

# FILMSCHOOLREJECTS

## DVD Review: Wholphin 10

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The short film is an art form that never seems to get its due. Currently their only public forums are [film festivals](#) where they play to tens of people, win prestigious awards, and then disappear into the ether. Traditional media outlets responsible for the films and television shows we engorge upon on an hourly basis don't know what to do with short pieces that fail to fit into a mandated length or familiar mold. How exactly do you market a five minute piece of performance art from Dennis Hopper? What do you do with a thirteen minute Spike Jonze documentary about Al Gore? Where do you stick a seven minute animated documentary about sex addiction?

It took the crazy and brilliant minds behind McSweeney's Quarterly Concern to find an accessible and creative home for these lost gems. They call it Wholphin (of course they do) and you can find it on magazine stands and in bookstores across the country. It's roughly the size of a trade paperback or traditional DVD case and features the disc as well as a booklet with information and interviews with the various filmmakers. But, what's a Wholphin you ask? I'll let them describe exactly what it is...

“ a quarterly DVD magazine from McSweeney's, lovingly encoded with unique and ponderable [films](#) designed to make you feel the way we felt when we learned that dolphins and whales sometimes, you know, do it. What, you may ask, is a Wholphin?! Photographic evidence can be found languishing in the nooks and crannies of the internet, but those too busy to visit Google for the 28th time today can trust us that it's the lovechild of a bottlenose dolphin and a false killer whale. A beautiful hybrid born of invention and exploration.”

They've published nine issues so far which have included unknown and homeless shorts from talented people like David O. Russell, Alexander Payne, Steven Soderbergh, Nash Edgerton, [Gus Van Sant](#), Nacho Vigalondo, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, and more. The shorts can be narrative, experimental, animated, documentary, music, comedy, etc. with the only requirement being... while I don't think there is a requirement actually. Which is kind of the point...

Issue #10 is already in the hands of subscribers and should be hitting store shelves this month. This issue features eleven shorts and includes work from two big names and several lesser known artists. Seven of the pieces are available via the menu, and four of them are the menus... four different [video](#) backgrounds on the menu that if left untouched see the text disappear and the video plays out in full. All four are dialogue-free and if nothing else act as visually appealing screen savers while you fix yourself a drink. As with any anthology or collection the quality of the shorts varies, but I'm happy to say this issue leans towards the solidly entertaining side of things.

- **An Audience of One** by Michael Jacobs (37:00) - This is a documentary excerpt about a San Francisco pastor named Richard Gazowsky who has a vision from God telling him to make the greatest [movie](#) ever made. As we all know by now James Cameron received the same memo, but I guarantee you the making-of behind Gazowsky's effort is infinitely more entertaining. He describes his impending classic as *Star Wars* meets *The Ten Commandments*, gathers up the savings of his entire congregation, and proceeds to shoot two scenes over three years. My favorite quote from the divinely inspired director to his less than convinced crew? "What if there's a Paris cafe in ancient times, so it's like an ancient cappuccino shop... like a Starbucks, this futuristic, ancient Starbucks."

- **I Love Sarah Jane** by Spencer Susser (14:00) - This Australian short combines youthful nostalgia, first love, and a zombie apocalypse. Awesome, I know. A group of unsupervised children keep themselves entertained with watching news reports, scavenging, and bow and arrow play. It stars Mia Wasikowska, soon to be seen in Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*, and comes from the director of the hotly anticipated [Sundance](#) flick *Hesher*. Susser shows a strong eye for visuals and dark comedy and marks himself as a director to watch.

- **He Was Once** by Mary Hestand (16:00) - I'll be honest and admit that when I first started watching this dark and creepy spoof of *Davey & Goliath* I was not a fan. It's done with live actors in odd costumes and makeup and shot slightly off-speed to give it a herky-jerky look, and I was put off by the overall feel. But as it went on I found myself mesmerized and disturbed in equal measure... spankings, lies, canine abuse, and urban bears all make appearances here. It's creepily fascinating to watch once you're accustomed to the style.

- **Teleglobal Dreamin** by Eric Flanagan (18:00) - An unemployed actor takes a gig teaching workers in a Filipino call center in this short that goes in an entirely different direction from what you'd expect. One of the girls takes him out for a tour of the city including drinks, karaoke, and cock fighting, and things take an interesting turn. Oh, and Brendan Fraser should never go to the Philippines.



- ***The Astronomer's Dream*** by Malcolm Sutherland (9:30) - Your mileage may vary here, but this animated short about I-don't-know-what lost me in the first minute. It's a bit too abstract-looking for my tastes I guess, but I'm also not a huge animation fan in general.

- ***Eve*** by Natalie Portman (21:00) - Portman makes her directorial debut here with a short character piece starring Lauren Bacall, Olivia Thirlby, and Ben Gazzara. More about relationships and interactions than an actual plot, Portman's short is a slice of life about a young woman who visits her grandmother but ends up as a third wheel on the older woman's date with a persistent suitor. Fantastic acting and writing reveal deep emotional layers while Portman's sharp direction lets us fill in the unanswered questions. This works perfectly as a short, but I can easily see a feature-length [film](#) that explores the relationships even further.

- ***Joe and Linda Flooded Out of Holy Cross*** by Jonathan Demme (22:00) - This documentary from Academy Award winner Demme looks at the 9th Ward in New Orleans one year after Hurricane Katrina. It's the short with the highest pedigree, but it's also one of two weakest on the disc. Katrina was (and still is) a tragedy of epic proportions, but this peek at a couple of the storm's victims fails to tell us anything new or captivate us with their story. Joe talks about how bad things are, and Linda cleans the house. Her occasional contributions about her concerns for Joe come closest to being affecting, but overall the piece just plods along. I know... I'm a heartless bastard.

Issue #10 is another solid installment in the Wholphin series and is well worth a watch. It's front-loaded with the best bits at the beginning and while not every short succeeds to the same degree, there's definitely something for every taste and interest here. Check out the [McSweeney's Store](#) for more info (or to order a copy if you're a shut-in afraid of venturing out to your local Borders). The issues are \$19.95 each, but you can get a four-issue subscription for \$50 which is a damn fine deal people!

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