

THE FILM FESTIVAL CHECKLIST

Questions to consider	Southern Shorts Awards	Other Festivals
<i>Is the festival online only, or do they actually screen in a real movie theater?</i>	Quarterly screenings at a commercial movie theater in an Atlanta suburb.	Varies from online only to screenings with borrowed gear in a conference room to regular movie theaters.
<i>Do they have my specific genre, or would my film compete against films in other genres?</i>	A dozen distinct categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action/Adventure • Animation/Puppetry • Comedy • Documentary • Drama • Fan Films • Horror • Mystery/Thriller • Musicals • Science Fiction/Fantasy • Web Series/Webisode • Western Plus • Made in Georgia	Most lump everything into Drama or Documentary or they're only for specific genres like Horror. Drama is by far the most entered category, followed by Documentaries. But if your film is neither, then you will have a better chance submitting to a festival that has your specific category.
<i>Is my film new enough?</i>	We accept film regardless of release date.	Most want films less than two years old.
<i>Do they have a theme?</i>	We do not ascribe to the 'theme' idea. Films must earn their way into our festivals based on scores alone.	Some festivals choose a different 'theme' each year such as "Family." But if your film doesn't fit, then you've wasted your entry fee.
<i>Are they annual or quarterly?</i>	We are seasonal, so we send out scoresheet and comments and have a festival screening every three months. With annual festivals, you may have to wait for almost a year to find out if you got in, and you won't get a scoresheet or judges comments.	Most film festivals are annual events and most quarterly ones do not have public screenings.
<i>Who are the judges?</i>	ALL of our Judges have an IMDb page and all are listed by name, with credentials and a picture.	Many never tell you who judges your film, or if they have any experience or even connection to filmmaking other than the fact that they 'like movies.'
<i>What criteria are used to judge my film?</i>	Our judges use a score sheet to evaluate each film on a set of standard criteria: Originality, Screenplay, Direction, Acting, Cinematography, Editing, Sound Design, Music, Production Design and the judge's personal score.	Most tell you absolutely nothing about their judging process.
<i>Do they guarantee to notify me if I don't get in?</i>	Every filmmaker receives their scoresheet and judges comments in an email sent to them directly, whether you get into the festival screening or not.	Some do not even bother to send out bulk emails notifying those who do not get in.

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<i>How can I be sure that they will even watch my film?</i>	Our scoresheet and Judges Comments are proof that 3 Judges have watched your film.	Without specific feedback about your film, there is no way to be sure.
<i>Do they give feedback?</i>	Every film submitted is viewed by 3 Judges and every one receives their scoresheet and Judges Comments, at NO extra charge.	A few other festivals do offer the option of feedback, by one person (possible with unknown credentials) but for an extra fee.
<i>Do they give you a scoresheet?</i>	Every submission receives a scoresheet showing 3 judges scores in 10 categories.	There may be another festival that does this for free, but we're not aware of them.
<i>Do they send you PDF certificates if your film, cast and/or crew win awards?</i>	Every films scoring at least 70 out of 100 receives a certificate. Cast and crew members who receive total individual scores of 7 or higher will also receive certificates.	As far as we know, we are the ONLY festival in the world that does this for free.
<i>Who gets shown at the festival?</i>	The top 3 highest scoring award-winning films in each genre are shown.	Varies wildly depending on the way each festival judges their entries.
<i>Do they curate? (Show hand picked films they've invited.)</i>	Never. Every film shown at each of our quarterly festivals has earned they place on the screen by their score.	Many festivals will pick films they like and invite those filmmakers to show them, sometimes even paying them to show their film with money taken in from your entry fees.
<i>Are they a competition?</i>	We have two stages in our festival. The first is scoring each film, cast & crew individually, which is their scoresheet. We then tally all of the scoresheets to see which films make the top in their genre, so that part is a competition.	Varies greatly.
<i>Do they have Best of Show awards?</i>	Best Of Show trophies for Best Picture, Director, Screenplay, Actor, Actress, Cinematographer, Editor, Sound Design and Music.	Most do not.
<i>How do they schedule?</i>	Ours is a one-day festival and we show in genre blocks.	Varies greatly, but short films are usually put into long blocks and/or paired as the starter for a feature.
<i>Will I get a Q & A after my film screens?</i>	Every filmmaker present gets their OWN 5 minute Q&A right after their film plays.	Most wait until the end of a long block of films and have all the filmmakers come down front, so that only a few will get time to talk about their iflm.
<i>Do they have an awards presentation?</i>	We have a professionally produced, black-tie awards presentation. We show clips from each nominee, and winners get to make an acceptance speech.	Most are very low key to the point of being anti-climactic and very few put much effort into the presentation.

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<i>What are the awards?</i>	We give away wood and metal trophies, wood and metal plaques and framed certificates.	Anything from an unframed certificate, to plastic trophies to nicer metal/wood or acrylic awards.
<i>Do they video the awards?</i>	We shoot and edit every Awards Presentation then post them online and offer acceptance clips to attending winners.	We are not aware of any other festival that does this other than major festivals like Sundance.
<i>Bottom Line: Why should I enter my short film into your festival?</i>	Out of the more than six thousand film festivals world wide, NO ONE gives you more bang for your buck than the Southern Shorts Awards, period.	Varies wildly.
<i>What can I expect when I pay my hard-earned entry fee to your festival?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your film will be viewed by three judges. • You will receive a personal email with your film's scoresheet and Judges Comments around two-weeks after the submission deadline for that season. • If your film, cast or crew have earned any awards, you will receive PDF Certificates of those awards. • If your film is accepted into the festival screening, you will receive a detailed email on what we need and how to proceed, along with laurels. • The film festivals are usually held about a month after notifications. • Festival screening filmmakers who attend will get their own 5 minute Q&A after their film shows, and will be filmed as they go to the podium to accept their award and make their thank you's at the Awards Presentation. • Festival winners will be listed on our website along with the video of the Awards Presentation. 	Someone will watch your film and determine if you 'make the cut' to be in their festival. This will be either a pass-fail situation, or those chosen may be passed along to someone else who will make final selections. They will notify you if your film is being shown, but may not if it isn't. At the festival, your Q&A (if they have one) may be at the end of a long block of films and you'll join all the other filmmakers at the front to take questions. So you might not get any questions at all. Their awards presentation is likely to be a basic 'who got what' announcement where you may find that you weren't even nominated. Award winners can make their thank-you's and someone might take pictures. It's not always like this, but these remarks are based on real experiences from us and other filmmakers we have interviewed. Your mileage may vary. :)