

The Magic Hour

United Kingdom 2009
Certificate 15 60m 29s

It's tempting to say that the five short films making up *The Magic Hour* are not only made by disabled people but about them too. To do so would, however, be slightly misleading. For while the protagonists are admittedly all handicapped in some manner, it's the situations in which they find themselves – ranging from the bawdily comic to the bleakly tragic – that provide the films' real focus. Linked together by a hypnotic animation sequence and a helter-skelter score that calls to mind television's *Tales of the Unexpected*, several of the films skitter around the edge of the surreal: in *Paraphernalia*, for example, a dialysis machine comes to life; in *Hands Solo* a deaf porn star sends a woman into a orgasm-induced coma; *Buttermouth* creates an exotic, dystopian world of night within a Camberwell flat; and in *Follow Me on My Journey to Die*, an eminently recognisable and world-renowned YBA is offered the Turner Prize on condition that she commit suicide. Indeed, only *The Hunger House*, a period drama set in World War II, seems resolutely tied to this world, and even here one sees shades of Beckett in the fond bickering of its central pair Cornelius and Peter, homeless, jobless and endlessly roaming – until they are rounded up by the Nazis and packed off to a death camp.

There's enough evidence here to suspect some potentially strong talent at work. Animators Andrew Gibbs and John Williams build on their critically acclaimed first shorts to produce two tender evocations of dependence and protection. William Mager's *Hands Solo* is a solid if typically silly contribution to the great British mockumentary tradition, while

SYNOPSIS A compilation of five short stories by directors who have a disability.

In *Paraphernalia*, eight-year-old Atari detests the low-tech robot who follows him around, but comes to realise that without this robot – in fact his dialysis machine – he would die.

Mockumentary *Hands Solo* charts the rise and fall of the world's first deaf porn star, Hands (real name Vernon), who has sacrificed the love of his life for success. Realising that his agent and director have duped him, he retires from porn and is reunited with first love Jane.

Stop-motion animation *Buttermouth* sees Clara attempting to deceive her elderly mother about the extent to which her own eyesight is failing. When Clara has an accident, her mother finally realises the truth that her daughter has been protecting her from.

The Hunger House is a drama set in Germany in World War II. Cornelius, who has Down's syndrome, and his epileptic friend Peter are sent to a 'hospital' for medical testing. Cornelius is condemned to die, but the apparently 'healthy' Peter is granted a reprieve. However, he confesses his illness and is executed with his companion.

In *Follow Me on My Journey to Die*, Gem, a young artist who suffers from spinal muscular dystrophy, has turned her legal battle to end her own life into performance art. She is awarded the Turner Prize on condition that she does indeed die. Gem fakes her death and starts a new life in Barbados.

Katherine Arianello, both directing and starring in *Follow Me on My Journey to Die*, displays a subtle but caustic wit in ridiculing the condescending cultural cachet accorded to the disabled. As the oh-so-liberal Turner judges debate the nominations, a whiteboard in the background lists the various minorities they've previously handed the prize to (Asian, gay, transsexual), and a trio of model-perfect acolytes bemoan the "body fascism" that judges fat arms an unworthy reason for euthanasia.

It's *The Hunger House*, an amateur effort from the Void Mediabox Group, that's the standout work, however. The scripting may be weak in parts, the lead performance (from professional Jason Maza) rather stilted, but the cinematography is first-rate, offering up some truly indelible images. The muted sepia tones, the blistering photographer's flash that catalogues the death camp's future victims, the stark tableau of an upturned wheelchair in an otherwise empty courtyard – all contribute to an atmosphere not a million miles away from Michael Haneke's *The White Ribbon*.

➡ Catherine Wheatley



Robot helper: 'The Magic Hour'

CREDITS

Produced by
Justin Edgar

©104 films limited
Production Companies
UK Film Council and 104 films present in association with Studio of the North
Made with the support of the UK Film Council's New Cinema Fund
Executive Producers
Justin Edgar
Julia Caithness
Colin Pons
Title Designer
Sara Mitchell

PARAPHERNALIA

Directed by
John Williams
Produced by
Katie Mackin
Julie Murnaghan
Written by
John Williams
Director of Photography
Sam Goldie
Editor
Nigel Bunyan
Art Direction
Ben Cote
Lindy Anderson
Music
Anthony Telfer Brown
John Williams

Production Company
Passion Pictures Limited
Executive Producers
Hugo Sands
Camilla Deakin
Assistant Director
1st: Andrew Potter
Gaffer
Johann Cruickshank
Visual Effects Supervisor
Neil Riley
CG Supervisor
Jason Nicholas
Animation Crew
Robot Animation:
Conor Ryan
Modellers:
Mark Harper
Ian Brown
Concept Artist:
Andrew Peel
Costume Designer
Julie Murnaghan
Sound Design
Nick Baldock
Sound Recordist
Nick Gillet

CAST

Elijah Muhammad
Atari Withers

HANDS SOLO

Directed by
William Mager
Produced by
Colin Pons
Scott James Bassett
Written by
Charlie Swinbourne
Director of Photography
Stuart Bentley
Editor
Andy Jadavji
Production Designer
Suzie Davies
Music
Joe Hastings
Gary Moore

©Solo Productions Limited
Executive Producers
Justin Edgar
Julia Caithness
Development Producer
Michelle Eastwood
Production Manager
Matt Grimwood
Assistant Director
1st: Peter Nightingale
Casting
Urvashi Chand
Rohan Chand
Script Editor
Sarah Golding
Lighting Gaffer
Ben Fordesman
Animations
James Merry
Set Decorator
Kimberley Fahey
Costume Designer
Kate Rose Newbold
Make-up Designer
Florence Carter
Sound Recordist
Dylan Voight

CAST

Matt Kirby
Vernon, "Hands Solo"
Nicola Stapleton
Bunny
Ben Rufus Green
Dave
Chris Curran
Roger
Deepa Shastri
Jane
Nadia Cameron-Blakey
the scientist
Dominic Coleman
the reporter
Celeste Agulhas
nurse
Jennie Shotton
make-up artist
Sandy Foster
fan
Andrew Blackshire
Andy Stopford
Damien Largey
Daniel Rose

Chris Chan
Dave Wallace
Greg Keith
supporting artists

BUTTERMOUTH

Directed by
Andrew Gibbs
Written by
Andrew Gibbs
Art Director
Zosienka Gibbs
Music
Anthony Haenen

Executive Producers

Michelle Eastwood
Justin Edgar
Animators
Andy Biddle
Nadine Paterson
Model Maker/Set Construction
Amy Waitt
Louisiana Adelaide
Dan Ojari
Alex Hiett
David Gilbert
Phillip Clatworthy
Emma Fitzgerald
Zoe Coles
Jade Mortimer
Jennie Wood
Character Design
Badzia Coombes
Costume Design
Badzia Coombes
Camille Anna Roman
Sound Design
Neel D'wala
Sound Designer
Alex Joseph

CAST

Chizzy Akudolu
voice of Clara/mama

THE HUNGER HOUSE

Written/Produced/ Directed by
The Void Mediabox Group

©104 films
Made by
Andrew Cooke
Zac Nicholson
Mark Burgess
Vincent Watts
Oliver Rotchell
Justin Edgar
Janice Rider
Beth Lewis
Chris Cooke
Ruth Anna Hughes
Sean Lowe
Roger Bowles
Helen Smith
Chris Wanklyn
George Smith
Bobbie Smith
Kevin Lakin
Debbie Seeley
Derek McCulloch
John Ellis
Tom Beach
Matt Alder
Sophie Turner
Toby Spanton
Kaley Green
James Arnold
Alex Jaep
Lucy Williams
Laura Russon
Rob Dowling
Tiffany Barritt
Jane Barton
Mark Shelley
Jason Troughton
Big Button Media
Stephen Goldsmith

CAST

Scott Swadkins
Cornelius
Jason Maza
Peter
David Proud
Ernst
Liam Evans Ford
doctor

Karen Meagher
Nurse Bremen
Sophie Turner
nurse
Chris Cooke
hospital orderly
Kaley Green
girl
Laura Russon
girl 2
Michael Grisewood
Nazi
Bournville College
Forward 4 Work
patients

FOLLOW ME ON MY JOURNEY

Directed by
Katherine Arianello
Produced by
Justin Edgar
Written by
Katherine Arianello
Director of Photography
Alex Ryle
Editor
Phillip Arkinshall
Production Designer
Rachel Noel
Music
Phil Mountford

Line Producer
Elisabeth Pinto
Assistant Director
1st: Christine Luby
Script Supervisor/Continuity
Irene Maffei
Casting
Amanda Tabak
Script Editor
Celine Haddad
Visual Effects Supervisor
Huw Bowen
Hair/Make-up Artist
Laura Phipps
Sound Recordist
Oliver Rotchell
Re-recording Mixer
Vincent Watts

CAST

Katherine Arianello
Gern
Jenna Harrison
Matty
Claire Amias
Beatty
India Wadsworth
Vie
Rae Baker
lounge lady
Dan Ford
Jonathan
Richard Canham
BBC cameraman
Julian Bird
Turner chairman
Duncan Foster
Turner Prize panel member
Joan Arianello
panel member (non-speaking) 2
Hayley Campbell
panel member (non-speaking) 3
Alistair Arianello
panel member (non-speaking) 4
Amba Freestone
panel member (non-speaking) 5
Marja Commandeur
waitress
Sean Donaghey
airport passenger

In Colour

Distributor
104 films
5,443 ft +8 frames