

MORGAN HILL TIMES

The top 10: Range, diversity offer filmgoers wealth of options this weekend

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The 2011 Poppy Jasper Short Film Festival will provide cinema fans with 46 films spanning a variety of genres from comedies and dramas, documentaries, science fiction and social commentaries, as well as two films made with creative media.

This weekend, festival goers will see some of this year's best independently-made short films at Morgan Hill's eighth annual short film festival, the South Valley's celebration of cinematic art from the world's most cutting-edge independent filmmakers.

In no particular order, here are the Morgan Hill Times Top 10 "must-see" movies at the Poppy Jasper this weekend:



A screenshot from the short film, "My Friend Peter".

- "The Aerial Girl" - Anne Simone Scott's 10-minute film is a hauntingly tender story about a teenage girl named Taylor who, after her father dies, moves to her grandfather's ranch in Wyoming with her mother. The young girl meets a ranch hand who turns her world upside down. The film's cinematography has a beautifully solid feel to it as it shows an urban cool young girl entering into the world of western cowboys.
- "Deep Blue Breath" - Directed by Patricia Cardoso, this 18-minute film uses real-life film footage mixed with animation sequences to tell the adventure story of a boy who, when put under anesthesia, travels deep into his own body. With the help of a dog, the child fights a battle against the Evil Lord Vater, a monster representing a disease the boy suffers from. The film is sensitively told and the animation brings the audience into a childlike world of the imagination.
- "Dilli" - This 25-minute documentary directed by Sushmit Ghosh and Rintu Thomas will bring the Poppy Jasper Film Festival audience into the world of millions of people struggling for a new life in the slums of India's Delhi. The cinematography is outstanding and the best of all the festival's films this year. "Dilli" starts off with the struggles of the poor facing abandonment by the Indian government, but toward the end, looks at the work of the Robin Raina Foundation (RRF), a charity organization now carrying out the largest private home building initiative in the Indian subcontinent by building 6,000 homes, free of cost, for the underprivileged residents of Delhi.
- "June Gloom" - This 14-minute film directed by Atilla Adam looks at the plight of a young man released from a California prison who returns to his home neighborhood to face the family problems he left behind. It received the Poppy Jasper's "best social commentary" award for its views on how society often fails to help former prisoners deal with adjusting to life beyond the cell bars.
- "Keenan at Sea" - In this enchanting two-minute animation film by Jeremy Galante and David Cowles, two little girls head out to sea with their trusty dog companion in a small boat and face a series of small adventures on the ocean water. The music and the animation work charmingly together to captivate the audience.
- "Last Kind Words" - A 15-minute drama directed by Azed Majeed and Jay Wolting, this dark tale looks at the origins of the "graveyard shift," where cemeteries hired guards to watch over new graves and listen for a bell in case the recently interred was buried alive. This film is extremely stylized in its editing and its incorporation of old blues music to create an Edgar Allan Poe sense of the macabre.
- "My Friend Peter" - In this hilariously funny 11-minute comedy by Steve Kopera, a socially awkward waiter learns

from his "best friend," an in-your-face monkey hand-puppet, the skills of socially interacting with people. Kopera has a great skill of pacing to creating comic visual effects. This is especially evident in the charming scene where the monkey puppet gives wine advice to a couple of businessmen dining at the restaurant during the lunch hour.

- "The Room at the Top of the Stairs" - Filmmaker Briony Kidd's 15-minute drama definitely has the haunted feel of Alfred Hitchcock's classic "Rebecca." When a young artist moves into a room in a boarding house, she feels overshadowed by a strange and dangerous girl who once inhabited that room. The pacing of the editing makes the audience wonder if this might be a ghost story. The ending where the young artist decides to follow in her nemesis's footsteps suggests that perhaps she has become emotionally possessed by the room's former resident.

- "Time Freak" - Andrew Bowler's 11-minute film received the best science fiction award for this year's Poppy Jasper. It tells the bizarrely funny tale of an obsessive inventor who creates a time machine and finds himself lost for an entire year traveling around yesterday trying to "perfect" one day of his life. The delicious O'Henry twist at the end is hilarious.

- "Scene at Sea" (originally titled "Gu Yeo-Rum-Eui Ba-Da") - Filmmaker Jaehee Lee's lyrically-toned film is 22 minutes of cinematic poetry. The Korean-language drama tells about the struggles of a son having to take on the role of caring for his blind, elderly father as they live their lives as fishermen on the edge of the sea. This film received the "Best Drama" award from the Poppy Jasper, and rightfully so.

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