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## Short Stay

### Ted Fendt

**Producer** Ted Fendt, Britni West, Blake LaRue, Graham Swindoll.  
**Production company** Ted Fendt (New York, USA). **Written and directed by** Ted Fendt. **Director of photography** Sage Einarsen.  
**Editor** Ted Fendt. **Music** Sean Dunn. **Sound design** Daniel D'Errico. **Sound** Sean Dunn.

**With** Mike Maccherone (Mike), Elizabeth Soltan (Liz), Mark Simmons (Mark), Marta Sicinska (Marta), Meaghan Lydon (Meg), Dan Faro (Dan), Calvin Engine (Cal), Rob Fini (Rob).

35 mm, colour. 61 min. English.

**Premiere** 12 February 2016, Berlinale Forum

Mike may always be wandering, but you'd hardly call him a man on the move. His stamping ground is modest, the strip of suburbia between his mom's house in New Jersey and the pizza place where he works. Mike's no great conversationalist and isn't big on direction either, preferring to let things happen than making them happen himself. Feeding a neighbour's dog, bumping into a friend, catching a hockey game: all just different reasons to trudge along the same wintry streets, unhurried, ungainly, alone. One day, opportunity knocks. Mike bumps into his old school friend Mark, who asks Mike to take over his walking tour job and Philadelphia apartment during his trip to Poland. A change of season, a change of scene, a change of fortune? The streets Mike now wanders through are different and the sun is shining, but otherwise it's the same old story: new people and new encounters, laced with the usual awkwardness and inertia. Ted Fendt's charming 35 mm miniature is not quite a comedy, nor quite a drama, but rather a moral tale: a lesson on how anything that falls into your lap can just as easily fall out of it again. We can change our context, but we can't change ourselves.

*James Lattimer*

## A special trait of character

*Short Stay* is a film where themes are developed and characters introduced only to vanish minutes, sometimes only moments, later. Events accumulate, but little happens. Mike is lost. He's floating. He has no plans and no prospects. There's a girl in the film who has to introduce herself twice before he can remember who she is. Somehow this doesn't bother him. Only rarely can we glimpse chinks in his armour.

The film comes out of my fascination for a very specific aspect of my friend Mike's personality, as well as the way he carries himself through the world, and the sound of his voice. I wanted to hone in on these things, magnify them and create a character out of that one particular aspect, a way of being comfortable in situations without seeming to have any goals or ambitions beyond the moment.

Though the cast is non-professional, this is not a naturalistic film that seeks to take advantage of their naivety and lack of experience. It's realistic due to documentary production techniques (direct sound, available light), but not naturalistic. The film contains a range of performance styles from the fairly natural (Marta and Meg), to Mark and Dan's B-movie 'villains' who might have stepped out of an Edward G. Ulmer or Luc Moullet film, to the quasi-Bressonian, unaffected manner Mike in which delivers his lines. Unlike actors, my cast does not map out a performance beforehand or come with a prepared interpretation of the character to telegraph to the audience. We talk little of psychology. Instead the hazards of the moment and their own individual voices and gestures inform the characters. Small – but sometimes major and drastic – changes in performance from one scene to the next allow for characters to arise out of a behavioural composite over the course of the film.

### Limited camera positions

The camera is always an observer, never attempting to convey or communicate anything. It can't. While the shot-reverse shot dominated my shorts, in *Short Stay* we shot every scene from one camera position and with one lens (a 25mm Zeiss). Pans and tilts to re-frame, change emphasis, or follow characters became a major element of the mise-en-scène. This lens and the small interiors often limited us to only two or three camera positions in the room while still maintaining a coherent sense of the space. Compositions and staging are, then, often the result of practical choices that stemmed from these decisions.

During the shoot, I was reading Edmund Wilson's diaries from the 1920s. There's a great passage in which he recalls the way a friend's father would vividly tell stories and conjure up people he once knew. I found words that described exactly what I was after: '...in every case, it had been some special trait of character which had interested him and which he had isolated and thrown into relief in such a way that it acquired a kind of beauty. Other than this, his best stories often had no point.'

*Ted Fendt*



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Ted Fendt was born in Philadelphia in 1989. He lives in New York, where he works as a filmmaker, translator, and projectionist. His translations from French into English include film criticism by Luc Moullet, Mireille Latil-le-Dantec, Emmanuel Sietty, and Louis Seguin; and subtitles for films by Jean-Marie Straub, Alain Resnais, Marcel Hanoun, and Jean Epstein. Ted Fendt is editing a forthcoming publication on Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet. He has directed three short films. *Short Stay* is his first full-length feature.

### Films

2012: *Broken Specs* (6 min.). 2013: *Travel Plans* (7 min.). 2014: *Going Out* (8 min.). 2016: *Short Stay*.