

Humanity in focus at Tally Shorts Film Fest

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Tally Shorts Film Festival Director Carole Robards started her adventures in film as an extra set of hands. Working on set, she and her husband, Rich Robards, were part of a group of local filmmakers that included Wade Bishop, Mark Bauer, Carlos Miranda, Cole Johnson and Stephen Smith. They worked collaboratively on numerous independent film projects over the years, exposing Robards to a variety of filmmaking techniques.

Robards says the group all had a special affinity for short films in particular due to the ability to tell a story in a snapshot of time. As a founding member of the festival, she and the group established Tally Shorts — taking place Jan. 25 and 26 this year — in order to bring the film community together in the Panhandle.

“The goal behind our main annual event is to be able to bring a great variety of film to the Tallahassee audience that they wouldn’t have access to,” says Robards. “We love short films in particular because you get to see a huge array of genres, styles, stories and subject matters from different countries and cultures all over the world in one weekend.”

Film has always piqued Robards’ design and artistic interests. A self-professed child of the ‘80s, she grew up in a time before CGI and is still amazed by movies like “Labyrinth” that use all practical sets — just puppets, props, camera and lighting. Robards is spellbound by how the film stands test of time by crafting the finite details.

This attention to detail was part of her job as set decorator for local filmmaker Eduardo Miyar’s “Page Jumper.” Attending to the peripheral background aesthetics, she helped with prop design. Though her props were in vivid color, Robards loved seeing how the noir film



Participants in the Tally Shorts Film Festival at Challenger Center in 2017. PERRONE FORD / PTFPHOTO.COM

transported the set to a different time.

“Since it was filmed in black and white, there was a stark difference between what I knew to be in the room and seeing what actually showed on the screen,” says Robards. “We’re in the room and it’s live, it’s color, and then when it comes on-screen it actually looks like it was made decades ago.”

Robards prefers behind-the-scenes work. She considers herself a “nuts and bolts” person, asking questions and helping to facilitate an artistic vision. It’s this determination that makes her successful in the role of director for the Tally Shorts Film Festival. She likens the festival to the filmmaking process — even if something goes awry, you must be patient and flexible and come up with a creative solution

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Carole Robards, Tally Shorts Film Festival Director

on the fly.

Another major part of the festival is cultivating relationships. This fall they partnered with the Southern Shakespeare Festival and hosted Marc Singer for a showing of “Beastmaster.” Robards hopes to continue involving other local organizations to both support and promote the arts in Tallahassee no matter the medium. This is the mindset at the heart of the festival’s mission.

“I’m a firm believer that unless you’re getting paid for it or getting personal fulfillment from it, you’ll be hard pressed to put energy into it,” says Robards. “I’ve done the festival because I enjoy the people, the audience and the filmmakers. We also have such a great core group of volunteers that support and believe in the festival.”

Screening 14.5 hours of film between Friday and Saturday, Robards says

masters of ceremonies will introduce each of the film blocks to audiences. Some filmmakers will conduct Q&As during those times as well with screenings at Challenger Learning Center and Sittig Hall.

Robards is excited that of the 297 submissions from 24 different countries, there will be 86 domestic and international films shown at this year’s festival.

Parties will take place on both nights, the kickoff will be held at Waterworks on Friday night and Saturday night’s awards party will be at Aura Restaurant and Bar. As filmmakers, Robards says that of the film festivals they attended, she appreciated the ones that made an effort to welcome the filmmakers. Thus, hospitality became a pillar of Tally Shorts to make a space for film-

If you go

What: Tally Shorts Film Festival

When: 4-11 p.m. Friday, Jan. 25, and 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Saturday January 26th

Where: Challenger Learning Center of Tallahassee, 200 S. Duval St.

Cost: \$20 adults, \$18 students/seniors

Contact: For more information, visit <https://tallyshorts.com/>.

makers to meet and greet with each other as well as the audience.

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Even as the festival enters its seventh year with nearly 2,000 films shown, Robards is continually surprised by the variety short films provide. There are many stories to be told, and she attests to the power of seeing, hearing and feeling stories from people from all cultures and walks of life.

“Films are as unique as humans are,” says Robards. “At the end of the day it’s all just an undercurrent of humanity.”

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area’s umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).

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