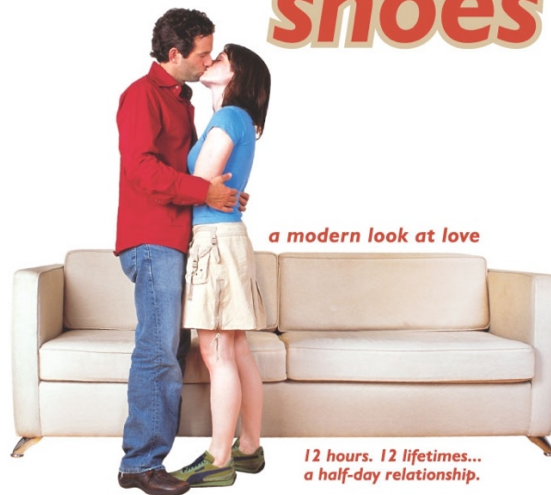


stacie morgain **lewis**

greg **shamie**

# elephant shoes



a real, sweet romantic comedy by **christos sourligas**

## ELEPHANT SHOES PRESS COVERAGE



## WORLD FILM FESTIVAL DIARY

# Hometown hit for Montreal filmmaker

Christos Sourligas is winning raves for the very-low-budget *Elephant Shoes*, brought to you courtesy of his credit cards

BY MATTHEW HAYS, MONTREAL

Not even halfway through the festival, and a homegrown hit has emerged. *Elephant Shoes* is an odd little romantic two-character film, an unusual comedy about a couple who meet on the street, immediately have sex upon arriving in his apartment and then spend the next 12 hours actually getting to know each other. Made on a mere \$10,000 by Montreal filmmaker Christos Sourligas, the film has won over audiences and critics alike with its lively dialogue, funny scenarios and winning couple.

The actors are New York-based Greg Shamie (a Montreal native) and Stacie Morgain Lewis (a New Yorker), who were dating during the film's 4½-day shoot and have since wed. "I knew I didn't have

much of a budget," Sourligas says. "But I just decided to take the plunge, it was something I really wanted to do."

Sourligas, who works for the Just for Laughs Festival in TV sales by day, last appeared in the World Film Fest eight years ago with his tremendously funny short film *Park Ex*. He funded *Elephant Shoes* Spike Lee-style — with several credit cards, which were promptly maxed out.

*Elephant Shoes* has many of the elements which mark ultra-low-budget filmmaking, including some pacing that feels off. But it also boasts two very strong lead performances and ace cinematography by Luc Montpellier, who also shot Guy Maddin's *The Saddest Music in the World*. Sourligas managed to snag Montpellier on a pro-bono basis because he'd served as



*Elephant Shoes* stars Montrealese Greg Shamie and Stacie Morgain Lewis in a whirlwind romance.

best man at the cinematographer's wedding. "I'm on cloud nine with the success we've had," Sourligas declares. "It's been really thrilling."

♦ ♦ ♦

## Inside

### THE PAGES OF REVIEW

A sleeper hit wows the crowds at the Montreal World Film Festival, R3



# The Gazette

MONTREAL | FRIDAY, MARCH 17, 2006 | [montrealgazette.com](http://montrealgazette.com) | SINCE 1778 | SPORTS FINAL

## Film captures couple's courtship



**BILL BROWNSTEIN**  
on a little movie that could

*"(Elephant Shoes) has gone on to wow (festival) audiences and critics alike."*

Christos Sourligas has spent much of the past week scouring the city in search of a high-tech video projector to rent.

The good news is that the Montreal director's film *Elephant Shoes* is being released theatrically today at the AMC multiplex. The bad news is that there is no 35-millimetre print of *Elephant Shoes* available. It was shot in digital video, thus necessitating a special projector, which the AMC doesn't have.

Sourligas finally did track down a video projector yesterday. It will cost him \$3,392.08 a week to rent. To put this in perspective, that represents one-third of the cost of shooting his \$10,000 film in the first place. Still, cheaper than making a 35-millimetre print for \$30,000.

He isn't complaining. He maxed out his credit cards financing this film, so what's one more expense to cover?

*Elephant Shoes* is the little film that could. Premiered in the summer of 2004 at the Montreal World Film Festival, it has gone on to wow audiences and critics alike at 16 more festivals.

It was picked up for distribution by Alliance Atlantis Vivafilm, which rarely releases films under \$1 million theatrically – let alone flicks that come in at 10K.

Plus, the movie will make its DVD bow next month.

*Elephant Shoes* is many things, but it has no elephants tromping through it. It features only two actors and it was put together by a crew of three over an intense 4½-day shooting schedule. Regardless, it looks as if it has the production values of a film 100 times its budget.

It also has a solid storyline. The film is a compelling, noirish romantic comedy about the rocky courtship of a couple. One of the angles is that the action takes place over a 12-hour period. Another is that the couple in question are really a couple, Stacie Morgain Lewis and Greg Shamie. They were dating when the film was being made, and now they are married.

Curiously, the courtship they depict has less to do with their lives than that of Sourligas, who concedes that a failed relationship was the genesis for this project.

Please see BROWNSTEIN, Page D3

### ELEPHANT SHOES (G)

A compelling, noirish romantic comedy about the rocky courtship of a couple (played by real-life couple Stacie Morgain Lewis and Greg Shamie).

★★★½

AMC 1:20, 3:25, 5:30, 7:35, 9:40

## BROWNSTEIN

### Movie shows fragility of a modern union

CONTINUED FROM D1

Nonetheless, Lewis, the New York-born lead in the hit Broadway musical *Wicked*, and Shamie, a Montrealer featured on an Emmy-winning episode of *Law and Order* and a guest star on *Six Feet Under*, muster up all the necessary emotions to make the movie credible.

Alexis (Lewis) and Manny (Shamie) meet by chance on a Montreal street corner. She's a tourist who has lost her way. He's a local who has never really found his way. They fall for one another in elephant-sized fashion.

But then, once the passion settles and the bed is made, the really tough part begins: They must actually get to know one another on a non-carnal basis.

The wonder of it all is that the couple go through the requisite stages of a relationship in just half a day. To each other, it feels like they have been together forever. To the viewer, though, it goes by in a flash. It is a truly fascinating overview of the fragility of a modern-day union.

And here's hoping Sourligas continues exploring the human condition and, at the very least, covers the rental cost of that video projector.

*Elephant Shoes* is showing at the AMC cinema.

[bbrownst@thegazette.canwest.com](mailto:bbrownst@thegazette.canwest.com)



# Romantic hit started off cursed

You can barely buy a good used car these days for \$10,000, yet that's the budget of Montrealer Christos Sourligas' romantic comedy *Elephant Shoes*.

Sourligas, 34, maxed his three credit cards, called in some favours and turned his apartment into a film set.

The result is *Elephant Shoes*, the sleeper hit of the Montreal World Festival, which screens at the Uptown tonight at 7:15 p.m.

Sourligas wrote this story of a relationship that begins and ends within 12 hours, after his girlfriend of four years left him two years ago.

"Instead of moping, I decided to work it out through a film," says Sourligas, who's in town to attend tonight's screening.

Though he studied film at university, Sourligas ended up as a sales manager for Just For Laughs.

*Elephant Shoes* is a film that succeeds on every level from its insightful, if not quirky, examination of love, to its slick cinematography and entirely credible performances.

What's just as mesmerizing as the film is what happened during the film shoot.

"It was disaster after disaster," recalls Sourligas. "On the first day, Greg Shamie,

who plays the man, broke his finger closing the door of the apartment, only to have a bookcase narrowly miss him as it crashed to the floor shattering props and equipment."

The two actors and three crew members, spooked by the accidents in the apartment, were relieved to move outdoors.

"While we were shooting on the street, two guys smashed into my apartment stealing money, my jewelry, the actors' passports, wallets, clothing and other cameras."

Sourligas says he shut down production and told everyone to go home to decide whether these incidents were negative omens.

"Next day everyone came back more determined and enthusiastic than they were originally. It was an incredible bonding experience and I know it made for a better movie."

— HOBSON







## Film festival hands out several awards

By **ROBERT NOTT**  
The New Mexican

A low-budget romantic comedy shot in four days took the Santa Fe Film Festival's Audience Award this year. Christos Sourligas' *Elephant Shoes*, which revolves around the intensity of a 12-hour relationship, received the award during the fest's Annual Milagro Awards ceremony at Eldorado Hotel on Saturday.

The festival, which features film screenings, panel discussions and parties, continues through today at various venues around town. The awards ceremony was hosted by actor, writer and cartoonist Jonathan Richards, who introduced the event with the remark: "This is what filmmaking is all about — awards." To that end, 10 filmmakers took home awards.

The festival's Creative Spirit award was given to Bill Rose for his documentary, *The Loss of Nameless Things*, which deals with the rise and fall of a troubled playwright. Best Short went to O Nathapon's rhapsodic tale of longing and loss, *Bicycles and Radios*. The Best Latino award went to Fabrizio Aguilar's Peruvian film *Paper*

*Dove*, about emotional and political upheaval in a small village in the Andes.

Other award winners include Jihyun Song's animated film *Earth* (Best Animation), Tommy Davis' documentary *Mojados: Through the Night* (Best Documentary), J. Mitchell Johnson's *World Without Waves* (Best Southwest) and Chris Kientz and Simon James' computer-animated film *Raven Tales* (Best Native).

The Independent Spirit award went to Russian filmmaker Boris Undorf's psychological thriller *Sonata*, while the Best of Fest was given to Hirokazu Kore-eda for *Nobody Knows*, a contemporary survival story. The festival's annual Luminaria

Awards, presented by actress Ali MacGraw, went to actor and Santa Fe resident Alan Arkin and Mexican filmmaker Alfonso Arau.

The collegiate musical group Mediterranean Ensemble won over the crowd with a short pre-ceremony set of European folk music.

Jon Bowman, executive director for the festival, said he was happy with this year's program. "In the past, there's always been a few break-out hits and signs of movement toward certain pictures," he said. "This year, there was a more diffuse interest in a lot of titles, and that's what a festival should be about: Discovering new and different voices."



## Film Festival attracts hundreds as event rolls into third day

By **ROBERT NOTT**  
For The New Mexican

Jerry Wellman didn't want to see Richard Nixon get killed because he was still trying to shake off his post-election depression.

Wellman was one of some 200 people who attended a party at Cowgirl BBQ and Western Grill on Guadalupe Street to celebrate the opening night of this year's Santa Fe Film Festival. The festival, which started Wednesday and continues through Sunday, features film screenings, panel discussions, music events and parties. Festival tributee Alan Arkin will speak about his career at 7 tonight at the Awakening Museum as the event rolls into its third day.

Opening night movies included Christos Sourligas' two-character romantic comedy *Elephant Shoes* and Niels Mueller's *The Assassination of Richard Nixon* — the film

Wellman didn't want to see. Wellman, whose short animated film *Locating Home* screens in the festival's New Mexico Shorts Sampler program, said of the fest: "These movies are like hypnotism or an overwhelming psychotherapeutic session. I went to see *Seoul Train*, which is about human-rights abuses in North Korea, and that makes my complaints — including about the election results — seem minor. So see? It is like therapy."

The festival boasts a party a night. During the opening-night bash, partygoers were enjoying different sorts of therapy, including music by the Alex Maryol Band, a cash bar and free food.

Among other film artists in attendance for the fest is actor Greg Shamie of *Elephant Shoes*. The Canadian performer attended the opening night screening of his film, which played to a capacity crowd at the CinemaCafé, he said.



Santa Fe Community College's Scott Plunkett, left, interviews Christos Sourligas, center, the Canadian director of *Elephant Shoes*, and Greg Shamie, an actor in the film. *Elephant Shoes* is a two-character romantic comedy that will be shown Saturday.

Jane Phillips/The New Mexican

"The film was a joy to make but difficult to watch," Shamie acknowledged as he sipped a beer. "But there was a point at tonight's screening when I thought, 'Oh, my God, the audience really likes this movie.' So I got to enjoy the ride the audience was going on."

Shamie had a few problems during the film shoot. He crushed one of

his fingers in a doorway and barely escaped being crushed by a "500-pound bookcase" that nearly fell on him. In addition, while the cast and crew shot an exterior scene on the street outside Sourligas' apartment — where all interior shooting took place — bandits broke in and began

Please see **FESTIVAL**, Page B-3

Continued from Page B-1

ransacking the joint.

When the crew tried to re-enter, they found the door blocked. The robbers beat a hasty retreat out the window, and Shamie discovered his passport and \$300 had been stolen. At least the intimate sex and bathtub scenes Shamie shares with his on-screen partner, actress Stacie Morgain Lewis, weren't that difficult to shoot — they're a married couple.

Jon Bowman, executive director of the film festival, said Thursday that four of the festival's opening-night screenings sold out. He estimated about 150 filmmakers were in town to attend the festival and said he hopes to sell at least 20,000 tickets before the last screening on Sunday. Sunday's events include a panel discussion on the role of women in cinema and a closing-night party at El Farol on Canyon Road.

As the opening night gala wore on, people filled Cowgirl, and waitresses, clad in cowgirl attire, found it increasingly difficult to make their way through the crowded passageways. As one waitress pushed her way through an unyielding crowd of revelers, she was asked how she was managing. "It's OK," she said, never slowing down. "I play rugby."

The Santa Fe Film Festival continues at various venues through Sunday. Call 989-1495 for information.



### Opening night

Opening-night movies at the Santa Fe Film Festival included Christos Sourligas' *Elephant Shoes* and Niels Mueller's *The Assassination of Richard Nixon*.

**Santa Fe & El Norte, B-1**



SANTA FE

## REPORTER

WEEKLY NEWS AND CULTURE

## SANTA FE FILM FESTIVAL

The Fifth Annual Santa Fe Film Festival is an exercise in artistry, innovation and, as it happens, good timing. With the film industry booming in New Mexico and more and more feature films and television spots being created here, while independent filmmakers angle on how to get in on the picture, so to speak, the Festival gives a fitting lead-off to a legislative session where elected representatives will be asked to consider increased support to encourage the film industry—and new media and creative industries of all kinds—in order to foster continued and

novel success. With 196 selections from 34 countries this year, the Festival puts another spotlight on Santa Fe as an international destination for arts and a potential capitol for bold, new initiatives in creative education, infrastructure and development. And when such a package is wrapped in an inspiring showcase for independent artists with two week's worth of parties crammed into a few days and an awards ceremony for good measure, something very, very good is going down. Here's a selective sampling from a big—and growing—event.

## ELEPHANT SHOES

If you mouth "elephant shoes," it looks like you're saying "I love you." This nugget of wisdom, among a few other charms, enamor an initially reluctant photojournalist of a painter who lures her into his Montreal apartment for a brief, intense affair. *Elephant Shoes* chronicles the whirlwind evolution love story in 12 distinct chapters including "Flirtation," "Romance," "Jealousy" and "Routine." Over the span of 24 hours, the lovers spoon-feed each other Ben 'n' Jerry's; dance in their underwear to Olivia Newton John; cross-check each others' lists of likes and dislikes; talk cuisine, masculinity and commitment and—rather unconvincingly—break up. The sense is a bird's-eye view of what goes on in a "real" love affair, not something airbrushed for the movies—dorky confessions, toilet-bowl humor, sexual tics and all.

(Mara Goldwyn)

CULTURE



# CW

## CROSSWINDS WINDY

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### BIG SCREEN

## Local films rub elbows with the big boys at Santa Fe Film Festival

by Meghann O'Leary

With the exception of action-packed blockbusters, the artistic preferences of festival lovers are sure to be satisfied by this year's international offerings at the **Santa Fe Film Festival**. Making its descent on New Mexico once again, the festival recognizes both veterans and up-and-comers alike. Big films like the *Assassination of President Nixon*, starring Sean Penn and Naomi Watts, and *A Very Long Engagement*, starring Audrey Tautou and directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet (both of *Amélie*), have already created a buzz and will be opening to sold-out audiences. But there are plenty of other films sure to be recognized for their originality, humanity and daring.

The one that hits closest to home is probably the documentary *VFW/ye*, directed by Lexie Shabel, which explores the short lived, but explosive music scene that took place in Santa Fe in 2002. The music club, VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) which began in the summer of 2002, offered a rare arena of

experimentation and freedom for local musicians who had heretofore struggled with the bureaucracy of a club scene. For Shabel, the space offered something welcoming and unpretentious. "It allowed all the musicians coming there to blossom and grow," she says. The regular band at VFW that she looks

says, "We didn't really know what to expect, but we got there and we played." And played to quite a few people. At its height of popularity, VFW would hold up to 200 patrons a night. "It was a place where I could really stretch out and find my voice," says Ford. But the welcoming space, which attracted

veterans, musicians and even the likes of Val Kilmer, was short lived. VFW shut down in the fall of 2002, just three months after opening. Local businesses were losing their customers to the happening joint, and it didn't take them long to discover some loopholes in VFW's liquor license. Hence, the documentary carries a melancholy tone.

"Music scenes never stay the same," says Shabel. "They change over time, but it's cool to be a part of the inception, when it's new and rare." A more intimate, but no less real film is *Elephant Shoes*, directed by Christos Sourligas, which explores all the humor, drama and heartache of a long-term relationship in the course of a 12-hour



Love at first sight? Like many independent films, *Elephant Shoes*, starring Greg Sturnie (l.) and Stacie Morgan (r.), hopes to hit it off with audiences at this year's Santa Fe Film Festival. (Photo courtesy of One Man Band Films)

on most fondly is 100 Year Flood. She says witnessing a recent performance of theirs was akin to watching Janis Joplin take the stage.

Felicia Ford, lead vocalist of 100 Year Flood, remembers her time at VFW fondly. "It was quite a beautiful experience," she

one-night stand. Actually it's only 76 minutes for the viewer. Sourligas was inspired to write the screenplay three weeks after the end of his own long-term relationship. The screenplay took 12 days, the shocking another four, and the budget amounted to a meager \$7,000. The film, which consists mainly of two unknown actors working through the issues of a relationship, was a risk from the outset, but then again, so are relationships. On that level alone the film is sure to garner some attention. "At first, people are turned off by watching two people talking," says Sourligas. "But they get so engaged. People have felt like this. They've been there talking with these characters." And, just so you know, when the words "elephant shoes" are said silently, it looks like "I love you."

**S**ome other films to check out include *Mojados: Through the Night*, a documentary following Mexican immigrants on their dangerous, illegal journey north, and *Peaceable Kingdom*, a portrait of factory farms which exposes how those tasty hunks of pork make it to the supermarket aisle. If you're not ready to give up your carnivorous habits, it might be best to sit this one out. From the dramatic to the humorous to the just downright weird, this year's Santa Fe Film Festival is sure to delight and inspire. **CW**

The 5th Annual Santa Fe Film Festival runs from Dec. 1 through Dec. 5. For a complete schedule, visit [santafefilmfestival.com](http://santafefilmfestival.com).



# Weekly round-up

**Elephant Shoes** is a low-budget smash, Next: **A Primer on Urban Painting** follows graffiti on a trip around the world



SPEED DATING: *Elephant Shoes*

by SARAH ROWLAND and MARK SLUTSKY  
**Elephant Shoes**

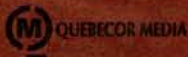
The first time I saw Christos Sourligas's debut feature was in 2004 at Montreal's World Film Festival, where critics from across the country gushed about the \$10,000 romcom. Still, as I sat down to screen it again, I couldn't help but wonder: was this Montreal-made sleeper such a stand-out only because so many of the other films screened at WFF were such shite? Well, I'm happy to report that no, that's not the case at all. In fact, I like *Elephant Shoes* even more after watching it a second time.

Sourligas breaks down every stage of a long-term relationship by using a 12-hour date as a model. Alexis (Stacie Morgain Lewis), a Toronto photojournalist in town for the day, bumps into Montreal cock artist Manny (Greg Shamie) on the street. The two proceed to speed through their first fuck, first fight and first fart. These oh-so quirky characters can be a little irritating at times, but that's only because they're so real. You've met these two before. You may not have liked them, but you've definitely met them. The acting here is flawless and the dialogue will ring true for anyone who has ever dated someone as filler until something better comes along.

But the real genius of this sweet and understated film is in the premise itself. And first-time filmmakers could learn a thing or two from Sourligas: when you've only got 10 grand to play with, keep it simple. (SR)

# MIRROR

Hundreds of Sudoku puzzles inside!



✓ **OPENING** *Elephant Shoes* See page 42 for review. **AMC Forum** 1:20pm, 3:25pm, 5:30pm, 7:35pm, 9:40pm



## Runaway Elephant



**BILL BROWNSTEIN**  
ON CHRISTOS SOURLIGAS

"The Montreal filmmaker (has) been wowing 'em with his \$10,000 debut."

**T**he Cinderella story continues for Christos Sourligas, the Montreal filmmaker who's been wowing 'em with his \$10,000 debut feature, *Elephant Shoes*. The romantic comedy – which has the look of a flick 100 times its budget – is fast becoming the darling of the film world.

After its premiere at the Montreal World Film Festival last summer, *Elephant Shoes* went on to glory at fests in Santa Fe and the Bahamas, among numerous others. The film is briefly back on home turf with a screening, in conjunction with the *Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois*, tonight at 10 at the Cinémathèque Québécoise.

Best of all, Sourligas, 35, has landed a major distribution deal with Alliance Atlantis, which will soon see *Elephant Shoes* in theatrical, TV and DVD release. Alliance Atlantis is also keen on Sourligas's planned sequel and trequel to *Elephant Shoes*.

Unlike the original, though, Sourligas will be spending considerably more on the *Elephant Shoes* updates. Yup, he'll shell out \$50,000 each. And this time, he doesn't plan to max out his credit cards to finance the films.

The sequel will have *Elephant Shoes* lead Greg Shamie and his co-star/wife Stacie Morgain Lewis touch base in France a few years later, while the trequel will find the couple coping with the birth of their first child.

While the genesis of *Elephant Shoes* was a relationship gone sour for Sourligas, the irony is the film has brought him love. He's hooked up with a woman he met at the Santa Fe Film Festival two months ago.

"The film won the Audience Award there and I fell madly in love," Sourligas says. "Who knows? Maybe there's another film in the making here. My only fear is that love will make me lose my sarcastic edge."

Fear not. History would seem to suggest otherwise.

Not content to rest on his laurels, Sourligas has also been contracted to make two more films, in addition to the *Elephant Shoes* sequel and trequel. The first is the teen comedy *Popcorn*, a naughty behind-the-scenes look at life inside a multiplex cinema: "*Clerks* meets *Meatballs*." The other is a thriller in the *Open Water* vein.

Not finished yet. Sourligas has created a children's book series and is developing a slew of TV shows. And he still hangs on to his day job as a senior manager for international television sales at the Just for Laughs festival.

"My philosophy is that I have plenty of time to sleep later in life," he says. "But now is the time for me to move forward."

Though most would label him an overachiever, that's not quite the diagnosis he received at a recent leadership seminar. "They told me I was more a drifter than a commander," he says. "I don't think they had much confidence in my achieving anything."

He'll show them. Perhaps on an Oscar podium.

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# The Gazette

MONTREAL | FRIDAY, AUGUST 27, 2004 | QUEBEC'S OLDEST DAILY | SINCE 1778 | SPORTS FIN

## Feature shot for \$10,000



**BILL BROWNSTEIN**  
ON LOW-BUDGET MOVIE

A shining example of how the human will can still triumph over the human wallet.

**T**his is what \$10,000 will buy you on most movie sets: coffee.

This is what \$10,000 bought Montreal writer/director/producer Christos Sourligas: one location; two actors; a three-man crew; 4½ days of shooting; and, oh yes, one impressive feature-length flick, *Elephant Shoes*, which makes its world premiere Sunday at the Montreal World Film Festival.

Nor did Sourligas, 34, put the touch on his family or the public purse to make his debut feature. No, he raised cash the old-fashioned way: He maxed out his three credit cards.

And nor were Sourligas's problems finished after financing. No sooner was he ready to shoot than: a) two digital video cameras malfunctioned; b) a tumbling 500-pound bookcase narrowly missed crushing 150-pound star Greg Shamie, who broke his finger not long afterward; and c) a burglary at Sourligas's apartment/movie set stripped Shamie and his co-star/wife Stacie Morgain Lewis of their passports, many personal possessions and most of their cash.

At a time when whinging among cash-strapped would-be filmmakers has reached epidemic proportions, Sourligas serves as a shining example of how the human will can still triumph over the human wallet.

Yet Sourligas is proud to report he did pay his stars for their 4½ days work as well as cover their travel, room and board. As for cinematographer Luc Montpelier, Sourligas called in a marker. Montpelier worked pro bono because Sourligas was best man at his wedding.

Cast and crew, however, were all given profit points, should the film go on to score commercially.

It would be easy to focus simply on this behind-the-scenes story, which has all the makings of a tragicomic screen classic.

But the more extraordinary story is the final cut of *Elephant Shoes*, a noirish romantic comedy that has the sophistication of a film 100 times its budget.

## Brownstein | Being dumped helped filmmaker

CONTINUED FROM D1

Ex-Montrealer Shamie and New Yorker Lewis, both veterans of the Broadway scene, play the love-struck couple with conviction. They meet on a street corner and they fall — like a 500-pound bookcase — truly, madly, deeply for each other. And then, once the passion settles, the tough part begins: getting to know one another.

It only seems that they are together for eons. In actual time, it's but 12 hours. So it goes in the wild and wacky world of contemporary relationships.

Shamie is quick to point out that the screen relationship bears little resemblance to his and Lewis's: "But it did help that we had the right chemistry going in and we just clicked, even after all the misadventures with the robbery and broken finger. Christos said he would understand if we wanted to throw in the towel. But those events made us stronger. That's what they call motivation in acting."

Actually, the script comes straight out of the life of Sourligas. "Let's just say it helped that I got dumped by my girlfriend of four years," the shaven-headed Sourligas reflects over soda water at a downtown pub.

"Rather than wallow in self-pity, I wrote, then I made a movie."

It was not only therapeutic, but also a stepping stone for Sourligas, who had previously made several shorts, including

the award-winning *Park Ex*, a tribute to his roots. *Elephant Shoes* has been accepted at three other festivals and distributors have come knocking at Sourligas's door.

But Sourligas, who toils by day in sales for the TV arm of the Just for Laughs festival, is bidding his time. He's contemplating his next feature, a thriller. It will have the monster budget — by his standards — of \$50,000 to \$100,000.

"I guess I'm going a little crazy," Sourligas quips. "So I had better start applying for more credit cards now."

*Elephant Shoes* screens Sunday at 5 p.m. and Monday at 1:30 p.m. at Cinéma Parisien I.

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Director Christos Sourligas is contemplating a thriller.



# Phoenix Film Festival

The Arizona Republic  
Apr. 3, 2005 12:00 AM

From 150 entries, organizers of the Phoenix Film Festival selected 10 films to compete for the Copper Wing Awards, which include best picture, best director and best screenplay.

Past winners include the Rick Schroder boxing movie *Black Cloud*, the border drama *The Gatekeeper* and the satirical look at Hollywood *Do It for Uncle Manny*.

Here's a look at this year's competing features.

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## 'Elephant Shoes'

\*\*\*\*

*Directed by Christos Sourligas, 79 minutes, not rated (sexual situations and nudity)*

Sharply scripted love story about a Montreal artist (Greg Shamie) and a photographer on vacation (Stacie Morgain Lewis) who meet on the street and spend 12 hours going through the 11 stages of a relationship, from flirtation to acceptance. It's a bit stagy, but the stars give convincing performances, as if they've been rehearsing for weeks, and the intimate scenes come off as realistic.

Using such a formal structure can mire a film, but Sourligas keeps things moving, capturing the awkwardness, trepidation and euphoria of a new relationship, while accelerating the action so the characters can go the route in half a day.

The title refers to a sound-alike for "I love you," spoken by someone who's too shy to say the actual words. It fits with the rest of the movie, which is about two people who are eager to connect but worried about what will happen if they do. The director is unapologetic about the movie's sentimentality, even daring to play the sappy Phil Collins ballad *Against All Odds* over the credits. Don't cry out loud.

(8:20 p.m. Friday, 12:15 p.m. Saturday, 2:15 p.m. Sunday)

- Bill Muller



### Scenes from a festival

Ingmar Bergman's *Saraband* and much more in Montreal  
BY GERALD PEARY

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And *Elephant Shoes*, Christos Sourligas's made-in-Montreal two-hander, is a deftly written, delicately acted love story, 12 compact, erotic hours in which an early-30ish couple meet, make love, make the most clever talk, and then must decide whether they are forever soulmates or, sadly, must part. A little miracle on a \$10,000 budget, and the talented newcomer actors, Stacie Morgain Lewis and Greg Shamie, steal the audience's heart.

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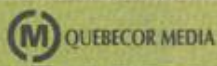
**A LITTLE MIRACLE ON A \$10,000 BUDGET:** Stacie Morgain Lewis and Greg Shamie stole audience hearts in *Elephant Shoes*.

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# MIRROR

Everybody Wing Chun tonight!



FILM  
World Film Festival  
roundup p. 26

## Global rundown

### ELEPHANT SHOES

First fuck. First fight. First fart. And that's all on the first date. Alexis (Stacie Morgain Lewis) and Manny (Greg Shamie) don't waste any time. Every stage of an average long term relationship is explored in their 12-hour affair, from the butterflies of flirting to the monotony of monogamy. Both lead characters can be irritating at times but that's only because they're so real. You've met these two before. Maybe you worked with one of them and their quirky ways made your shift go by faster but outside of work, you had nothing in common with them and quite frankly, you were a little embarrassed by the way they dressed. But as Montreal director **Christos Sourligas** proves, they need love too. The acting here is flawless and the dialogue will ring true for anyone who has ever dated someone as filler until something better comes along. Perfect romantic comedy rental. (SR)

by SARAH ROWLAND,  
MARK SLUTSKY  
and MATTHEW HAYS





EVERYONE SAYS **ELEPHANT SHOES**: SHAMIE AND LEWIS

**SHOOTING ON CREDIT**  
LOCAL DO-IT-YOURSELF BRINGS  
FIRST FEATURE TO THE FFM

Christos Sourligas wanted to make movies. But unlike most slackers, after film school he went out and got himself a real job (as a buyer in the Just For Laughs' television department). Six years later, his experience as an international wheeler-dealer for one of the industry's behemoths gave him a unique perspective and a sure-fire way to fund his first feature. Instead of messing around with Telefilm and Sodec grants and the like, he financed his full-length film with three credit cards.

"Why give up... creative control?" Sourligas shrugs. The romantic dramedy *Elephant Shoes* is clearly his calling card, and it's a snappy package for such a small movie. Despite (or perhaps because of) his big plans, Sourligas has done a lot with very little.

*Elephant*

*Shoes* was shot in 4 1/2 days with a cast of two, a crew of three, and, essentially, one location: Sourligas's apartment on Aylmer Street.

Simplicity also reigns in the script, which follows a couple through their whirlwind relationship: The stages of love and loss are cut up into 12 "chapters" that follow Sourligas's theories about the way love works (as hashed out in the scriptwriting process a couple of months after his long-time girlfriend moved out on him).

"At first, the idea was 12 stages, 12 scenes, all done in [single takes], but then reality intruded," he says.

Still, there is a certain vérité aspect about the long shots and inventive Steadicam flow created by Sourligas and his cinematographer, Luc Montpellier, who recently shot Guy Maddin's *The Saddest Music in the World*.

Because *Elephant Shoes* is so simple and intimate, it was important to find two actors with a readymade dynamic; the director found his couple in the real-life couple of Stacie Morgain Lewis and Greg Shamie, NYC Broadway and off-Broadway vets. After a sweaty and claustrophobic rehearsal run during the Eastern Seaboard blackout of 2003, the production moved up to Montreal for more disastrous installations of the laws of Murphy: equipment malfunction, an almost-fatal falling bookshelf, and a break-in at Sourligas's apartment 30 minutes into the



first day of shooting.

"There was a happy ending in all of this," Sourligas says with typical aplomb. "All this stuff happened so that I would have a better movie... and there could be a happy ending."

Indeed, happy endings are promised: The screening version of *Elephant Shoes* only has eleven chapters; Sourligas plans to maybe shoot chapter 12 in Paris, if, say, a prospective distributor wanted him too. "Happy endings happen all the time in real life, and I'll shoot 'em," he says with a grin. "Besides, I'm for sale, too! I'm not above it."

**MELORA KOEPKE**

*Elephant Shoes* screens at the *Parisien* cinema, Sunday, August 29 at 5 p.m. and Monday, August 30 at 1:30 p.m.



**ELEPHANT SHOES**

(Canada, 2004)

Directed by Christos Sourligas

September 25, 7:15 p.m., Uptown

If life were like a rented DVD, you'd be able to fast-forward through the dull bits and hit slow-motion or pause to savour the sweeter moments. *Elephant Shoes*, subtitled *A Modern Look at Love*, takes just such an approach to romance and comedy.

It tells of Alex (Stacie Morgain Lewis) and Manny (Greg Shamie), who meet by chance outside Manny's Montreal apartment. He invites her up for a drink. She's due back in Toronto the next morning, and she declines, then cautiously accepts. Alex vows there'll be no sex, but her reluc-

tance soon melts as he charms her with disarming insight into her tastes in music, art and travel. The result is an intense, 12-hour affair into which the willing partners cram enough revelations, sensations, jealousies, disappointments and unabashed romance to

occupy most couples for months.

Shamie and Lewis, the film's only cast members, are splendid in their roles. Each expresses convincing vulnerability, though at completely different times, in a sharply written story by director Christos Sourligas. This isn't a

big-budget production, but the money's all up on the screen, where two strangers manage to communicate volumes about love, gender roles and life's bittersweet truths.

BOB BLAKEY



• NEPEAN THIS WEEK FRIDAY AUGUST 27, 2004 •

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## Canadian film fills huge shoes at Montreal fest

PAUL TELNER AND  
BYRON PASCOE  
Talking with Telner

If September's Toronto International Film Festival is too far of a hike from Baseline Road, look no further than Montréal for the 28th annual Montreal World Film Festival, taking place Aug. 26 to Sept. 6.

Of the 416 films being screened from 72 different countries, 136 are from Canada. Included is the world premiere of a romantic comedy entitled, *Elephant Shoes*.

The film was produced for only \$10,000 and financed entirely by the producer's credit cards.

Written, directed and produced by Canadian Christos Sourligas, *Elephant Shoes* is about meeting someone, falling madly, head-over-heels in love with them and then poof, as quickly as they came into your life, they disappear.

Alexis and Manny are a '12-hour' couple whose turbulent love affair is told

over the course of a half-day. Broadway star Stacie Morgan Lewis plays Alexis while Greg Shamie, who has appeared in such TV shows as *Law & Order* and *Six Feet Under*, plays Manny.

During a 24-hour period of filming, three crazy events happened, which could have easily ended the production. A 500-pound bookshelf stacked heavily with encyclopedia-sized books tumbled onto a performer, who narrowly escaped massive head injuries by inches. Second, two state-of-the-art cameras refused to function properly, prompting a frantic search for replacement gear on the first day of shooting. Finally, the main shooting location was broken into by thieves. Somehow the team persevered.

Christos Sourligas's One Man Band Films is an independent film production company. Past short films include *Park Ex.*, which was awarded the



Canadian film *Elephant Shoes* has its world premier at the Montreal World Film Festival Aug. 29.

Canadian Multicultural Award by the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television.

Paul Telner had a chance to sit down and talk to the Canadian filmmaker.

**Paul Telner:** What motivated you to create *Elephant Shoes*?

**Christos Sourligas:** Essentially, I got dumped. My girlfriend of four years woke up one day and walked out, without an explanation. I fell into a spiral for a short while. However, I knew something good would come out of it, so I wrote a film. It's somewhat autobiographical.

*Shoes, see page 33*

• NEPEAN THIS WEEK FRIDAY AUGUST 27, 2004 •

## Movie explores what it's like to have loved and lost

*Said silently,  
"elephant shoes"  
looks like you are saying  
"I love you".*

*Shoes, from page 31*

**PT:** What can audiences expect when they see *Elephant Shoes*?

**CS:** A real, sweet romantic comedy; real people, real dialogue, real experiences that everyone can relate to.

The audience will walk out saying, "Been there, done that."

**PT:** How did you attract such a great team for the

film?

**CS:** Luc Montpellier is probably one of the top young DOP'S (director of photography) in the country. He is a friend from Ryerson Film School. Along with the two actors, Luc just fell in love with the script.

**PT:** What do you hope to accomplish by having your film in this competition?

**CS:** Press, positive

reviews from critics; audiences will help in selling the film to a distributor.

Without a press kit and buzz, it's difficult to shop around.

**PT:** Why should people from Ottawa come to Montréal for the World Film Festival?

**CS:** The World Film Festival is one of the largest film festivals in the world with over 400 films from over 70 countries. It is truly a "world film festival". Audiences will see films that they will never see again.

*Elephant Shoes* will be screened on Sunday, Aug. 29 at 5 p.m. and Monday, Aug. 30 at 1:30 p.m. at Cinema Le Parisien.

*Elephant Shoes* and all other feature-length films presented in the Panorama Canada Section qualify for the audience-chosen Golden Zenith Prize.

When said silently, "elephant shoes" looks like you are saying "I love you".

For more information, please visit [www.elephantshoesmovie.com](http://www.elephantshoesmovie.com) and [www.film-montreal.org](http://www.film-montreal.org)

**\* (Elephant Shoes is) a real, sweet romantic comedy; real people, real dialogue, real experiences that everyone can relate to. The audience will walk out saying, "Been there, done that."**

**• Christos Sourligas  
Canadian filmmaker**



**ELEPHANT SHOES**

A film review by Steve Rhodes

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RATING (0 TO \*\*\*\*): \*\*\* 1/2

ELEPHANT SHOES, written and directed by Christos Sourligas, is a delightful talkfest of a romantic comedy, à la BEFORE SUNRISE. Manny (Greg Shamie) meets Alex (Stacie Morgain Lewis) on the street near his apartment in Montreal. After giving her directions to the hotel where she has a reservation, he ends up, almost on a lark, inviting her out to dinner.

Well, I'm here to report that, after agreeing to just of Alex's two rules -- "no sex" and later "no falling in love" -- they end up never going out to eat, staying instead in his apartment where they spend the evening gabbing and happily violating their two rules.

Every section of the movie has a cute little title, typical of these is "2. Awkwardness." Once in his kitchen to share a glass of white wine, they get giggly. "I get a nervous twitch," he says to her, "when I get to first base." Laughing, she quickly corrects him, "Don't kid yourself. You're still at bat." Their first kisses are interrupted with nervous laughter.

Manny would make Babe Ruth proud. He hits a home run in record time. The sex between them, while not the least bit graphic, is quite passionate, hot and very believable. These are two actors with great chemistry who kiss convincingly, a simple act that movies can't do credibly, and who show real desire for each other. After the sex scene is a stage labeled "3. Denial," but it could have been titled "Buyer's Remorse?" as they each try to figure out if they really did the right thing. She circles the room, avoiding eye contact with him, while he busies himself by throwing a ball as hard as he can into his baseball glove.

Their fling, romance, newly found friendship or whatever it is goes through many more stages that night. Thanks to a smartly written script, all of the stages are cute. When ELEPHANT SHOES ends, you'll feel like you're bidding adieu to a pair of friends with whom you haven't been able to spend nearly as much time as you would have liked.

ELEPHANT SHOES runs 1:29.

The film is being shown as part of San Jose's Cinequest Film Festival ([www.Cinequest.org](http://www.Cinequest.org)), which runs March 2-13, 2005.

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