



THE WORLD ACCORDING TO SHORTS

NEW YORKER/Color-B&W/1.66, 1.85 & 2.35/Dolby Digital/95 Mins./Not Rated

Program produced by Jonathan Howell.

“La Perra”—Cast: Claudia Celedon, Boris Quercia, Catalina Saavedra. Written and directed by Hugo Maza. Director of photography: Eduardo Castro. Edited by Eduardo Maza. Production designer: Francisca Cuesta. Music by Aureo Baqueiro. Executive producer: Hugo Maza.

“We Have Decided Not to Die”—Cast: Kasia Werstak, Daniel Askill, Jordan Askill. Written, directed and edited by Daniel Askill. Produced by Christopher Seeto, Daniel Askill. Director of photography: Denson Baker. Production designer: Andrew Van Der Westhuyzen. Music by Michael Askill. Costume designers: Jordan Askill, Kasia Werstak. Executive producers: Sam Zalaskalns, James March-Smith.

“United We Stand”—Directed by Hans Petter Moland. Produced by Orjan Karlsen, Yngve Saether. Written by Are Sjaastad. Director of photography: Gaute Gunnari. Edited by Sophie Hesselberg. Music by John Erik Kaada.

“Antichrist”—Cast: Dariusz Maciuk, Marcin Zaluski, Tomasz Szczesniak, Adam Witokowski. Directed by Adam Guzinski. Screenplay by Guzinski, based on a story by André De Toth. Produced by Włodzimierz Prządkiwicz, Tomasz Prządkiwicz. Director of photography: Marek Gajczak. Production designer: Marek Zawierucha. Edited by Jaroslaw Kaminski. Music by Adam Guzinski.

“The Old Woman’s Step”—Cast: D. Nene-Francesca Ribeiro Da Silva, José Luciano Da Silva Araujo. Written and directed by Jane Malaquias. Produced by Cecilia Araujo. Director of photography: Roberto Iuri. Production designer: José Adjafre. Edited by Veronica Saenz. Executive producer: Isabela Cribari.

“Ring of Fire”—Written and directed by Andreas Hykade. Produced by Michael Jungfleisch. Music by Steffen Kahles. Voice-over: David Michael Williamson.

The six films that comprise *The World According to Shorts* are not equally good, but they represent the healthy state of the short-story form on the international movie scene.

Producer Jonathan Howell has assembled a group of interesting, original short subjects from a variety of filmmakers from different countries. The best of the bunch are truly great examples of the short fiction genre, while even the worst are worth catching.

The World According to Shorts starts strongly with “La Perra” (Chile, 2003), a sly satire on middle-class ennui in the tradition of Buñuel and Fassbinder. In director Hugo Maza’s story, a bored, wealthy wife and husband fantasize about their innocent new maid in order to spice up their sex life. Claudia Celedon and Boris Quercia are amusing as the couple and Catalina Saavedra steals the show as the deadpan housekeeper.

“We Have Decided Not To Die” (Australia, 2004) is a somber, poetic piece about three people who just barely escape death through transcendence. Writer-director Daniel Askill wisely eschews dialogue and creates haunting imagery with the help of special effects.

“United We Stand” (Norway, 2002) is an outstanding dark comedy on the order of Lars von Trier about eight elderly Labor Party members who rescue a young woman from a bog and then find that “no good deed goes unpunished.” Though the shortest of the shorts in this package (at nine minutes), “United We Stand” is the most memorable. On the strength of this film, writer Are Sjaastad and director Hans Petter Moland should be better known and working actively in the industry.

“Antichrist” (Poland, 2002) is also very well-made, but more derivative and unpleasant business about a group of boys who play games in an post-apocalyptic desert. When the leader of the youths declares he is the antichrist, he and the others turn their fun into dangerous and violent activities. The meaning of all this ends up too vague to be called an allegory of the rise of fascism, though writer-director Adam Guzinski neatly pays homage to several stories and films, including *Lord of the Flies*, *Forbidden Games*, *A Boy and His Dog*, and even *Mad Max*.

“The Old Woman’s Step” (Brazil, 2002) has the makings of something great with the languid but strangely fascinating story of an elderly woman (D. Nene-Francesca Ribeiro Da Silva) who sells a chicken as a way to pay for a gift for her grandson (José Luciano Da Silva Araujo). Unfortunately, writer-director Jane Malaquias leads us not to an O. Henry twist ending but, rather, a bit of feel-good humanist treacle. Up until the disappointing denouement, “The Old Woman’s Step” intrigues as a neo-Neorealist work (with a nod to the chicken in Rossellini’s short contribution to *Siamo donne*, 1953).

Finally, “Ring of Fire” (Germany, 2000) begins with what seems like a “South Park” riff on *Brokeback Mountain*, but then evolves into a frightening parody of all western tropes, particularly the psychosexual dimensions of those Freudian cowboy movies of the 1950s (*Johnny Guitar*, *The Left Handed Gun*). Writer-director Andreas Hykade’s unsettling Edward Gorey-inspired animation is in elegant black-and-white wide-screen.

The World According to Shorts must compete for attention with many other short films and packages of shorts (including the concurrent release *Boys Briefs 4*). Here’s hoping this particular collection will get the attention it deserves.

—Eric Monder