



Shortbus

John Cameron Mitchell

USA, 2006
English

102 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: **Process Media**
Executive Producer: **Michael J. Werner, Wouter Barendrecht, Frank Olsen, Alexis Fish**

Producer: **Howard Gertler, Tim Perell, John Cameron Mitchell**

Screenplay: **John Cameron Mitchell**

Cinematographer: **Frank G. DeMarco**

Editor: **Brian A. Kates**

Production Designer: **Jody Asnes**

Sound: **Ben Cheah**

Music: **Yo La Tengo**

Principal Cast: **Sook-Yin Lee, PJ DeBoy, Paul Dawson, Lindsay Beamish, Jay Brannan, Justin Bond**

Production: **Process Media, 311 Church Street, Suite 2B, New York NY 10013 USA. T (212) 219-3209 F (212) 219-3417 howard@process-media.com**

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Canadian Distributor: **THINKFilm**
US Distributor: **THINKFilm**
Foreign Sales Agent: **Fortissimo Films**
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John Cameron Mitchell's *Shortbus* was swirling in controversy even before it went into production. An e-mail solicitation for performers prepared to engage in hardcore sexual activity was widely reported. And then Canada's own Sook-Yin Lee almost got fired from her CBC Radio job for daring to join the cast. Finally, the Cannes Film Festival set it up as this year's *cause célèbre* with a midnight slot and much nervous laughter.

Shortbus is indeed packed with sex: all kinds of sex, graphically shown. It includes some acts that are familiar, some less so. But the film is not at all titillating. Sex serves as a guiding narrative device; it keeps the plot moving and reveals the intentions and fears of the multiple characters portrayed. Mitchell was clearly not just looking to make something that began and ended with its own controversy.

Shortbus is in fact a film about a peculiar window of time, between the September 11 terrorist attacks and the great blackout of summer 2003. New York City found itself under threat, full of grieving tourists and being tossed around as a political football. New Yorkers, increasingly accustomed to the city's gentrification and normalization, were shaken from their often cynical, anonymous existence. The result, contends Mitchell, was a sincere reconnection with the world, a pause button on irony that included the flowering of sexual possibility and fantasy. The blackout night was the epiphany for these explorations, when friendliness and frolic abounded.

The story focuses primarily on two couples, one straight and one gay, and how their lives intersect with a few semi-lost souls. The various players end up at a weekly salon called *Shortbus*, hosted by drag legend Justin Bond. Through Bond's eyes, they see the possibility of communing with like-minded folks about art, politics and, most importantly, sex. The characters' various disappointments and blockages find a salve in this unique and necessary clinic.

Shortbus, by the way, refers to the "special" school bus used for those outside the mainstream, from the physically challenged to the outrageously gifted. It is an apt title for a film that, in its very sincerity, stands vigil against all those who seek to exclude and demonize brave souls who dare to be different.

■ Noah Cowan

John Cameron Mitchell was born in El Paso. In the early nineties, he originated the OBIE Award-winning off-Broadway production "Hedwig and the Angry Inch," which later became his feature directorial debut. *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* received the best director and audience awards at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival and Mitchell received a Golden Globe nomination for his performance as the title character. Since then, he has directed music videos for Bright Eyes and Scissor Sisters and executive produced Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation*, which screened at the Festival in 2004. *Shortbus* (06) is his second feature.