

# RUSHES SOHO SHORTS FESTIVAL 2008



## Rushes Soho Shorts Festival

This summer Rushes Soho Shorts Festival brings you the best in short film by celebrating the genre over a 10 day period. 2008 marks their ten year anniversary. It's an amazing feat for any organisation, but for an organisation that promotes short film, this is a mark of true success. Aesthetica caught up with Festival Director, Joe Bateman, before the parties, screenings and events of this year's extravaganza.

A decade is a long time to be promoting the art of short film. It takes continuous determination, stamina and drive to bring short film to the forefront of the public's attention. This dedication to the genre is behind the realisation of Rushes Soho Shorts Festival, which is now in its tenth consecutive year. Rushes, a festival that meticulously selects and screens the best UK-based short format work, is set this year to be the most exciting festival to date, with international partnerships and the addition of a new competitive category. Festival Director, Joe Bateman, is looking forward to his second year as Director and intrigued to see how the new, longer ten-day schedule will unfold.

Bateman has been connected with Rushes since its inception in 1998. Previously, he worked at London's Curzon Cinema in the Private Hire Department, and helped to establish the *Serious About Shorts* programme. Being in the industry, Bateman naturally made links with Rushes when the concept was first conceived. In the first year, it was decided that the delegate centre would be based in the mezzanine level at Curzon, because both companies believed passionately in the potential of short film and they selected a location that would be "the heart of the festival." The Festival's *raison d'être* manifested from a need to "showcase work produced in Soho and around the West End." In the first few years, audiences and



filmmakers received the Festival enthusiastically, and this zeal has raised the bar to ensure success. This is in part down to continuous development and innovation, in particular, the music video and animation categories, which are a part of the broad range of genres that offer a platform for filmmakers to get their work noticed, in an industry where shorts are often overlooked.

Maintaining this link with Rushes, Bateman became the Director in January 2007 and has pushed the Festival's ethos and programme even further. He is the first person to work with the Festival on a year-round basis. This has enabled him to focus on specific aspects of the Festival and "solidify everything that had been happening over the previous nine years." This year will see the fruition of the Festival's programming after numerous experiments last year, one of these included the introduction of the Documentary Category, which came about as a response to the large numbers of factual work being submitted. Promoted by Nick Broomfield, this was a highly respected aspect of last year's Festival, and Bateman hopes to expand on this with the new Broadcast Design category, adapted from the Title Sequence and Idents Category. This category is deliberately vague to include varying styles of work such as "digital posters, commissioned, branded work and short films lasting ten, fifteen seconds." Bateman is passionate about developing a proper outlet for "work that has been specifically designed to be broadcast



*Groove Armada – Get Down*, directed by Pleix. Winner of the Music Video Award 2007.

through mobile phones and online, viral advertising.”

The Festival’s ethos is that of promotion and celebration of short format work, and the creative teams behind the scenes. Bateman enthuses, “Showcasing filmmakers is what Rushes continuously strives towards — to share the ideas and show off the creativity and talent is invaluable.” With a career rich in the many interdisciplinary aspects of film, Bateman is certainly qualified to be in the role of Director. He says: “With my theatre and acting experiences, I can appreciate working in front of the camera, and then with the exhibition and distribution side, I can understand the business angle.” This knowledge facilitates the more practical aspects of running a Festival, particularly identifying how a venue should be utilised to get the maximum potential.

An important element of Rushes is obtaining sponsorship, however, with famous patrons that include Ray Winstone and Bill Nighy, the Festival’s profile is continuing to ascend. Winstone and Nighy’s connections with the event are beneficial, Bateman says, “They have a natural interest in the work, so it’s something that they truly believe in and are really supportive.” The new association with Australia Short Films has taken Rushes onto a higher level. Bateman believes that these partnerships “are essential, as there are such a huge number of festivals out there. The more that you can collaborate — the better.” The international element also

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“brings fresh ideas and original filmmaking to the UK and inspires filmmakers that are watching in the UK.” This primarily adds to Ruses’ reputation as an innovative event in the arts calendar.

With submission numbers reaching 1200, a lot of work goes into the selection procedure. Interestingly Bateman has noticed a trend in issues that have been explored through the shorts. He says, “Last year, it revolved around death and people’s attitudes towards it. There was comic death, urban violence and social issues about death, which was very interesting.” Given that there is no prerequisite dictated to filmmakers, such similarities provide a fascinating connection that underlines the Festival. With Bateman’s focussed approach and new themes emerging in this year’s work, Ruses Soho Shorts Festival is not to be missed.

For more information on the Ruses Soho Shorts Festival 2008, please visit [www.sohoshorts.com](http://www.sohoshorts.com). The Festival begins on 23 July 2008 and continues through to 1 August 2008.

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