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**“Check Please” short wins IFO check  
Shortcuts’ prize goes to DDB’s Larry Ziegelman**

Agency creative Larry Ziegelman’s romantic comedy short, “Check, Please,” based on a family incident, won the Illinois Film Office’s first Shortcuts short film contest.

IFO director Betsy Steinberg presented Ziegelman with a check for \$665 and a crystal star award before his film screened as part of CIFF’s Short Films program Monday night at the AMC River East theatre. Ziegelman, an ACD on the State Farm account at DDB, says he will use the check towards his next, more ambitious comedy that he will direct this weekend.

“Check Please” is about a dinner that descends into bedlam when a young woman is invited to meet her fiancé’s family at a posh restaurant and her fiancé and his father get into a tussle over who will pick up the check.

“This actually happened to my brother, who fought with my dad over paying for dinner,” Ziegelman said. The film he’ll direct this weekend, “You Shouldn’t Have,” is about “a dysfunctional Jewish family,” and is also based on an incident that involved his “Seinfeld-like parents.”

“‘Check, Please’ was more like a test for the new film” – his third in three years. “It’s longer, 15-minutes, a way bigger-budget film, with seven actors and a baby, and it’s being shot in a rental house in Des Plaines,” he said.

An ACD/writer at DDB for a dozen years, Ziegelman started making short films when he had a slow period selling spots to clients. “I had a lot of good ideas, so I said, hey, this would make a good short film.”

“Check Please” was actually an idea for a Capital One spot. “Guys fighting to buy the dinner because they can get miles and I turned it into a short film,” he said.

Both 2005’s “Coffee Break,” and 2007’s “Check Please” have had solid runs on the festival circuit. Although “Check Please” has screened in a dozen festivals, the IFO win is its first.

The IFO introduced Shortcuts last June as a way “to encourage filmmakers across the state to explore their creativity and showcase their skills,” Steinberg said.