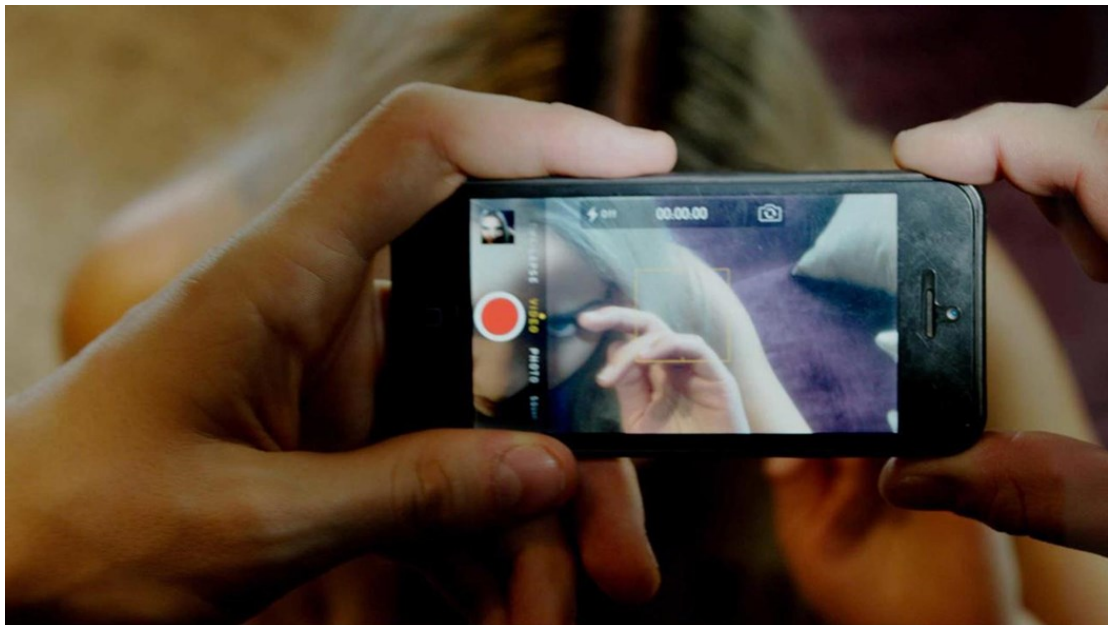


# Five Breakout Talents From the London Short Film Festival

— January 14, 2016 —

The LSFF hits venues across London for the 13th year running this January, showcasing the most exciting new directors in contemporary filmmaking



*Rate Me Film still courtesy of London Short Film Festival*

Text [Sarah Jilani](#)

The London Short Film Festival is back this month, celebrating a cutting-edge selection of short film, documentary, animation and music videos which showcase creative irreverence, experimentation and storytelling. The gathering of young film lovers was founded in 2003 by Philip Ilson and Kate Taylor as a student club and has since exploded into a week-long festival of

international short film, becoming a leading UK platform for new work and industry events. The highlights this year are a serious-minded but fun-loving mix, including a live scoring of internet cat videos, panel discussions with directors, and a low-budget shorts marathon. The LSFF's strength lies in its knack for discovering fresh talent, and these five newcomers quickly won audiences over with their bold short films.

Fyzal Boulifa, *Rate Me*

Leicester-born director Fyzal Boulifa's film is edgy, highly strung and self-contradictory – not unlike Generation X's incessant online chatter – making it a fitting parody of our social media selves. Awarded Best Short at the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes, *Rate Me* is inspired by a real website on which users rate prostitutes. Teenager Coco is imagined again and again in chapters based on user reviews: she is at once a *femme fatale* and a schoolgirl victim, a troubled daughter and a savvy gold digger, and over time, our protagonist's real identity grows increasingly surreal and cacophonous. *Rate Me* is rising star Boulifa's second British Council fund-winning film and a street-smart look at the commodification of identity.



Manoman *Film still courtesy of London Short Film Festival*

Simon Cartwright, *Manoman*

Simon Cartwright had had no cinematic training prior to his decision to do an MA in Animation at the National Film and Television School in London – and a happy decision it was for his future audiences. His amusing, irksome yet endearing 11-minute animation *Manoman* was made using a mixture of rod puppets and digital animation. Our timid protagonist Glen attends a primal scream therapy session to find his masculinity, accidentally unearthing his own Neanderthal doppelgänger in the process. Glen and his primal alter ego go out to wreak havoc – dire consequences and a bizarrely enjoyable story ensue.



*Tamara Film still courtesy of London Short Film Festival*

Sofia Safonova, *Tamara*

Sofia Safonova's 16-minute short is her London Film School graduation film, and is based on a storyline of understated strength. In it, a bus conductor who spends her days on long-haul journeys across Siberia is looking forward to a first date, but bringing her surly pre-teen son with her quickly results in her exasperated entrapment between two male egos. Shot with an empathetic eye that captures small nuances of expectation

and disappointment, the director looks set to be a natural storyteller.



*Balcony Film still courtesy of London Short Film Festival*

Toby Fell-Holden, *Balcony*

With its hard-hitting story and cynical young narrator, Fell- Holden's short film was screened in the 'Movements: Refugee and Migrant' strand of the LSFF to an audible, collective gasp from the audience. An Afghan father-daughter live in social isolation on an English council estate, but a tentative friendship blossoms between the daughter, Dana, and our narrator Tina. Tina tells us of Dana's likely life – a controlling father and lonely days – as she becomes Dana's protector at school. Yet Tina's own life experiences has her only seeing the dark where there may in fact be light. It's a mature and affecting work from a noteworthy new talent.



*Scarlet Film still courtesy of London Short Film Festival*

*Annetta Laufer, Scarlet*

Writer and director Annetta Laufer's topical short about two asylum-seeking Rwandan sisters had her nominated for Best Writer at London's Underwire Film Festival. For Scarlet and her young sister Grace to travel from Hastings to London for their appeal hearing at the Home Office, they need to raise money to replace their stolen train tickets. With all attempts failing, Scarlet resorts to what many women have before her – but the resulting encounter is unexpected. Laufer's talent shines through in conveying an atmosphere of loss and non-belonging.

*The 2016 London Short Film Festival continues until January 17 at the ICA Cinema and Hackney Picturehouse in London.*