

YELLOW

A MUSICAL FILM CONCERNING THE ADVENTURES OF
A YOUNG COUPLE IN LOVE, SEX AND UNDERSTANDING...

press kit
october, 2006

NICK PETERSON
CAMERA AND DIRECTION

ERIC SCHOPMEYER
MUSIC AND LYRICS

MARY DEFRESE
PRODUCTION AND ART DIRECTION

SHOT ON AN **eclair** EDITED ON A **STEENBECK**

"Nick Peterson is one of the best young filmmakers I have come across in a long time. His unity of vision is rare and gives me hope for the next generation of American filmmakers."

Gus Van Sant

featuring

ERIC SCHOPMEYER

NORA RYAN

NICO IZAMBARD

HANNAH PHELPS

JAMIE CURRIER

NICOLE SANGSUREE

CHRIS GRAHAM

*plus
special guests*



www.sampofilms.com/films

yellow

Description From Northwest Film Forum's Local Sightings Program:

The collaboration of filmmaker Nick Peterson and musician Eric Schopmeyer, "yellow" combines the sensibilities of Ernst Lubitsch's Hollywood musicals of the 1930s and the restrained photographic sense of Yasujiro Ozu to create a unique modern musical exploring the complexities of love, sex and relationships. The story follows cynical Natalie (Nora Ryan) and her interactions with new boyfriend Matt (Eric Schopmeyer) and best friend Christian (Nico Izambard). The clever original songs never upstage the film, but rather serve as integral parts of the story. Amazingly, they were recorded live on the set with the musicians accompanying off camera, lending a naturalness to the performances and transitions. Shot and edited completely on film, "yellow's" daring artistic approach makes the indie musical one of the most original features to come out of Portland in recent years.

5 Reels (97 minutes), Super 16mm; April, 2006

Nick Peterson (Camera + Direction)

Nick Peterson is a filmmaker living in Portland, Oregon whose short works have won several "Best Of" awards and played at such festival as the NW Film and Video Festival, Ann Arbor, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Film Festival and Bumbershoot 1-Reel. Often characterized for their uniqueness and ambition to challenge common narrative trends, his films have garnered critical praise from filmmakers such as James Benning and Gus Van Sant. He has twice been nominated for the Rockefeller Media Arts Fellowship in 2004 and 2005.

[Nick Peterson] is one of the best young filmmakers I have come across in a long time. His unity of vision is rare and gives me hope for the next generation of American filmmakers.

Gus Van Sant

Films: **contingent** (26 minutes/2004), **Split Pea Soup** (4 minutes/2004), **Dog Breath, in the Year of the Plague** (12 minutes/ 2004), **webern tests** (5 minutes/2003), **three** (13 minutes/2003), **two** (10 minutes/2003), **one** (10 minutes/2002)

Eric Schopmeyer (Music + Star)

Originally from the Washington DC area, musician and composer Eric Schopmeyer has lived in Portland since 1994. With a BA in music and an MEd from Portland State, in 1999 he began teaching music at Marysville Elementary where he is co-founder and director of the Highly Successful Marysville Marimba Band program.

As a member of local filmmaking trio Archipelago, Schopmeyer has co-directed, edited and composed music for 3 short feature documentaries: **Honky Tonk Dirt** (2000), **A Thing of Wonder** (2002), which received the Oregon Arts Commission Media Arts Fellowship and **The Beautiful and the Fine** (2004).

Over the past several years Schopmeyer has done scoring and sound design work for numerous film projects including contributions to the soundtrack for a feature film that premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2003 and an upcoming PBS documentary series. He has composed original music for several films by Nick Peterson, including **Contingent** (2004).

also on DVD:

musical offering (april, 2006)

Short film inspired by Anton Webern's famed 1935 arrangement of a fugue for 6 voices from Bach's Musical Offering. Comprised of a succession of horizontal tracking shots which are intended to mimic Webern's acute mapping of different instruments to the same melody lines. All the filming was done on a portable 6-foot dolly system, which was constructed specifically for the film, and allowed Peterson to film by himself in virtually any terrain. Made in the summer of 2005 on short ends left over from the production of his short "**Contingent**."

7 ½ minutes, Super 16mm; April, 2006

frenesi (april, 2006)

Concept ripped-off from Ernie Kovacs. Music by Esquivel. Entire film made day of "**yellow**" premiere: shot and edited in less than 10 hours.

2 ½ minutes, DV; April, 2006

nick peterson
camera and direction

"yellow" filmmakers

eric schopmeyer
music and lyrics

mary defreeze
art direction and production

players

eric schopmeyer
nora ryan
nico izambard
hannah phelps
chris graham

amy rose
lee parten
lin sorensen

intro
john meindersee
peter bauer
mike wilder
bill leverette
kasey wagoner

party

jaime currier
nicole sangsuree
thomas phillipson
sarah campbell

library

cathy leverette
rob tyler
andrew hamilton

also

ady leverette
jake parten
sean stevens
andy blubaugh

office

marzipan
eugene valjean
mark schopmeyer

se house

elizabeth corazon
nikolai petrovsky
jin lee
redd moon
shanny shimbleshanks

and

vladimir (as herself)

music ensemble

lars campbell
trombone/ensemble leader

jean-paul ramos
drums ("let's be prude" + "first morning")

nick kahl
bass

ez-e
marimba ("i'm not convinced")

hillary schoap
viola

nicole sangsuree
guitar ("sobriety")

martin castillo
drums ("i'm not convinced" + "some tenderness")
marimba ("let's be prude" + "reprise")
vibraphone ("first morning" + "soliloquy")

thomas phillipson
accordion ("sobriety")

production crew

ryan "doogie" shanholtzer
sound recordist

ady leverette
pitch hitter

sean stevens
superman

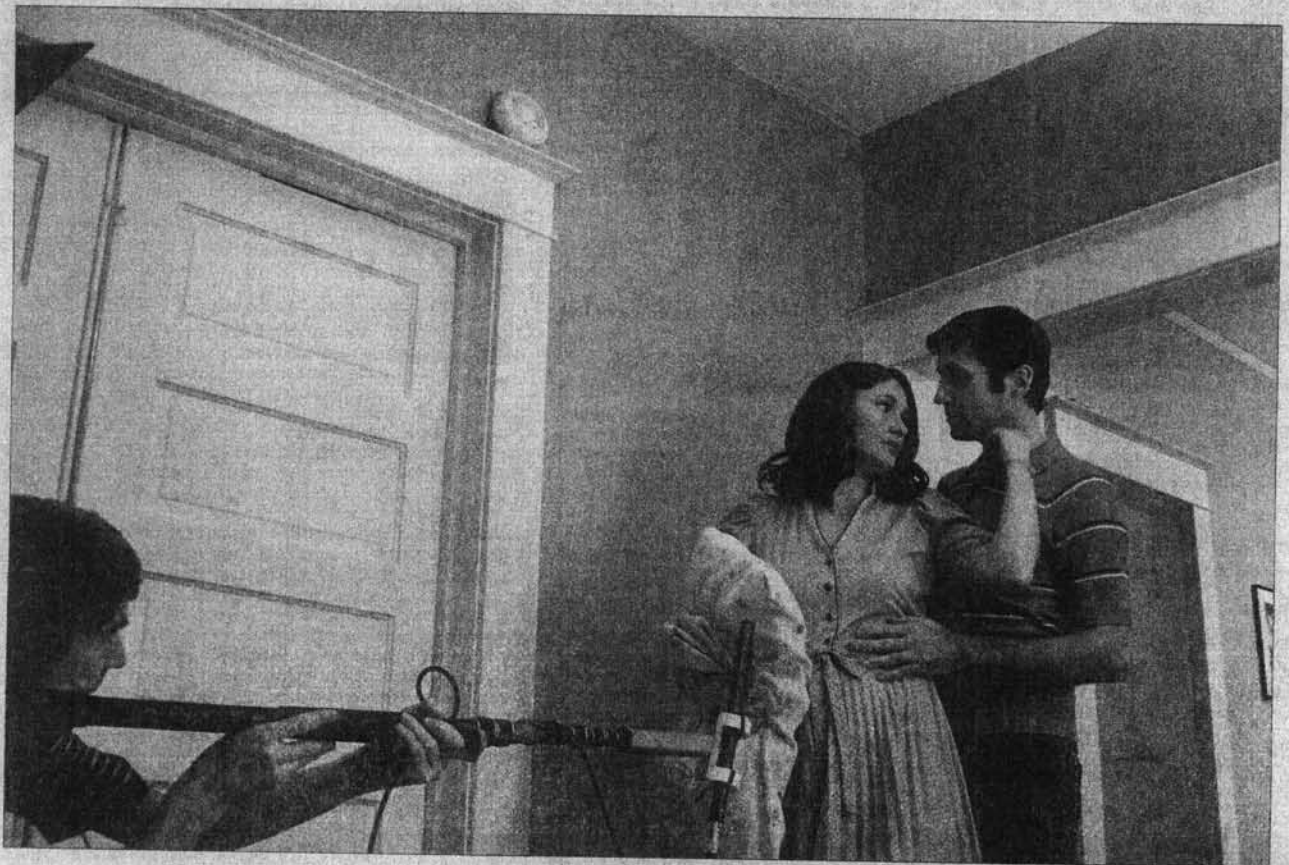
don peterkofsky
on-set pro tools engineer

jake parten
grip and sound recordist

katy cannatelli
set photography

shot on an
eclair

edited on a
STEENBECK



BRIAN LIBBY/SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

Eric Schopmeyer and Nora Ryan star in the musical "Yellow." Unlike most small-budget independent movies these days, director Nick Peterson still shoots on film and, in what Schopmeyer laughingly calls "crazy," shot the musical numbers live, rather than recording the audio later in a studio.

At home on the set

Turning his apartment into a film studio, a local director makes a movie that sings

By BRIAN LIBBY | SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

"Yellow" premiere

When: 7:30 p.m. Thursday
Where: Northwest Film Center's Whitsell Auditorium, 1219 S.W. Park Ave.
Cost: \$7 general admission
More information: 503-221-1156; www.nwfilm.org

"Sorry about the mess," writer-director Nick Peterson says, stepping into his apartment in Northwest Portland.

The dining room, filled with film canisters, lighting equipment and gaffer's tape, is dominated by a massive Steenbeck editing table. The chic thrift-store furniture and vintage cocktail set in the next room, however, will soon look familiar to Peterson's audience.

"Everything you see here is from the film," he says. "I live in my film."

Peterson moved into the apartment last year specifically so it could be the set for his feature-film debut, a musical called "Yellow," which premieres Thursday. Although the film's look and style are as beautiful and distinct as that of any Sundance winner, Peterson's production was exceptionally grass roots. He collaborates with a small family of actors and technicians who happily work at no pay. "I feel more

Please see 'YELLOW,' Page E4



Nick Peterson

Age: 25
Hometown: Portland
Education: David Douglas High School; Mt. Hood Community College
Films: "One, Two, Three" trilogy; "Contingent"; "Yellow"
Influences: Yasujiro Ozu, Ernst Lubitsch
Family: Single; no children

Portland's Nick Peterson has made short films that have garnered the admiration of heavyweights like Gus Van Sant.

KATY CANNATELLI

'Yellow': Musical's songs recorded live during filming

Continued from Page E1

comfortable working with my friends," he says nonchalantly.

Peterson has gained widespread praise at local festivals from admirers like director Gus Van Sant for a string of short films, such as his "One, Two, Three" trilogy (completed in 2003) and "Contingent" (2004).

"Nick just seems really in control, especially for so early in his career," Van Sant says. "I think usually, for a young filmmaker, the problem comes from there being any number of different things you can do. But Nick's films are completely disciplined in their focus."

Although self-taught, Peterson is a student of cinema. His first love is Japanese master Yasujiro Ozu, whose films of the 1930s through '60s chronicled tumultuous societal change with the restraint of haiku. More recently, Peterson has fallen under the spell of Ernst Lubitsch, the German expatriate who made a succession of classic Hollywood comedies and musicals from the 1920s and '30s such as "The Love Parade" and "One Hour With You," both of which screened at the Northwest Film Center recently

as a precursor to the "Yellow" premiere. The yin-yang of these opposite influences — one quiet and stoic, the other boisterous and witty — makes "Yellow" a breakthrough for Peterson far beyond his going from shorts to a feature.

Still, making a musical brought an extra-high degree of difficulty. Flash back to a typical shooting day last fall. Co-stars Eric Schopmeyer (who also composed all the songs in "Yellow") and Nora Ryan are in the bedroom with producer/art director Mary DeFreese attending to Ryan's makeup while Peterson loads his 16 mm camera in the hallway. Meanwhile, a host of musicians wait in the next room poised at their instruments. When Peterson calls "action," the actors break into song while, in the next room, players join in note-perfect on trombone, viola, drums, marimba and acoustic bass. Peterson is already old-school for sticking with celluloid in a film world now dominated by digital video. But recording all the musical's songs live?

"Nobody does it that way because it's crazy," Schopmeyer says with a laugh. He teaches music, including a popular kids' marimba ensemble, at Marysville Elementary School in Southeast Portland. But there was a method to the madness, he says — even if Peterson's neighbors in adjacent apartments were often infuriated.

"I can pretty easily suspend my disbelief when characters break into song, but not when the audio production was obviously created in some studio at a completely dif-

"Nick just seems really in control, especially for so early in his career."

Gus Van Sant,
director

ferent time in different acoustical conditions," Schopmeyer says. "That makes it even more unrealistic — it's too perfect. The sound becomes completely unconnected from the image."

"You can hear the echoes of the instruments in the room during the indoor scenes," Peterson adds. "And the one song we did outside, it sounds so beautiful because it's just out in the open air. You can't re-create those little idiosyncrasies."

The songs in "Yellow" are often sung imperfectly but with buoyant spirit and knowing wit, much like Woody Allen's "Everyone Says I Love You." And the story, which Schopmeyer describes as "boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy may be wins her back," is unabashedly romantic but with an existential underpinning.

Making a musical comedy gave Peterson a kind of genre template he never had before. That also brought the chance to subvert it. Some scenes, for example, are filmed entirely through a window. Thus, there's no audible dialogue, only physical gestures like in a silent film. Peterson's characters are

frequently gay or bisexual, which Lubitsch never would have been able to explore. And "Yellow" has a distinct Portland flair, seen in characters' vintage clothes and tattoos as well as locations like Valentine's bar and the MAX train.

Despite Peterson's gifts, "Yellow" wasn't without its crises. One breakfast scene was almost derailed by a bread-blackening toaster. DeFreese, the producer, was often calling friends at the last minute to serve as extras. But all the while, his collaborators say Peterson has been an unwaveringly steady force.

"I was absolutely amazed," Schopmeyer says. "The whole production was fraught with so many ridiculous problems and obstacles beyond our control — not to mention the ones we gave ourselves. But he held it together always. Nick's so thoroughly dedicated. He gives his entire life to his films."

With such an ambitious and daring feature debut, the whispers about Peterson being destined to follow Van Sant and Miranda July toward Hollywood triumph may soon become a roar. But Peterson has different motivations. "You see a film by Ozu or (French legend Robert) Bresson, and it's uniquely theirs," he says. "That's the model for me. The rest may or may not happen, and that's fine."

Meanwhile, Peterson is all too happy to keep living — literally and figuratively — in his films.

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Full Spectrum

With his feature debut, *yellow*, local filmmaker Nick Peterson shows his true colors.

BY DAVID WALKER



Few local filmmakers have warranted more close scrutiny than Nick Peterson. Best known for his trio of near-silent short films—*One*, *Two* and *Three*—which he directed and photographed, Peterson has quietly built a reputation as one of the most stylish and promising filmmakers in Portland. Working primarily in 16 mm as so many others embrace digital video, Peterson creates intricately composed moving pictures with a vibrant spectrum of color—photographs that come to life.

The big question on the minds of those that have been following Peterson's career is when the 25-year-old would move from shorts to features. This weekend, Peterson's fans will have their question answered as his debut feature, *yellow*, premieres at the Northwest Film Center.

What may come as a big surprise to some is that, for a director known for a series of shorts that eschews dialogue, *yellow* is a musical. Inspired by the early 1930s musicals of Ernst Lubitsch, *yellow* stars Nora Ryan and Eric Schopmeyer as Natalie and Matt in what amounts to a traditional tale of girl meets boy. During the course of their day-to-day lives, Natalie and Matt cross paths on a regular basis, often eating lunch at the same park. But neither thinks to approach the other until Matt overhears Natalie talking—

or rather singing—about her relationship status with Christian (Nico Izambard).

Yellow is at once beautiful and daring, and just a little bit odd. Peterson's often static photography displays the same beautiful sense of composition and color palette that makes his work uniquely recognizable. And while the film is a musical, there are also entire sequences that play out with no dialogue, recalling *One*, *Two* and *Three*.

The music in *yellow* was written and composed by Schopmeyer, himself a respected filmmaker. Unlike traditional musicals where the songs are lip-synced by the actors and the music is laid down as a separate track during editing, the songs in *yellow* were recorded live on set, with musicians accompanying off camera. This unconventional production style adds to the casual tenor of the film, and in turn makes the musical numbers all the more surreal.

If *yellow* has a weak point, it would be the bare-bones story. There is so much attention to the overall craftwork of the film and the music that it feels as if the story is secondary. In fact, there is no credited screenwriter. But at the same time, *yellow* is not so much about the story as it is an expression of feelings through motion picture and music. And to that end, the film succeeds.

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SEATTLE WEEKLY

FILM

October 4, 2006

Close to Home

The best efforts at regional film fest have strongly anchored roots.

By [Brian Miller](#)

IF SIFF IS LIKE getting your kid into the Ivy League, so far as Seattle filmmakers are concerned, the ninth **Local Sightings Film Festival** represents the honorable fall-back school that might actually deliver a better education. With six features and 50-plus shorts spread out over six days, Northwest filmmakers are less likely to get lost under the institutional weight of SIFF, whose local titles returning here are *Apart From That* and *Urban Scarecrow*. Both deserve your attention for their strong sense of place: Andrew McAllister's *Scarecrow* (7 p.m. Mon., Oct. 9) stages a coming-of-age tale along the derelict stretches of Route 99 where, as he told *Seattle Weekly* this spring, "the motels are falling apart, and yet the signs are really colorful and vibrant. It's almost like our Las Vegas Strip." By contrast, co-directors Jennifer Shainin and Randy Walker filmed their ensemble piece, *Apart From That* (7 p.m. Wed., Oct. 11), up in the Skagit Valley, using a few professional actors and many neophytes to relate overlapping tales of small-townish discontent, absurdism, and occasional comedy. It's like Cassavetes in the sticks.



Ryan and Schopmeyer harmonize in *Yellow*.
sampo films

EXTRA INFO

Local Sightings Northwest Film Forum,
1515 12th Ave., 206-267-5380,
www.nwfilmforum.org. Free—\$8. Fri.,
Oct. 6—Wed., Oct. 11. See Web site for full
schedule and details.

Somewhat similar, but focused on two fraternal twins in their early 20s, is the festival opener *June & July*, the first feature from Seattle's Brady Hall (7 p.m. Fri., Oct. 6). June longs to escape from their hick town, while brother July has no problem with a place where nothing seems to happen. These bored orphans paint, party, and tend a pair of turtles, and the movie's initial pacing does reflect their aimless lives. Then, unexpectedly, plot starts seeping in—organically, in fact genetically—which makes Hall's tardy tempo seem more calculated. Nothing ever happens until something you don't want to happen does. Violence intrudes on the twins' lives, even as both are finding potential romantic partners.

There's an unhurried mossy regionalism at work here. Whether it's July pedaling his bike to work at a thrift shop or June on a drunken date, texture matters more than incident. In *Apart From That*, too, characters are implicitly defined by their environment—even if they're not actively complaining or plotting their escape. A rainy climate of inwardness prevails as everyone waits for the weather to

break.

THIS IS WHY *Yellow*, from Portland's Nick Peterson, seems the sunniest and freshest of the bunch (7 p.m. Sat., Oct. 7). It's the most formally controlled and rigorously conceptualized, and yet it's also a delightful indie musical in which the performers spontaneously launch into song, in their own voices, with musicians performing live (both on and off camera) in the manner of an old-school Broadway show. The plot is thoroughly retro: Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, and . . . you'll have to see it yourself to learn how things turn out. Songwriter Eric Schopmeyer plays the office dweeb romantic lead opposite Nora Ryan's librarian. All their stumbling approaches and retreats are made more plausibly human by the vulnerability of their voices as they reach for the right note, clink teaspoons into the audio mix, and even accommodate extra instrumentation like the pinging buttons of a photocopier or the castanet clicks of an old Royal typewriter. The movie's hybrid sensibility is both vintage and modern; cell phones chirp in some scenes, while the librarian's A-line dresses wouldn't be out of place in a Doris Day picture.

Rather than simply falling into bed, as the title of one song goes, "Let's Be Prude." Peterson shows no less restraint in scenes shot through windows where the sound drops away entirely. If there are to be big communication gaps between these lovers, why should we be privy to every conversation? Yet *Yellow* isn't off-puttingly arty at all. As the librarian sings, "Why be like everyone else?" Stubbornly sticking to his legato cadences, aided considerably by two charming leads, Peterson has created a winning, offbeat breakthrough.

Lastly, though there are too many short films to track, those who enjoyed Linas Phillips' *Walking to Werner* at SIFF—in which he schlepped from Seattle to L.A. to meet Werner Herzog—won't want to miss *Ushtanka, the Mama Story* (9:30 p.m. Sat., Oct. 7), a portrait of his aged Lithuanian grandmother. Something like Scorsese's *Italianamerican*, it lovingly portrays an old soul shaped by a time and culture that no longer exist—someone, as Phillips says, "you never saw the way you should." Which is not a bad motto for the entire Local Sightings lineup.

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