

Good Mourning, Ian Morgan

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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On his return from the Sundance Film Festival in London, where he premiered his award-winning short film *Good Mourning*, Cape Town-based filmmaker Ian Morgan tells us what winning the first SundanceTV Shorts Competition for South Africa meant to him and what he learnt through this experience.

“It is the first year that SA has been included in the winners, and it really is an honour to have my film screened with such talent,” he said. “Traveling to London was an incredible experience. It was a great opportunity to make some contacts in the industry in London and to learn about what films people are looking for.

“I learnt that people actually enjoy the off-beat characters I create. People are looking for things that stand out, not necessarily abiding by the laws of the real world.”

He goes on...

■ **What was your key takeaway from the experience?**

Don't be afraid to try new ideas and techniques, and most importantly, don't stop making films!

■ **What inspired you to create the film, and what do you think made it stand out?**

“ I often find myself ‘googling’ absurd occupations and the ones that stand out I add to a list of potential film ideas. The professional mourner is actually a real thing and exists all over the world in different forms. ”



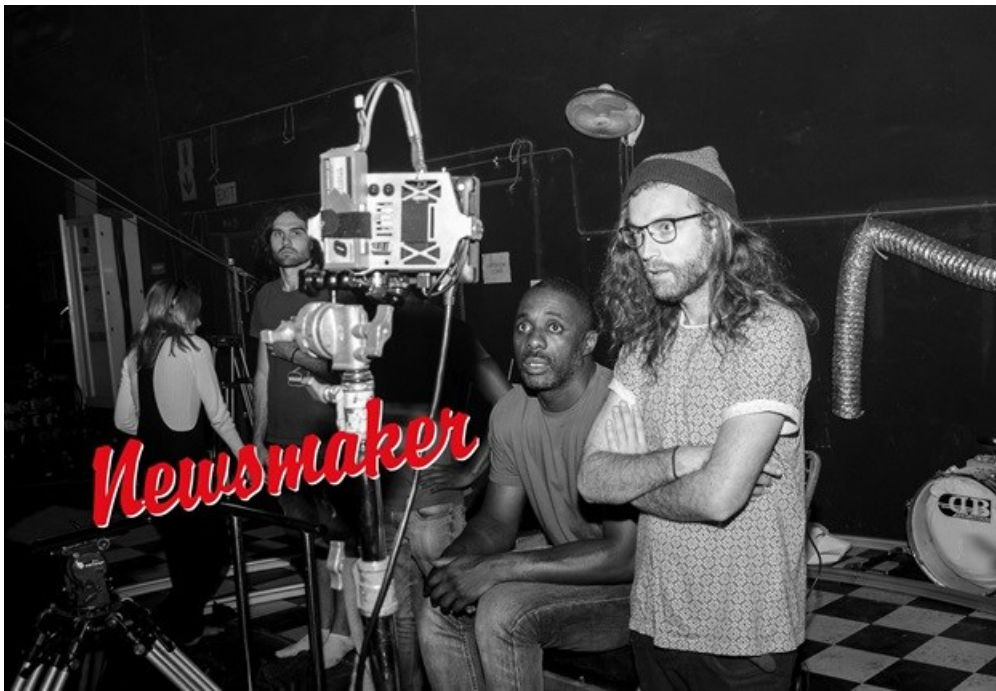
Ian Morgan

It is quite big in Asia where honour is a big thing, so the more people you had at your funeral, the more important you were. I found this an interesting topic as it falls in a bit of a moral grey area: you are lying about your emotional connection to the deceased but are paid to be there.

■ **Why short form?**

Budget. It all comes down to the money. The film was completely self-funded and made for a super low budget. Luckily, we had an awesome cast and crew, and everyone helped out where they could.

I come from an advertising background and the film was initially a personal project to brush up on my directing of characters and dialogue, rather than a montage of beautiful shots with a logo slapped on at the end. It was a breath of fresh air having complete creative control over the film and it turned out so great that we thought, “Hey, let's enter this into festivals.”



■ **Comment on the current state of film in SA.**

“ The South African film industry is in a strange place at the moment. We’re expected to make South African-relevant films, but what does that even mean? ”

We are a country rich with South African stories, but that doesn't mean we should limit ourselves to those stories alone. Films with universal themes should also be told.

My films are predominantly set in an absurdist world that is not solely relevant to a single market. I mean if you look at what our box office is doing, we still go and watch films made internationally; whether it's a Hollywood film or an independent film, I believe that's what the SA market wants. That being said there are local films out there that are doing great at the moment: *The Wound*; *Nommer 27*; and *Five Fingers for Marseilles* are all incredible!

I feel that after being to the Sundance Film Festival: London, we shouldn't actually box ourselves into only making films for a 'South African-relevant' audience, we should start making films for a bigger market. We have such talented people in South Africa with amazing skills, with a talented cast and we shouldn't be lending this out to international clients. We have the skill to do it ourselves, so let's do it!

■ **What does the future of film look like to you.**

I think that the future of film lies with the streaming services, like Netflix and Showmax. I also believe that as attention spans get shorter and shorter, so will the length of the films that are released.

■ **What do you love most about your career?**

I have an awesome job directing at a production company called TinToy Productions, predominately creating adverts. Every day you have a new office and are constantly meeting awesome characters!

Coming from the ad world, where it has predominantly been about creating beautiful images, *Good Mourning* was originally intended to be a project to prove to myself that I could still direct characters in dialogue-driven scenes. Going forward I hope that I can make more films and be a bit more selective with the commercial jobs I take on.

■ **What are you currently reading/watching/listening to for work?**

I have just finished reading *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* by Mark Manson and I'm now reading *The History of Bees* by Maja Lunde, as part of the research for my next short about bees.

 **Tell us something about yourself not generally known.**

Well, to be honest, not many people know my name is actually Ian Morgan. Most clients and friends actually know me as "Bear". I have absolutely no clue why that name has stuck, but it has.

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