



SEPTEMBER 6-16, 2012 • THROUGHOUT WASHINGTON, DC
1317 F STREET NW, SUITE 920 \ WASHINGTON, DC 20004 \ 202-393-4266

Event Report

Submitted October 15, 2012

Total Ticket Sales	7,054
Total Redeemed	6,484
Net Ticket and Pass Sales:	\$72,651 (1% increase from 2011)
In-Kind Donations (approx.)	\$27,878
Net Income (including WAB)	\$118,932 (13% increase from 2011)
<i>P/L</i>	\$16,986

Goals:

1. Create a new program to pair films with chefs and food.
2. Increase followers on social networking sites.
3. Increase awareness of Screenplay Competition
4. Attract new audience through partnerships and social couponing

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:

Food Pairing Program

This is a program in two parts — each with different results.

The concept for selecting food-themed films was requested by Whole Foods Market P Street, a long-time supporter of the Festival. Throughout the submission period, we actively solicited “food films” to compete for the Golden Pineapple award for outstanding use of food as a theme or subject. The winner is awarded \$500 in store gift cards and a trophy. This was the second year we offered this prize, but the first we actively sought food-themed movies. This portion of the program was successful.

For the second part of the program, we brought on a restaurant consultant, Jill Richmond of The Coterie, to find and coordinate with local chefs and mixologists with whom we would pair a selection of films. The idea behind the program was to attract more press and a new audience, as foodies and food media is a specific genre on the rise. The chefs would create simple dishes based on the films, and would serve them to the audiences at those particular screenings. The original goal was to create 12 pairings, but soon after contacting chefs, we cut this number down to 8. Because a chef bailed out of the program at the last minute, we presented 7 pairings over the weekend. Since The Coterie was providing their extensive services for gratis, we brought on an intern to coordinate the donation of the ingredients (from Whole Foods Market), delivery to the chefs, pick up and of the final dishes, and serving to the audience. Through a series of late-summer mishaps, we were forced to assign a rookie intern to the project. This mistake led to a series of misunderstandings and logistical issues. In addition, the food-related press, while

heavily courted by our PR firm, did not pull through with the necessary publicity, and we saw no real increase in audience attendance at the 7 paired screening. After the festival week, Jill and I briefly discussed ways to make this program more effective in the future, and have decided to shelve the idea for a future event.

Screenplay Competition

145 entries (up from 123 in 2011)
89 audience members in attendance (down from 223 in 2011)

This year was the 6th year DC Shorts held a Screenplay Competition, and the first in two years that was held during the festival week (the past two competitions were at a later date and held during the ScriptDC event.) The decision to move the competition to the festival week was due to the late date of this year's ScriptDC (December 1-2.) The decrease in attendance is most likely due to the date move.

While the event attendance was down, the quality of scripts, the performances and the direction were much improved over other years. Unlike previous years in which auditions and casting for the readings were done on Friday and the performance on Saturday, this year, everything was done in a 12-hour window. The new time constraints created more of a competitive spirit, and it showed.

This year's winner was from a local writer (as was last year), and we expect the final film to be delivered to the DC Shorts office by the May 1 deadline. The winner was presented with a \$1,000 check after the event, and will receive the final \$1,000 if the film is received by the deadline.

While this program has been running for six years, there are still issues:

- Attracting good-quality actors with the commitment to attend the audition
- Providing resources to offset the expense of writers traveling from outside the area
- Attracting a broader audience

Online Film Festival

Passes sold:	272
Codes handed out:	500+
Total Loads:	6,688
Total Plays:	4,599

In order to show more films to our audience, and to create a new revenue item that could be discounted for social couponing to increase the voucher value, we created our first Online Film Festival. The original goal was to market the festival outside of the DC region for cash sales, and offer it as an add-on only for local sales. Over 100 filmmakers agreed to stream their films during the festival week.

We chose to use a combination of multiple Vimeo accounts and a modified version of our WordPress-based film sorter for presentation. This inexpensive solution allowed us to add films quickly and inexpensively, but did not allow for us to create unique redemption codes. This meant that a single code was used by all, allowing for possible free views from code sharing.

When working, the system was robust and allowed the films to stream properly on different devices. However, the coding of our site did not allow for proper viewing on iOS devices (as was originally advertised), and through a series of errors, the system went down at least two times over the week.

Feedback from those who used it was very positive – most believed it allowed them to see more films than they ever would have in the theater. The major issue was the removal of the award winners from the system after they were announced. This was done to force sales of the Best of DC Shorts screenings, but ended up as a PR issue. This was resolved at the beginning of October with an email with a new code valid through the month sent to all who had access to the system.

The option to purchase the pass was only available after tickets to other shows were placed in the shopping cart. This was frustrating for many, as they could not find the proper link to buy the pass. Most of the voicemails received over the festival week pertained to redemption and purchase of the pass.

Issues to consider moving forward:

- Finding an online streaming platform with unique code access
- Reprogramming sorter to work on iOS devices
- Finding an easier way to purchase the pass online

Social Couponing

Scoutmob Sold:	72
Washington Post Sold:	104
Living Social Sold:	287

This year, we created 3 social coupons (LivingSocial, ScoutMob and the Washington Post). All had three very different offers and the coupons had to be redeemed online so we could capture patron data. All included access to our online film festival (we had 100 films online for the festival week with an access code). This allowed us to up the retail value, so the post-discounted net price was not too low.

We sold about \$8,600 worth of these passes, and from some data comparisons, 70% were new name to our database. We believe that the new patron data outweighed the possible loss of income. The couponing accounted for an increase of almost 1,000 additional tickets sold, even though our total revenue was only a few dollars more than last year.

We received numerous voicemails about the redemption process. Non-working codes were the result of user error, but others did not understand how to redeem online, even with an expanded instruction list on the web page.

Issues to consider moving forward:

- Easier redemption
- Ensure that only valid tickets can be redeemed based on the type of coupon
- Adding more value so that the net price is not less than 50% of full value (minus the online-access portion)

Catalog Delivery

The catalog is printed and ready for our press lunch the first week of August.

A total of 65,000 catalog were ordered through our partnership with OnTap Magazine. The total cost to print the catalog was \$7,800, but including the \$5,000 partnership from Flats 130 apartments (brokered through OnTap,) the total out-of-pocket cost was only \$2,800 or 4.3¢ each.

Using students through the American University Freshman Service program, we delivered 20k catalogs the week of August 20 to about 120 businesses around areas we know our audience lives. 30k were inserted in OnTap Magazines on September 1. An additional 5K or more were delivered via interns to outdoor film screenings, bar events, through food trucks and other avenues. The Washington Examiner distributed 8k on the day before the festival (September 5), and the remaining catalogs were placed at the four screening venues.

PR and Media Strategy

Facebook followers (post event):	2,874 (an increase of 617 from pre-ticketing)
Twitter followers (post event):	1,944 (an increase of 246 from pre-ticketing)'
Media mentions:	Over 125 (not including calendars)
Amount spent on PR:	\$8,300

The 2011 electronic press kit was awarded the Thoth Award from the Public Relations Society of America. This kit consists of a printed catalog and a flash drive with copies of every film (small, highly compressed iPod-sized images with our watermark). Photos, descriptions of films, contact info --and suggested articles are also on the 8GB drives.

For the 2012 event, Scott Circle Communications, our PR firm for the last five years, created an initial release for distribution in early July. They planned and organized a press lunch at Matchbox Chinatown the first week of August that was attended by 22 writers from local papers, blogs and online media.

In addition, we had two interns develop an extensive blog, with more than a dozen articles about the films, as well as reviews of every film and showcase. Articles covered subjects from LGBT film to returning filmmakers, to the depiction of Muslim women and the large number of films from Great Britain.

At the same time, they scheduled over 300 tweets and Facebook postings that were automatically delivered via Hootsuite. All of these postings contained filmmaker #hashtags and @mentions, and links back to the dcshorts.com website. The process was simplified by Hootsuite's implementation of an system in which we could upload a CSV file of content.

This successful strategy created more than 125 mentions in papers, online media, blogs and broadcast media (not including the dozens of calendar listings). A full list of the media placements is online at <http://dcshorts.com/news/in-the-news/>

In addition, our tickets system was tied into Facebook – before payment was finalized, a pop-over box appeared offering a 10% discount if the purchase was shared to the users Facebook friends. 703 (about 10%) tickets and passes valued at \$8,842 were purchased under using discount.

Issues consider for the future:

- Increasing blog awareness and readership
- Creating more releases for various niche media
- Cross promotion of blog content with niche media
- Better tracking of Facebook and Twitter offers to determine reach

Venues

This year, we expanded out use of the US Navy Memorial (USNM) to show films on both weekends. The extras shows, including the Best of screenings, varied in audience sizes, but accounted for a substantial amount of extra ticket sales. Audiences like the venue, with only a few complaints about the seats and locating the facility.

We were blessed with free access to the new Angelika Film Center in Fairfax – and were the first organization to use it for a multi-day festival. More than \$4,500 was collected from the 6 ticketed shows.

We received a number of complaints about the Atlas Performing Arts Center, from the no-food policy in the auditorium, to poor projection and sound. The projection issues were addressed and corrected, but the audio problems could not.

While Landmark's E Street Cinema worked well (again) as our main first-week venue, the facility is getting old and there are concerns about reliable WiFi access for ticket sales.

Ticketing Systems

For the second year, we contracted with TicketSocket.com for online sales and in-person box office. While the system was more robust this year, there are still concerns about proper training for all box office staff, the issuing of refunds through our customer support representative, and the reliability of the scanners to check tickets.

During the past year, I have visited a number of pass-only festivals, and am examining this option for future events.

Volunteers & Venue Managers

290 scheduled volunteer positions
129 active volunteers
103 volunteer screeners
8 paid managers

Filmmakers and managers all agree – there are no volunteers as dedicated to making the week a success like our volunteers. They worked in positions from selling tickets and checking in filmmakers and VIPs at the box office, to collecting tickets at the theater door, to unloading and setting up the parties, to serving drinks and food – and then cleaning up all of the mess. They are truly an inspiration – and the only reason DC Shorts runs as smoothly as it does.

This year, instead of managers assigned to specific venues, we had a staff of 8 managers who scheduled themselves among the locations. While this allowed everyone a chance to work the number to hours they wished, it also meant that there was no one with real expertise at any one location.

The managers did a great job tracking down and assigning volunteers to duties as required, and worked well as the first-line of decision making when dealing with patrons. Two managers had worked for DC Shorts the previous year, and the rest were new to the team.

We hired Annie Evans as our new events coordinator. She had met with Mark Chaikowski (2011 party planner) a few times over the summer to learn about his strategy and was given access to all of his vendors (equipment rental, liquor delivery, ice, etc.) Annie took on more than was necessary, and even with the damage caused to the rented ZipTruck, she kept expenses down to levels in line with 2011.

RESOURCES:

Ticket Buyer Map: <http://bit.ly/dcs12-audiencemap>