

WISCONSIN FILM FESTIVAL

**short.times.six at the 2007 Wisconsin Film Festival**  
*A fistful of funny shorts deliver laughs at Monona Terrace*  
*Kristian Knutsen on Monday 04/16/2007 04:04:01.*

With four days of frenetic film viewing drawing rapidly to a close Sunday evening, I couldn't have guessed upon entering Monona Terrace to see short.times.six that it would be one of my favorite screenings of the weekend.

The warning signs were there, though. I have attended many festival screenings in the semi-circular auditorium that is the home of Michael Feldman's "Whad'Ya Know?" and have never previously seen it filled to capacity. That was the case on Sunday night, though, with every seat I could see in the room occupied, with more than a few filmgoers sporting eye patches. More on that later, though.

This series featured six Wisconsin-made shorts, all of which took flights of fancy and/or played for laughs in the best way short films can. Most of these shorts weren't so short, though, three of them clocking in over the fifteen minute mark. That was no problem, though, as each was more than capable of entertaining me (and the rest of the crowd given the volume of laughs and cheers) through the entire screening.

A few thoughts on each film in the order of their screening follows.

Meaningful Touches by Sarah Steel

One of the shorter entries in the series, this film took a humorous approach to suspense as a man overcomes his hesitations about visiting a niche health clinic for the first time. Set in 2057, he is required to fill out a form asking him numerous questions about his grooming habits and skin condition in advance of receiving treatment. This short warmed the audience in Monona Terrace up nicely, drawing some laughs and a big round of applause at its end.

The film is also available for viewing online.

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*The Captain & Me* by Mason Hill

Yarr! The scattered filmgoers sporting eye patches and even a couple of tri-corner hats were geared up for this offering, a gloriously tongue-in-cheek homage to silent films, Madison, and pirates. The titular captain is the unchallenged authority in town, at least in the taverns where he reigns benevolently as peacemaker and defender of ladies' honor. When one leering n'er-do-well decides to take out his frustrations on the captain, though, he sets off an epic and hilariously ridiculous chase throughout the heart of Madison.

Numerous locations around State Street and the Capitol Square (circa the summer of 2006) are recognizable throughout the 17-minute film. These include The Pub, Maduro, Lisa Link Peace Park, and the corner of State and Gilman streets, complete with road construction and CowParade bovines lurking in the background. The biggest laughs, though, came via sight gags involving the Orpheum marquee and the Abraham Lincoln statue on Bascom Hill.

The short ended with a massive ovation of clapping, hollers, and even a few yarrs.

*Turtle* by Matt Osterman

How useful is *Genesis*, Chapter 6 as a how-to guide? Or to be more specific, how useful is the story of Noah to a socially awkward and god-fearing man who receives a command to build an Ark? From a turtle, no less? This film answered these questions, telling the tale of the trials, temptations, and tribulations faced by a man acting on command from the God of the Old Testament. Even better, this absurdist look at religious devotion features a Christian Rock soundtrack.

This short was co-produced by Osterman and Damian Kussian, who also worked behind the camera on *Sportsfan*, which screened twice at the festival. More information about the film is available [here](#) and from [IMDB](#).

*The Professor's Daughter* by Luke Pebler

The only entry in the series that wasn't a comedy, this film zeroed in on the intersection between the personal and professional life of a computer scientist developing what may be the most significant invention in human history. It is an AI program, one that quickly learns to anthropomorphize itself to the professor's expectations as he struggles in his relationships with his divorced wife (and current boss) and an alienated daughter.

While it didn't draw the laughs, this film successfully combining sci-fi suspense with personal drama received a big round of applause from the audience in Monona Terrace, an appropriate reaction for the winners of the Best Wisconsin Narrative Short Film. More information about the film is can be found on its [IMDB profile](#) and at [theprofsdaughter.net](#).

*Clone Appetit* by Eric Nelson

This shortest short of the screening was easily the most tasteless, err, make that tasty of the bunch. "Get excited for a delicious meal," promises this instructional video, as a customer service agent walks a caller through properly utilizing a quick-grow kit, complete with personal genetic samples. Of course, the crowd in the auditorium ate it up with laughs, gross-out groans, and another big round of applause. More information about the short movie can be found at its [IMDB profile](#), as well as from [StoryBoard Productions](#) and [Heavy Visuals](#).

*Script Cops* by Scott Rice

The biggest laughs of the night were reserved for this final film of the series, an all-out spoof of *Cops* for film geeks. "The following program endorses the eradication of bad motion picture screenplays," begins the opening shot of the six-minute short, before launching into the familiar riffs of Inner Circle. Packed with jokes about screenwriters (procrastination, [IMDB](#), Mamet's dialogue, a Robert McKee "Story Seminar"), the episode follows busts of the offenders in city's across the nation as the cops take down bad scripts like *Milfs*, *Bar Mitzvah Crashers*, and *My Big Fat American Wedding*. The audience certainly loved it, as the spoof film received some of the loudest applause I'd heard through the festival.

*short.times.six* was a wonderful way to wind down my festival experience, with plenty of laughs in a crowded theater.