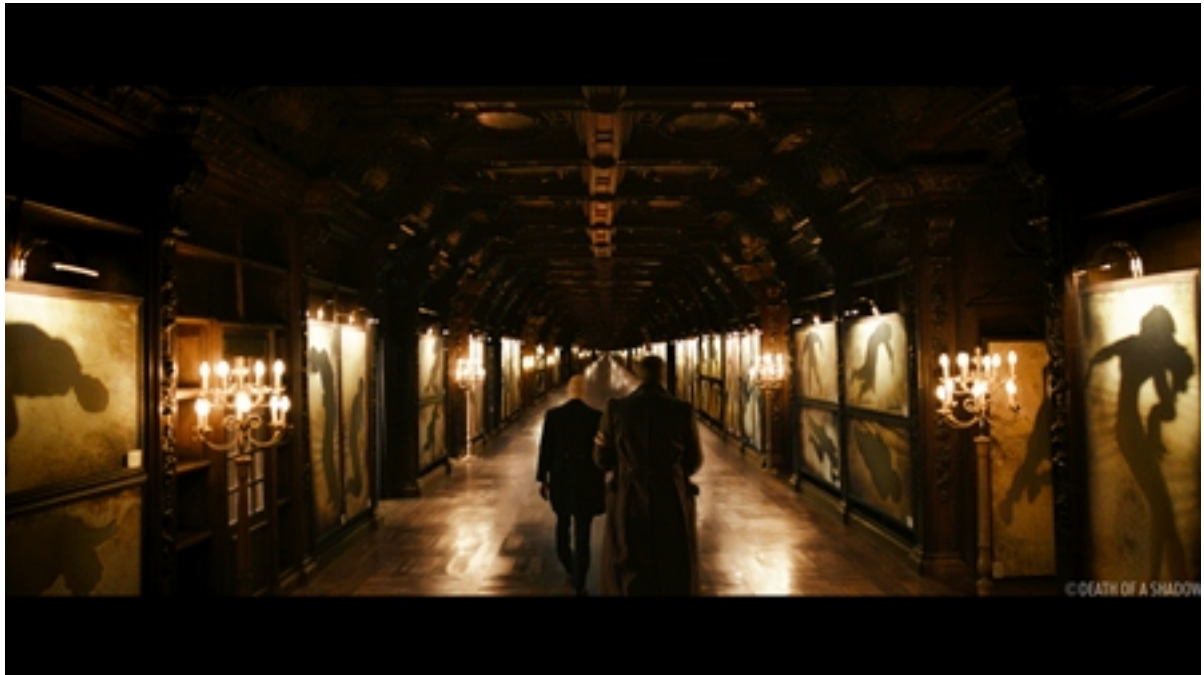


Film Feature: Ranking the '2013 Oscar-Nominated Live-Action Shorts'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) on February 1, 2013 - 2:49pm.

CHICAGO – Want a leg-up in your Oscar pool? The five short films nominated for the Academy Award for “Best Live-Action Short” are now playing at the Landmark Century Theatre in a special presentation. The program runs 114 minutes and we have mini-reviews of all five below, ranked in the order we’d like to see them win the Oscar.



Death of a Shadow

Photo credit: Shorts International

"Death of a Shadow"

Matthias Schoenaerts (“Bullhead,” “Rust & Bone”) plays an afterlife photographer. He is imprisoned in his own shadow and given a deal by a Grim Reaper-esque character that if he can capture 10,000 souls by photographing them at the instant of their death than he will be returned to the real world and to his love Sarah. Easily the most inventive and unexpected of all ten of the nominated fictional shorts (live-action and animated), “Shadow” is a beautiful meditation on sacrifice, loss, and the impossible. A great central performance anchors a piece so memorable and unique that it makes the program worth seeing on its own. Luckily, it’s not the only great nominated live-action short this year as I also love...



Curfew

Photo credit: Shorts International

"Curfew"

It's a testament to the true ingenuity of "Shadow" that I have to place this amazing piece of work in the 2nd place. I'd be happy if either won the big award. Tonally ingenious, "Curfew" opens with a young man in a bathtub with recently-slit wrists. His sister calls and berates him into babysitting for his niece. He agrees. The two spend a night together and it doesn't go the manipulative, expected places, finding time for a dance number in a bowling alley that is one of my favorite scenes of the year in any film and a truly powerful ending. It's just likable and incredibly memorable.



Asad

Photo credit: Shorts International

“Asad”

Too many Oscar-nominated films center on children in jeopardy but there is an honesty to this Somali piece that’s often missing from films like it. The tale of a war-torn fishing village in Somalia and the child caught between growing up too soon and a gentle fisherman trying to keep him from it has beautiful cinematography and organic performances. It doesn’t feel heavy-handed like it easily could have and I think that’s because of the honesty brought to it by an entire cast made up of Somalia refugees. Ultimately, it feels a little less creative than my top two but it’s a sweet tale and you won’t be disappointed.



Buzkashi Boys

Photo credit: Shorts International

“Buzkashi Boys”

Two Afghan street kids, one whose dad is a blacksmith, want to be Buzkashi riders, competitors in a popular local game that takes place on horseback. Easily the longest of the program, this one is a bit too slow and repetitive, but the kids give honest performances. I just wish it was half as long as it hits too many of the same beats over and over again.



Henry

Photo credit: Shorts International

"Henry"

Perhaps it is because this is the year of "Amour" but I found this piece about an older man who is dealing with severe dementia and unaware that his wife is dead to be a bit dishonest and manipulative. I will say that it's well-shot (it looks great) and the central performance is strong but we've seen this kind of thing before with a better script.