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## [TISH] 2024 Shorts Showcase



**Date: April 7, 2024 Author: Valeska Hexpot © 0 Comments**

On April 6th, 2024, The Toronto International Spring of Horror & Fantasy Film Festival took over The Revue, a beloved rep cinema nestled in Toronto's bustling Roncey neighbourhood. Offering a slate of full-length films, shorts, and music videos, TISH's seventh year featured submissions from North America, Europe, and Asia. After grabbing a bagel and an iced coffee at perennial favourite Coffee and All That Jazz, I headed down to the cinema for an afternoon of genre goodness.

It's no surprise that I love a shorts program—and TISH's 2024 Shorts Showcase boasted some bangers.

## Edouard teaser 001



*Edouard* (2023) blends absurdity with pathos, proudly serving up a premise that is both darkly bananas and surprisingly effective. Written and directed by F. Manga, this French short centres on Catherine (Laurence Porteil), a quirky woman whose partner Eduoard, a former model, has a dark side... and a very peculiar physical trait. When Capitaine Francis Jouliac (Cedric Camus) begins investigating the murder of her upstairs neighbour, he is pulled into this odd couple's maelstrom of jealousy and violence.

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Porteil is excellent as Catherine, nimbly skipping between harmlessly unhinged, malevolent, and anguished, while the dead serious Camus acts as the perfect foil. These performances, and the several twists gleefully seeded throughout the narrative, make for an entertaining and memorable watch.

In Braydon Leadbetter's *Delivery* (2024), a luckless pizza delivery guy (Stephen Brda) gets more than just a bad tip when he winds up in the home of a sociopath (deliciously played by Chase Jungewaelter) who loves three things: violence, waxing philosophical, and extra cheese. *Delivery* is snappy, thoughtful, and effective, and perhaps the only horror short I've seen that takes the time to explore the truly important question: does pineapple really belong on pizza?



The fan favourite of the shorts showcase, Joey Monahan's *The Cabin* (2023), offers an idyllic slow burn for much of its 21-minute run-time, lulling viewers into a false sense of security through its whip-smart cosplay as a wilderness documentary. Its subject, a reclusive hermit (Mark La Pointe), illustrates a typical week at his log cabin home—showcasing his self-reliance, fondness for stew, and fervent hope that his traps will net him some fresh meat soon. After a reveal that is both horrifying and well-earned, the last quarter or so of the film becomes a stomach-turning (but impeccably produced) butchery tutorial that I honestly couldn't watch for more than a few seconds at a time. A must-see when it winds up at a festival near you.

The final short of the showcase, Jeremie Sery's *Unfathomable* (2024), was perhaps my personal favourite of the bunch—at least, it's the one that left me wanting *so* much more. A perfect lazy Sunday turns into a night of horror as two women (Catalina Cielo and Manon Pages) find their home invaded by a shadowy figure of unknown origin (and species). Kept separated throughout the ordeal, the pair must rely on their instincts to stay alive while terrified about the fate of their loved one.

Cielo and Pages turn in excellent performances as Sery ratchets up the dread, teasing us with glimpses of the creature that are both well-executed and exquisitely incomplete. Queer representation, bone-chilling creature design that leaves the best bits to the imagination, and expertly-driven tension... what's not to love? I would be very interested to see this proof-of-concept turned into a full-length film.

A few more highlights:

Written by Emile Harris and directed by Russ Emanuel, *Routine* (2020) was inspired by the monotony and anxiety of the pandemic and adds in an unexpected twist. The live-action portion of the short introduces our protagonist, Cassie (Paige Laree Poucel), and sets up the graphic-novel-style credit sequence where the majority of the story happens—this sequence garnered several cheers from TISH's enthusiastic audience.



Directed by Jim Patrick McCullough and Anthony Ladesich, *Claire Voyance* (2024) is a short and sweet little animated picture about a lonely and socially awkward office worker who finds companionship in an unexpected place—and finally gets a little revenge on her douchebag boss. Cole McCracken’s *The Skin She’s In* (2024) is light on dialogue but heavy on atmosphere (and fantastic practical effects), exploring the concept of identity through a horrific lens.

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TISH has some surprises up its sleeve for future events—follow the fest on Instagram or Facebook to get the juicy details as they become available!

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## Published by Valeska Hexpot

Hailing from Toronto, Valeska is the founder and co-editor of *Anatomy of a Scream*, executive editor of the inclusive biannual horror journal *Grim*, and co-host of *Fright School*, a Toronto-based interactive horror screening and discussion series. She co-edited 'Scared Sacred: Idolatry, Religion and Worship in the Horror Film' from *House of Leaves Publishing* and serves as a judge for the *Ax Wound Film Festival*. She's guested on numerous genre podcasts including *Bloody Good Horror*, *Horror Queers*, *Something Red*,

Scarred for Life, Behold! An Electric Terror, and XOXO Horror. She is a freelance writer and Camp Arawak drop-out who balances a passion for maple syrup with a love of blood, and spends her time critiquing slasher films, watching makeup tutorials, and living deliciously. October is her natural habitat. Find her on twitter @bitchcraftTO. View all posts by Valeska Hexpot

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