

Shortbus

Review by Megan Spencer 2006

Shortbus is one of the bravest and best films of the moment, the second feature by John Cameron Mitchell, the American filmmaker responsible for 2001's Magnificent Musical Movie Masterpiece, [Hedwig & The Angry Inch](#).

Set in New York City, *Shortbus* is the post-9/11 movie I for one have been waiting for.

It's an unfettered tale of love, sex and human frailty set in a city that's had its heart ripped out.

Shortbus's beautiful animated title sequence zooms us through a model of Manhattan, where we witness three couples having sex, sex and more (real) sex.

Sofia (Sook-Yin Lee) is a sex therapist who's never had an orgasm in spite of best efforts by her husband James (Paul Dawson).

Jamie (PJ DeBoy) and boyfriend Rob (Raphael Barker) have hit kind of a rut, and are thinking about "opening up" their relationship sexually to include other people.

And Dominatrix Severin (Lindsay Beamish) is very disillusioned with her clientele, and yearns for a human relationship far away from that of 'the financial transaction'.

Each character finds their respective way to *Shortbus*, a club for the 'sexually adventurous' and society's misfits. There they begin to learn how emotionally screwed up they are, what they might need to do to fix themselves, move on and ultimately, grow up. Fates also intertwine...

Although set in a very contemporary queer culture environment ('mapped' to the Lower East Side of Manhattan), it was a refreshing to experience this slice of urban contemporary life depicted on film in such a universal way.

Shortbus is defined as a 'queer' film yet it easily accessed by the 'mainstream'. Anyone with a beating heart will emotionally identify with this picture. Filled with sometimes heart-breaking and always authentic moments - plus insightful, cheeky humour - *Shortbus* opens its doors and welcomes one and all. It is inclusive, not exclusive: there's no door-bitch vetoing those not cool enough to enter. Only those with closed minds.

Having said that, *Shortbus* is bound to be seen by 'some' as a gratuitous alt-culture gab fest, indulgent on every level, evidence of 'what's wrong with society today' – hell, a 'lascivious sex film that should have been banned!'

Thankfully our censors did not, rating it R+18 so that consenting adults can go along, make up their own minds and have some fun.

And lest Mitchell be accused of not being patriotic enough... American patriotism is taken to a whole new level in *Shortbus*, with one of the most 'creatively' interpreted renditions of the star-spangled banner you're every likely to hear or see...

Get - on - that - bus.

