

Scary shorts invade Toronto's Worldwide Festival

Written by Trevor Parker

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It's an old adage that films need to be feature length to earn any money. As a result, scads of earnest indie efforts struggle to inflate an hour and a half with interminable filler, their ideas and funding stretched well past the breaking point. So it's always nice to appreciate the short-film format, to salute and support undiluted visions of moviemakers brave enough to work within their confines. To share in this abbreviated fun, Fango readers in Toronto are urged to check out the Worldwide Short Film Festival that gets underway this week.

There's so much underappreciated awesomeness to the short film; succinct slivers unfettered by Hollywood's saturation marketing so they can strike with a real bite of mystery. Shorts can have stronger impact, leaving today's ADD audiences with no time to distract themselves before the punchline drops. We're also mostly spared tedious scenes of exposition and explanation; things that happen simply happen. In a scary vein, the Worldwide Fest is offering two Midnight Madness programs screening at 11:59 p.m. this Friday, June 3 and Saturday, June 4. Also highly recommended is the Hardgore program screening Thursday, June 2 at 11:30 p.m. The Worldwide programmers from the Canadian Film Centre have collected some of the world's finest and edgiest for these showcases—here the highlights that deserve to be sought out:

- Jerome Sable's THE LEGEND OF BEAVER DAM (see story [here](#)): The unlikely rise of the horror/comedy/musical continues with this lively and bloody campfire singalong. Great makeup FX, hilariously operatic songs. Beware Stumpy Sam!
- Can Evenrol's TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER: A young boy discovers a freaky EYES WIDE SHUT-esque mask tucked away in his house, and the little scamp decides to slip it on and give

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his father and pregnant mother a good scare upon their return home. Nine minutes of concentrated taboo-breaching ensue. Amateur FX are surmounted by sheer testicular fearlessness. Extreme and disturbing.

- Firas Momani's THE ADDER'S BITE: No real narrative to be had here, just a slimy black nightmare, a tone poem of darkness and movement. Weird robed creatures sprout tubular tongues while others writhe and wriggle away in a silent dungeon ceremony.
- Lola Parra's PERRA: This Spanish entry features ugly psychosexual interplay and an unbalanced relationship resulting in a gory EC Comics-style conclusion. Animal lovers should avoid.
- Rory Low's THE MIDGE: A simple tale of insects and camping injected with Cronenbergian body-horror flourishes. Packs in all the thrills of a Syfy creature feature, minus the slumming has-beens spouting scientific gibberish.
- Dennison Ramalho's NINJAS (pictured above; story [here](#)): Accomplished, confident filmmaking used to deliver a pointed social statement, NINJAS meets and surpasses the considerable hype it has accumulated thus far. This film is a rough, cruel experience—part moral quandary, part ghost as manifestation of guilt and part agony show. For all the power drained from the concept of torture by cheap HOSTEL knockoffs and the ridiculous Rube Goldberg contraptions in the SAW films, prepare to feel something real and excruciating again. Unmissable.

For more information including the fest's various offerings, check out its [official website](#).