

# 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 Large**  
**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 Arkinstant  
**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