 2023]**  
Programme Four | 23 mins

*Beat* delves into the world of Saul Eisenberg, a musician and performer who turns the discarded junk of the city into instruments that make unique and beautiful sounds. A joyful and playful documentary with the power to inspire viewers to look at their surroundings with a more curious and engaged eye, Eisenberg and director, Christopher Karallis, force us to question the way we easily discard objects that have apparently outlived their usefulness, and what our role can be to bring beauty into the world.



**CANINE**  
**[LORENZO MANDELLI, UK, 2022]**  
Programme Four | 19 mins 01 sec

With his girlfriend away on a business trip, Alan discovers that their dog has gone missing from their flat while he was out. Increasingly disturbed, Alan embarks on a gruelling, lonely, and vulnerable search. *Canine* is a compelling, bitter thriller that moves between the boundaries of truth, lies, and obsession.





**ALL THE LOVE OF THE WORLD**  
**[GUÉRIN VAN DE VORST, BELGIUM, 2022]**

Programme Four | 19 mins

A group of women prostitute themselves for regulars under a highway bridge. A tropical forest on the outskirts of the city hosts a strange reunion between one of the sex workers and her son, who seems to love his mother a little too much. *All the Love of the World* plays like a vivid, brutal, and surreal daydream, and makes great use of 'Yes Sir I Can Boogie', the cult song by Baccara.



**DEPARTURE**  
**[TANGUY POCHOY, FRANCE, 2023]**  
Programme Four | 5 mins 51 secs

A bedridden, elderly man and his estranged son reconnect in a hospital room after a boundless distance has grown between them, the weight of their shared past a third, heavy presence in the lonesome space. While writer and director, Tanguy Pochoy, tells us little about his protagonists, their story is one of universal grief, love, and hurt, that can do without words entirely whilst still delivering a shot to the heart.



**TWO STARS SHORT**  
**[ZAK KLEIN, UK, 2022]**

Programme Four | 10 mins 39 secs

A bridesmaid clashes with her cab driver during a tense journey to a friend's wedding she doesn't particularly want to attend. A wry comedy about what it means to have a 3-star rating - in life as well as on your Uber profile. *Two Stars Short* radiates the kind of life wisdom only London cab drivers can so casually deliver to their rather self-involved passengers.

# PROGRAMME FIVE



**PAN AM BLUES**  
**[JOLYON WHITE, UK, 2021]**

Programme Five | 16 mins 30 secs

Short Focus Film Festival alumni and award winner, Jolyon White's futuristic thriller, *Pan Am Blues*, is the first part of a mini-series that follows Clara (Sydney Craven) as she is put through her paces during an experimental psychological programme. Fans of *Black Mirror* and *Maniac* will feel right at home with this darkly comic sci-fi short.



**ANIMALS**  
**[GREG CRUTTWELL, UK, 2023]**

Programme Five | 16 mins 42 secs

Liam is a young man in his early twenties who is struggling to come to terms with an incident involving his father at a football match that he was unable to attend with him. Feelings of rage, resentment, frustration, and an ever-burning desire for revenge and retribution have brought him to the point of a final resolution. *Animals* is a powerful film that pins you to your seat and forces you to face the profound trauma and life-changing hurt that senseless violence and injustice can cause.





## THE LION'S SHARE

[JULIEN MENANTEAU, FRANCE, 2022]

Programme Five | 14 mins 07 secs

Jacky is a 75-year-old lion tamer. Born and raised in a traveling circus, he fully intends to die there. But the state is banning the breeding of big cats. Soon, only domesticated animals will be allowed in the circus ring. Backed into a corner, Jacky looks for a solution, but the threat looms above him. *The Lion's Share* is a sympathetic eulogy of a disappearing world that feels raw and authentic.



## DICKS THAT I LIKE

[JOHANNA GUSTIN, GERMANY, 2022]

Programme Five | 13 mins 19 secs

Visual artist, Daniela Torres, creates colourful ceramic penis sculptures inspired by the men who have been 'dicks' to her. In this intimate portrait, Daniela shares her struggles, anger, and catharsis as she creates a sculpture modelled after a series of unsolicited dick pics. She also shares her process with a diverse group of women who come together in one of her popular Berlin-based workshops. It's a hands-on approach to healing that yields strangely beautiful results.



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*ls* = live screening | *o* = online

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