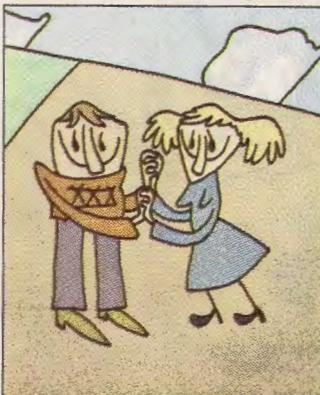


D Lifebeat

The Providence Journal

FILM FEST



MERGINGARTS PRODUCTIONS

In **"Backwards"** by Aaron Hughes, a busted romance is played backwards with a startling twist. See it at the Short Short Story Film Festival.

Like short movies? Then these are for you

By **MICHAEL JANUSONIS**
JOURNAL ARTS WRITER

Movie fans will have a chance to see some of the best short films from around the world when the Short Short Story Film Festival goes on screen Saturday at the Cable Car Cinema.

Founder and organizer Toni Pennacchia of Pawtucket isn't kidding when she called it Short Short. None of the 38 films in the festival, which is divided into two very distinct shows of 19 films apiece, is longer than 5 minutes and most are barely half that. But all of them tell a complete story, like a good short story on a printed page. They come from Ireland, Spain, Australia, Quebec and even Brooklyn.

Pennacchia said that there were so many films from New York this year that for the first time the festival, which debuted in Providence in 2007, made a stop in New York City last weekend. For the 2008 festival, because of difficulty finding a venue in Rhode Island, the festival decamped to Concord, N.H., and Brattleboro, Vt.

She calls this year's festival at the Cable Car "partnering with the right venue." By that she doesn't mean just renting the hall, but the fact that the Cable Car's new owners "stand behind what they're

SHORT

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38 films in 2 separate sessions

doing."

Pennacchia has no submission fees, as do many film festivals, which is how they make their money.

"No money is exchanged," she said with a laugh. She works at Brown University and has had an interview show — Spoiler Alert Radio — since 2004 on community radio and also on the Internet. The festival is, for her, a labor of love.

Rather than simply trolling other film festivals, she prefers to find the films on her own. Some of the shorts are submitted by the filmmakers themselves.

"I just want good content and a good mix."

The films will be judged by a string of judges, many of whom have contributed to her radio program — "People who

are involved in the film industry or have a feature-length film or two under their belts." They're sent DVD discs of the films to be judged. One of the judges is from as far away as Israel. But there also will be audience judging, with the scores from New York and Providence combined.

Pennacchia calls it a "mix of creative films," although they have been separated into two categories — "Heartstrings," which are films of a somewhat sentimental nature, and "Headtrip Program," which has what she calls "more off-center films, with black comedies and horror well represented, along with many films that don't pigeonhole easily."

Judging from the half dozen previewed, she has chosen

well.

It's an unusual mix, ranging from the Irish film "Whatever Turns You On," in which a raggedy-looking homeless man uses the money from his begging cup to buy a universal remote control at a spiffy looking electronics store for a very clever reason, to the Spanish "Invisible Old People," in which an elderly couple take their fantasy selves out in public with an eye toward what becomes a very spectacular finale. "My boyfriend cries whenever he watches this," Pennacchia said.

From Quebec, Pierre M. Trudeau's "Garbage Angels" is a marvelous funny-wistful computer animation in which junked articles form a sort of jungle community. An old guitar is protected by a canister vacuum cleaner that uses its hose like an elephant's trunk. Chirping cell phones rise like a flock of birds. A gaggle of old chairs flees from a pair of whirring chainsaws,

looking from above like gazelles being chased down by charging lions.

Even stranger is Aaron Hughes' "Backwards" in which a busted romance with tragic consequences is played backwards with some very startling elements coming into focus only at the end.

The Heartstrings program will go on screen at 1 and 7 p.m. on Saturday at the Cable Car Cinema, 204 South Main St., Providence. The Headtrip program will be screened at 3 and 9 p.m. Tickets for the early shows are \$7 at the door; for the evening shows they are \$9. Student tickets are \$7 for all shows. There also will be a free reception at 5 p.m. with a performance by Phil Goldman of the Live Bait short storytelling series. His stories, like the films, will be held to five minutes or less.