

# Stirling Silver Screen Film Festival

Saturday June 22, 2019, 7:30 PM  
Stirling Festival Theatre, 41 West Front Street

Canadian Short Films

## 1. Kokota: The Islet of Hope

Filmmaker: Craig Norris  
Moncton, New Brunswick  
Time: 14:57

### **Overview**

Mbarouk Mussa Omar is from a small East African Island called Pemba. Nearly ten years ago he visited a tiny neighbouring islet called Kokota and was shocked by what he saw.

Kokota was teetering towards collapse, and Mbarouk knew climate change and deforestation were the culprits. He desperately wanted to help Kokota, but what could one poor man from Pemba possibly do?

*Kokota: The Islet of Hope* tells the story of Mbarouk's quest to help Kokota.

This short introduces viewers to resilient people living on the front lines of climate change and tells the story of how these unlikely heroes have managed to innovatively adapt to a warming climate while reforesting their island.

This inspirational film promises to leave audiences around the world believing that simple solutions really can have huge impacts.

### **Director Biography**

Craig Norris is an award winning documentary filmmaker and photographer, and owner of VIDEOBAND, a New Brunswick based Production Company. His video and photo projects primarily focus on the environment, conservation and climate change. Norris' work has been featured at the Royal Ontario Museum and toured nationally with Dr. David Suzuki. His latest release is a series of short nature documentaries commissioned by the UNESCO designated Fundy Biosphere Reserve, and funded by Mountain Equipment Co-op and Parks Canada.

Norris is currently in pre-production for a thirty minute short commissioned by the European Union about economic development and climate change adaptation in rural Africa.

### **Director Statement**

I made Kokota because I thought it was a great story with an important message in this time of global climate change.

Broadly speaking, I believe we have a tendency to over complicate problems, and I think this story proves that simple solutions can have huge impacts.

## 2. From the Water

Filmmaker: Greg Hemmings  
Saint John, New Brunswick  
Time: 11:30

### **Overview**

From the Water follows the active surf and paddle-board community that formed five years after an intensive harbour rejuvenation effort in Saint John, New Brunswick. Set to a touching poem by Robert Moore, which was inspired by the local water keepers, this experimental short pays homage to the human capacity to right a wrong done against nature, and to nature's ability to provide community members with an inspiring place to play in their own backyard.

### **Director Biography**

Greg Hemmings is a filmmaker who is committed to using the powerful medium of film to inspire positive social action. His production company *Hemmings House* helps good companies tell their stories to help them become great contributors to a happier and kinder world.

### **Director Statement**

This film shows how a passionate community can clean up the waters and enjoy the playgrounds that Mother Nature provides .

### **3. Cramahe Heritage**

Filmmaker: Sean Scally  
Trenton, Ontario  
Time: 12:00

#### **Overview**

This is the story of EJ Padginton, the longest serving postmistress in Canada from Coloborne, Ontario. She never married but corresponded with soldiers during the Boer War and the two World Wars according to Sean. She was on the job for an amazing 70 years. This is the story of the legacy of her war-time effort.

#### **Director Biography**

Sean Scally, semi-retired photographer who produces short films and is actively involved in many artistic projects in the Belleville and Trenton area. He is originally from Kirkland Lake, Ontario. In 1979 he started a career in the Canadian forces as an aero engine technician and served 20 years in various postings. He ended up in Trenton where he remained upon retirement from the forces. Thereafter, he began work at Ontario power generation as a nuclear inspector and inspected most of Canada's nuclear stations. After 12 years, he retired from that position to pursue his passion for photography and film.

### **4. Learning Song**

Filmmaker: Levi Kassel, 14 years old  
Toronto, Ontario  
Time: 2:12

#### **Overview**

A fun way to teach kids all about life. Levi wrote the music for this film and directed his little brother how to say the lines. This is an innocent outlook on the real world through a 7 year-old's eyes.

### **Director Biography**

Levi Kassel is 14 years old. He was 13 when he made this film. He is interested in music production, film making, hockey, and more!

#### **Director Statement**

Director Biography: I always wanted to make a difference in the world, so I thought, what better a way than by educating the future generations!

### **5. A Licence to Torture**

Filmmaker: Jim McDonald  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Time: 12:30

#### **Overview**

When a series of coincidences and misunderstood motives puts a Canadian citizen in the hands of torturers in Cairo's Scorpion prison there is no one to save him.

"A Licence to Torture" is the story of a university professor, who travels to Afghanistan to attend a conference. He is then detained in Cairo on his way back to North America having drawn the attention of security authorities through incidental contacts he made at the conference and by his efforts to find a friend who had returned to Egypt and then disappeared. Once arrested, he is subject to allegations and accusations based on false witnesses, baseless evidence, unsubstantiated assertions and physical threats. He finds himself suspended in a reality over which he has no control unless he admits to being an accomplice to terrorism in Egypt and Afghanistan. He has fallen, inadvertently, into the torture trap.

#### **Director Biography**

Jim McDonald has had a long career in Canadian and international politics, serving on the political staff of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau for five years, as well as stints as Chief of Staff at Justice and Foreign Affairs. In these roles, he developed a keen awareness of the need for people everywhere to fight for human rights and to resist all forms of tyranny.

### **Director Statement**

We must take every opportunity to stand up for the rule of law, not the rule of a few, and that means standing up against torture and Trump's support for it.

President Trump's public endorsement of dictators and his explicit approval of their methods is a moment of truth for us all. Do we avert our eyes? Do we accept the fact that such approval of repressive regimes is the new normal?

I believe the answer to these questions must be a deafening NO.

### **6. Life via Rail**

Filmmaker: Ethn Godel & Jonny Micay  
Toronto, Ontario  
Time: 8:48

#### **Overview**

Life Via Rail tells the story of Jason Shron, a train enthusiast from Canada who abandoned a prestigious PhD program to pursue his dream of a career in the model train industry.

#### **Director Biography**

Jonny Micay has a strong passion for people and loves to immerse himself in unfamiliar environments with unique individuals. As a camera operator, he has worked professionally in 10 countries and hopes to explore many more as a documentary filmmaker.

#### **Director Statement**

Passion is the root of all creative and ambitious careers. It is the driving force that individuals to fulfil their dreams.

Jason Shron's passion for trains is unparalleled. Since the age of two he has been obsessed. His journey to becoming Canada's most well known model train manufacturer is an example of how far commitment, and motivation can take a passionate individual.

### **7. Tanks - Down with the Butterfly**

Filmmaker: Aram Kouyoumdjian  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
Time: 5:32

#### **Overview**

Made over 8 months in 2009, Tanks blends live action and stop motion animation through the 3D compositing of over 150,000 still images. An ambitious passion project of Halifax filmmakers Aram Kouyoumdjian and Jason Levangie, Tanks remains an impressive and unique assault on the senses that issues a warning that is more relevant today than it was when it first screened a decade ago.

#### **Director Biography**

Aram has been telling stories by blending moving images and sound in ambitious ways for over 20 years. Beginning in the world of music videos, Aram has dappled in live action, animation and puppetry and his work has enjoyed several nods from both the film and music industries. His recent work includes Clay's POV, a point-of-view scripted comedy television series for Super Channel, and Wild Game, a documentary series for APTN.

#### **Director Statement**

Inspired by and set to the song "Tank" by the now-defunct Halifax band Down With The Butterfly, Tanks is an apocalyptic depiction the last moments of human existence, which we destroy through war and reckless lack of respect for our food sources. Tanks reminds us to not blindly follow the orders of those driven by greed for power and money.

### **8. The Gift**

Filmmaker: Lorelei Miller  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Time: 15:55

#### **Overview**

When you're lost and broken what brings you back?

\*\*\* INTERMISSION \*\*\*

A young man struggling with depression embarks on a journey back into the world he withdrew from. The Gift is a journey to find out what really motivates us as we navigate through the challenges in our lives.

### **Director Biography**

Lorelei attended Humber College's Film and Television Production program. Since then, she has worked on several productions in Ottawa. She is a dynamic, multi-faceted, and creative person who loves the creative and collaborative process of production.

### **Director Statement**

When I read this script, I was really connected to the emotional journey of this story. How can you find your way back when your feeling so lost? That's what I wanted to explore in this film. I love telling stories about the human experience and how we deal with the challenges in our lives.

## **9. Sunrise on the Total Chaos**

Filmmaker: Craig Norris  
Moncton New Brunswick  
Time: 5:11

### **Overview**

An experimental short that surrealistically transports viewers to the deck of The Total Chaos, a lobster fishing vessel working on the magnificent Bay of Fundy at sunrise.

The power of visual storytelling is front and centre in this six-minute film with a soundscape and no dialogue. The Total Chaos heads out on the water at the crack of dawn to begin a short and intense lobster fishing season. Beautiful footage in slow motion turns the frantic pace of their work into a beautiful ballet in nature. A sound design completes this unique experience.

### **Director Biography**

Craig Norris is an award winning documentary filmmaker and photographer, and owner of VIDEOBAND, a New Brunswick based Production Company, see page 1.

## **10. The Woodsmen**

Filmmaker: Jodi Cooper & Victor Cooper  
Frankford, Ontario  
Shot in Stirling, Ontario  
Time: 18:30

### **Overview**

Something is wrong in Slender Valley. When residents start to go missing in the vast forests, Park Ranger Sherman, and Deputy Ranger Lewis take on the chore of leading search expeditions. But someone knows more than they are letting on and Slender Valley can't keep its secret forever... or can it?

### **Director Biography**

Jodi Cooper is a creative professional completing a master's degree in communications at Mount Saint Vincent University. Her documentary and narrative films have been screened at festivals internationally. She teaches film and art appreciation at Loyalist College, from which she is a proud graduate. Jodi mentors local filmmakers and students as a member of the Belleville Downtown DocFest organizing committee. The film festival screens quality productions from around the world and focuses on nurturing independent filmmakers. Jodi and her filmmaking partners recently ran a successful crowdfunding campaign to collaborate with their audience on a short film, The Woodsmen.

Victor Cooper has been producing and directing outdoor adventure television for nearly a decade. Recently he co-wrote and directed a short horror film entitled MERCY with his wife Jodi. The film received an overwhelming response and critical review.

### **Director Statement**

I just really want people to take away that quality work can come from a local production company, as well as great storytelling. Supporting local initiatives,

like “The Woodsmen” is especially important because it demonstrates that quality content can come from places other than Hollywood. We’re building up our local area. Students at Loyalist College having to go off and work in Toronto, can (now) stay here because there’s a vibrant film industry here.

## 11. Away Home

Filmmaker: Jana Stackhouse

Toronto, Ontario

Time: 20:43

### **Overview**

A man returns to his family home on the East Coast of Canada to say goodbye to his terminally ill mother.

### **Director Biography**

Jana Stackhouse is an award-winning director whose films have screened at various festivals internationally including TIFF, The Atlantic International Film Festival, and Los Angeles CineFest. While earning a BFA in Film at Ryerson University, Jana received numerous awards including The Norman Jewison Award and the Harvey Hart Director’s Award. Jana wrote and directed “Away Home”, which was selected for TIFF’s Canada’s Top Ten Film Festival and won the Best Female Director Award at Hollywood North Film Festival. Jana’s latest project is directing the web series “Note To Self” for CBC which garnered over one million views and received a Canadian Screen Award Nomination for Best Fiction Web Program or Series.

### **Director Statement**

As the writer and director of “Away Home”, I wanted to share an honest story of a family struggling with the mortality of the woman who binds them together. When I began writing the script, my grandmother was dying from Alzheimer’s. It was incredibly difficult to watch but it inspired me to tell a story about a grieving family. Then Canada passed Bill C-14 which decriminalized medical assistance in dying and this completely altered my path. I began reading testimonials of patients and their family members and I was fortunate enough to speak with physicians who had first-hand experience in the process. This influenced the story greatly and it became about an

individual’s choice and how it affects everyone around them. The film is about being given the opportunity to say goodbye and celebrate the life of a loved one.

I’ve often had viewers come to me after a screening and share such incredible and personal stories with me. I consider it an honour that people feel like they know me after watching the film and are compelled to share their own experiences.