

**PITTSBURGH
PLAYHOUSE**
POINT PARK UNIVERSITY



SEPTEMBER 11-12

STEEL CITY EMERGING FILM FESTIVAL

Executive Producer

Kiesha Lalama

PPU Film and Animation Department Chair

Andrew Halasz

Festival Coordinator

Mary Ann McBride

Festival Organizers

Carly Thompson

Mary Ann McBride

Andrew Halasz

Festival Logo Designer

Beth Pedone

Pittsburgh Playhouse Administrative Staff

KIESHA LALAMA.....EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
TED WATTS JR.....MANAGING DIRECTOR, PRODUCTION AND DAILY OPERATIONS
SHARON GOLDSTEIN.....MANAGING DIRECTOR, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
JAMES MANNING.....BUSINESS OPERATIONS & COMMUNITY RELATIONS MANAGER
JESSE VAN SWOL.....PRODUCTION & COMPANY MANAGER
CARLY THOMPSON.....EVENTS MANAGER
LUKE BRAHLER.....MARKETING MANAGER
DENNIS NOVAK.....BOX OFFICE MANAGER
ALEX BOYD.....PATRON SERVICES MANAGER
EMILY SAVINO.....DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
BRENDAN PAVLICK.....EVENTS COORDINATOR
BRITTANY MARTIN.....BOX OFFICE ASSISTANT

Pittsburgh Playhouse Production Staff

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MAGGIE CROCKARELL*.....	SCENE SHOP SUPERVISOR	CLARA RIMES*.....	ASSISTANT SCENIC CHARGE
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RANDALL EXTON*.....	CUTTER/DRAPER	WILLIAM "BUZZ" MILLER*.....	THEATRICAL AV/IT SUPERVISOR

*EMPLOYEES AT THE PITTSBURGH PLAYHOUSE ARE REPRESENTED THE
INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF THEATRE STAGE EMPLOYEES (IATSE)

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

FEATURE FILM

The Twelve

Dir. Michael Day | 1:35:00

The Twelve is a satirical, character-driven comedy that turns courtroom drama on its head, serving sharp dialogue, unfiltered opinions, and twelve very different takes on justice.

Additional Credits: Dean Fisher Jr., Jourdan Henderson, Lisa Schurga, and Kevin Kauffman

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

**NARRATIVE: SUSPENSE, CONTROL &
ALTERNATE REALTIES**

Jeremy (An SCP Universe Film)

Dir. Nico Gonzalez-Rychener | 0:06:52
Magic Hour Creative

Will's new job as a janitor at an old SCP site might be a bit more than he bargained for...

Additional Credits: Luke Kuntz (Writer, Camera Operator and Editor), Nico Gonzalez-Rychener (Editor), Basil Lee (Camera Operator), and Codey Zimmerman (Sound Designer)

Temporal Casino

Dir. Cohen Walter Crossley | 0:02:14
Winchester Thurston School

A reckless blackjack player travels back in time after losing it all in this short film.

Additional Credit: Cohen Walter Crossley (Writer, Producer and Music)

The Algorithm

Dir. Suede Shepard | 0:06:47
Grandin Theatre Film Lab

A teenage boy does increasingly more invasive acts in an effort to grow his social media following.

Additional Credits: Suede Shepard (Writer and Editor), Reece Brown (Producer), Chase Hunter (Director of Photography), Eve Foster (Production Designer), and Marcus Highpipe Smith (Sound Mixer)

Drop the Plot

Dir. Abigail Boothe | 0:09:59
Grandin Theatre Film Lab

A narrator who's tired of not receiving the spotlight struggles to figure out what type of movie his protagonist is in.

Additional Credits: Abigail Boothe (Writer), Nathan Meza (Producer), Desmond Garnett (Director of Photography), Lilly Dunn (Editor), and Syl Meador (Sound Mixer)

Meet Cute

Dir. Penelope Simmons | 0:09:20
Grandin Theatre Film Lab

A young man has a connection with a girl he meets in a coffee shop, but it turns out they have very different perspectives of the same event.

Additional Credits: Kenton Walters (Producer), Marcus Belgarde (Director of Photography), Alena Myers (Editor), and Elijah Haynes (Sound Mixer)

The Stand-In

Dir. Kody Hinnant and Ben Sowden | 0:08:57
Grandin Theatre Film Lab

A wannabe actor who can't seem to land any roles finally nabs a high-paying gig when he's asked to portray the co-worker of a dead man at his funeral.

Additional Credits: Kody Hinnant (Writer and Producer), Abbigail Clinton (Director of Photography), Cheyenne Howerly (Editor), and Kasimir Atkinson (Sound Mixer)

Precipice

Dir. Jayden Greening and Rocco Comer-Romeo
0:06:30
Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12

A reckless group of teens on the run from the ever approaching future engage in a downward spiral of drug abuse, violence, and existentialism.

Additional Credits: Jayden Greening (Writer), Rocco Comer-Romeo (Writer), Connor Parente (Writer), Evelyn Wawrzyniak (Writer), and Greta Raulerson (Writer)

ANIMATION

Wizard Sting

Dir. Kylie Fitzgerald | 0:04:16
PennWest Edinboro

The knights of a local kingdom have received word that some wizards are planning to deal illegal spell materials, and plan to stop them with whatever they deem necessary.

Le Wizard

Dir. Amelia Doughty | 0:00:43
Pine-Richland High School

Stop motion animation.

Additional Credit: Amelia Doughty (Writer)

Water on the Mind

Dir. Amelia Doughty and Piper Brooks | 0:02:05
Pine-Richland High School

Stop motion documentary of how water impacts the human mind and body.

Additional Credits: Piper Brooks (Writer) and Amelia Doughty (Writer)

What a View!

Dir. Madison Began | 0:00:31
Pine-Richland High School

Digital animation.

Additional Credit: Madison Began (Writer)

Bad Dog!

Dir. Kaylee Sue and Elizabeth Gabalski | 0:04:43
SUNY Fredonia

Jack is a Pitbull mix from Cardiff Wales. With the "Banned Dog Act" being lifted he moved to Birmingham to figure himself out in the big world and find a well-paying job. However he quickly found out that people are still not all that kind to certain breeds of animals. While he struggles to adjust to this backlash and lack of money, he goes to the pub to think. This is where he makes a new best friend, Max! Who recruits Jack into his group, with this chaos and robberies ensue.

In the end, he becomes the "Bad Dog" we all know to come and love, but will he realize what he is doing is wrong?

Ceci C'est Moi

Dir. Amelia Doughty | 0:01:15
Pine-Richland High School

In this 2D stop motion film, a young woman struggles to find herself in the midst of everything, yet finds comfort in her individuality.

One Step Closer

Dir. Angel Ricardo Parada-Viera | 0:02:58
Berwick Area Senior High School

A short romantic comedy animation about two individuals at a train station on Valentine's Day.

***Additional Credit:* Angel Ricardo Parada-Viera (Writer and Producer)**

NARRATIVE: SECRETS, SURVIVAL & ISOLATION

Another Shot

Dir. Nolan DuBois | 0:08:00
University of Pittsburgh

A young man at a costume party, Mark, actively avoids an ex-partner, Rachel, who doesn't recognize him beneath his mask. As Mark evades her throughout the night, glimpses of their past begin to reveal the nature of their connection and relationship. Eventually, Rachel corners him, forcing him to remove the mask.

Additional Credits: Nolan DuBois (Writer), Max Christopher (Producer), Nate Drew (Director of Photography and Editor), Adam Snook (Production Designer), Alec Cassidy (Composer), Lucas Sherman (Composer), and Ethan Crosby (Composer)

Remember When

Dir. Mayangela Speicher | 0:05:25
Point Park University

A year after graduating high school, two friends meet at a park to watch the sunset. Valerie is in college and Jackie decides to stay back. When they reunite, perspectives clash as Jackie lingers in the past and Valerie wants to move on. They were best friends in grade school who did everything together, but now everything has changed. They try to reconnect but fail to do so due to their difference in pursuits. Deep down in their hearts, they realize their friendship will not be the same, but eventually they will be able to find common ground.

Additional Credits: Zoe Ross (Writer), Mayangela Speicher (Writer and Producer), Katie Sullivan (Sound Designer), and AmiRae Lehr (Editor)

You Need It, We Have It

Dir. Casey Kopetchny | 0:04:56

Point Park University

When a recluse is plagued by an eerie sitcom, she becomes obsessed with buying products from an infomercial.

***Additional Credits:* Casey Kopetchny (Writer and Producer) and Jacob Gaertner (Editor)**

Sticky Twisty

Dir. Chase Hunter | 0:05:39

Grandin Theatre Film Lab

During their regular game night, a group of friends find out why a bizarrely slimy body contortion game is a sticky subject for one of them.

***Additional Credits:* Michael Thorell (Writer), Reece Brown (Producer), Suede Shepard (Cinematographer), Marcus Highpipe Smith (Sound Mixer), and Eve Foster (Production Designer)**

Forest of the Marauder

Dir. Dennis J. Thompson | 0:15:00

Point Park University

A big game hunter looking for glory sets out with a hunting party to hunt down a mysterious creature. One by one members of the party start disappearing until only 2 remain. Consumed by his obsession the hunter betrays his friend in the hopes of getting the ultimate prize.

***Additional Credits:* Dennis J. Thompson (Writer) and Charles J. McDonald (Producer)**

Figment

Dir. Zackary Casto | 0:03:10

North Hills High School

A short horror film based on the price of drug abuse.

***Additional Credit:* Zackary Casto (Writer and Producer)**

You Will Die

Dir. Jupiter Chapman | 0:09:10

Grandin Theatre Film Lab

A father with a not-so-terminal illness struggles to reconnect with his adult daughter.

***Additional Credits:* Jupiter Chapman (Writer and Sound Designer), Michael Thorell (Producer and Sound Designer), and Griffin Shaver (Director of Photography)**

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT NARRATIVES

Whispers of the Untainted

Dir. Athena Tomsic | 0:03:16

Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School

An alienated factory worker finds inspiration in nature, and a mysterious woman.

Solitaire

Dir. Ella Kurschinske | 0:02:46

Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School

A fauvist film about the deep connection between a couple.

***Additional Credit:* Ella Kurschinske (Writer and Producer)**

Spotlight

Dir. Austin Ocrah | 0:04:00
Seneca Valley Senior High School

A boy learns what it's like to fail.

***Additional Credit:* Austin Ocrah (Writer and Producer)**

PEST

Dir. Ella Kurschinske | 0:05:28
Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School

Loneliness is a parasite, an isolated boy is infested
with bugs.

***Additional Credits:* Lincoln Gaines (Writer), Adrien Emler (Writer),
Demarion Martin (Writer), and Ivy Smith (Writer and Producer)**

Friends Inside

Dir. Audrey Wakeley | 0:05:19
Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School

Ajax begins to tear themselves apart to fit in, as they
begin to hallucinate things that aren't there.

***Additional Credit:* Audrey Wakeley (Producer)**

Dreamers Wish to Seek

Dir. Aero Rea | 0:07:35
Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School

After coming across a commercial for a doctor's
clinic promising he can make any dream come true
in one visit, different patients stop in hoping to turn
these dreams to reality.

***Additional Credit:* Aero Rea (Writer and Producer)**

Andromeda

Dir. Baylor Brooks | 0:15:00

Point Park University

After her mother's funeral Janie, a young woman, is visited by a teenage version of her mother, Allison, that same night.

Additional Credits: Baylor Brooks (Writer and Producer), Jack Ruzanic (Producer and Director of Photography), Anna Segar (Editor), and Dylan Mays (Production Designer)

Emmileen and Her Best Friends' Perfect, Awesome, Epic Senior Trip

Dir. Talya Pashuta | 0:08:18

Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School

Before her best friends head off to college and she never sees them again, Emmileen plans the greatest senior trip ever, with all this pressure she is putting on herself to make it perfect, what could possibly go wrong?

Additional Credits: Ivy Smith (Writer and Producer), Quinn Crawford (Writer), and Adrien Emler (Writer)

DOCUMENTARY

Manes of Earth

Dir. Ella Kurschinske | 0:06:59

Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School

Retired and rescue horses help connect victims of trauma to nature as a type of therapy.

***Additional Credits:* Sydney Davis (Director of Photography) and Lincoln Gaines (Audio)**

Do Your Part

Dir. 7th and 8th Grade Students | 0:03:37

Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School

As middle school students, we can do our part to protect the environment.

Beaver County Steel: Roots and Resilience

Dir. Talya Pashuta | 0:06:46

Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School

Beaver County has a rich history of industry that has impacted the community in many ways, not all of them positive. This history can serve as a cautionary tale, as we attempt to prevent a backslide into the mistakes of the past.

***Additional Credits:* Layne Burchett (Director of Photography) and Sydney Davis (Camera Operator)**

Underground Pittsburgh

Dir. Madison Began and Amelia Doughty | 0:07:45
Pine-Richland High School

A documentary about some of the underground music venues in the city of Pittsburgh, PA.

Additional Credits: Madison Began (Writer) and Amelia Doughty (Writer)

Western PA Paranormal

Dir. Audra Farrar and Piper Brooks | 0:07:35
Pine-Richland High School

A documentary about paranormal stories in and around Western Pennsylvania.

Additional Credits: Audra Farrar (Writer) and Piper Brooks (Writer)

What Is the Most Important Resource on This Planet?

Dir. Madison Began and Audra Farrar | 0:2:02
Pine-Richland High School

A documentary about the importance of fresh water for the planet.

Additional Credits: Madison Farrar (Writer) and Audra Farrar (Writer)

Pine-Richland GSA

Dir. Audra Farrar | 0:01:31
Pine-Richland High School

A news package about Pine-Richland High School's GSA club.

Additional Credit: Audra Farrar (Writer)

Found Self

Dir. Catherine Grace Maher | 0:06:17
Grove City College

Found Self is a personal documentary about identity, solitude, and the quiet growth that comes from stepping into the unknown. Through the lens of a study abroad experience, it explores the parts of travel that don't make it to Instagram and reminds us that sometimes, finding yourself means remembering who you've always been.

***Additional Credit:* Catherine Grace Maher (Writer and Producer)**

Visiting Uncle Paul

Dir. Luke J. McDonough | 0:09:16
New York University

A documentary short film about my uncle, Brother Paul McMullen of the Franciscan Friars of the Third Order Regular. I wanted to capture the essence of his life as a Franciscan, displaying a unique way of living that very few people understand, but I also had a lot of fun framing it around the fact that my family and I were just visiting our relative, giving it a more fun and personal feeling.

***Additional Credits:* Denise Letcher (Producer), Joseph McDonough (Producer), Richard Kelly (Key Grip), Richard Kelly (Assistant Camera Operator), and Constantin Strother (Production Assistant and BTS Videographer)**

NARRATIVE: ILLUSION, IDENTITY & CONNECTION

Conceptuality

Dir. Makenzie Alice Closson | 0:04:08
Point Park University

A conversation on a rooftop between two people where one is driven by emotion, and the other is driven by logic.

Additional Credits: Mackenzie Alice Closson (Writer and Producer), Jacob Gaertner (Boom Operator), and Casey Kopetchney (Cinematographer)

Dream a Little Dream of Me

Dir. Amelia Doughty and Piper Brooks | 0:01:35
Pine-Richland High School

A girl finds her dreams haunted by a strange figure that resembles a fish, but her dreams soon to blend into reality.

Doll Parts

Dir. Lauryn Priester | 0:13:55
Hofstra University

When Magnolia becomes entranced by a make-up infomercial, her bottled up jealousy towards her friend, Florence, comes flowing out in a mix of arguing, hallucinating, and creating.

Additional Credits: Lauryn Priester (Writer) and Emily Pantell (Producer)

Manikin

Dir. Luc Gilchrist | 0:06:00
Ohio University

Lola, a woman consumed by loneliness after losing everyone in her life, finds solace in reliving Christmas morning every day with her mannequin son, Leo. Trapped in a cycle of nostalgia and grief, Lola clings to the illusion of a perfect family moment, even as reality slips further away.

Additional Credits: Luc Gilchrist (Writer and Producer) and Stacey Pindell (Director of Photography)

Reunion

Dir. Roman D'Antonio | 0:03:29
Point Park University

Two strangers with mutual feelings for each other both discover they share an unexpected childhood connection.

Additional Credits: Roman D'Antonio (Writer and Producer) and Joseph D'Antonio (Producer)

ROACH!

Dir. Christian Wege | 0:11:50
Point Park University

Married couple Arthur and Tori are preparing for a house visit as part of their adoption application, but chaos ensues when Arthur sees their chances threatened by an unwelcome guest — a creepy, crawly COCKROACH.

Additional Credits: Christian Wege (Writer) and Madison Kurtz (Producer)

Stereomyths

Dir. Gracie McEwan | 0:08:34
Point Park University

Additional Credits: Lucas Weber (Writer) and Landen Laskoski (Producer)

2026 Steel City Emerging Film Festival Judges



PJ GAYNARD is a multi-talented award winning filmmaker with over thirty years of experience. He runs Goat Milk Fudge Productions and the Nonprofit Pittsburgh Shot which includes The Pittsburgh Crew Connect, the Pittsburgh 48 Hour Film Project, and the Filmmaker Flea Market. He has a BFA in Film, Video, and Animation from RIT and an MA in Humanities/Humanistic Studies from CalState Northridge. He co-created the CCAC Film Technician Program and taught courses there from 2016-2020.

Learn more:

<https://www.goatmilkfudgeproductions.com/>

<https://www.pittsburghshot.org>



CAROLINE COLLINS is an actor, writer, producer, and director. She has appeared in film and television roles for NBC Universal, Showtime, Apple TV+, and others. Caroline has written, directed, and produced award-winning short films and television pilots. She is vice president of the board of Carnegie Screenwriters, a member of the board of the Pittsburgh Shot Initiative, and a member of Women in Film and Media Pittsburgh. Caroline also previously served as Associate Director of Film Pittsburgh, a film-presenting nonprofit.

2026 Steel City Emerging Film Festival Judges



MINETTE SEATE is an Executive Producer at WQED Pittsburgh. Throughout her career Minette has produced, written, and hosted dozens of television talk shows and documentaries including *Black Horizons*, the country's longest-running minority affairs talk show. Minette is a multiple Mid-Atlantic Emmy Award winner and was the host and producer of the independent film series "Filmmakers Corner" for fifteen seasons. Her numerous short and long form documentaries have focused on arts, culture and community with an emphasis on Pittsburgh's African American history. She is a proud product and supporter of Pittsburgh's arts and media community and a member of the Pittsburgh Black Media Federation.



STEVE JACKS is a Visual Effects Editor whose credits include *The Mandalorian and Grogu*, *Ahsoka*, and the Academy Award-winning *I, Tonya*. A 2006 graduate of Point Park University's Cinema & Digital Arts program, Steve got his start as a post-production PA on M. Night Shyamalan's *The Happening* and rose through the ranks of assistant editing before carving out a career in visual effects editorial, where he's led the department on *The Mandalorian* since 2019.

*Thanks to our Steel City Emerging Film Festival
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