

'Food For Thought' Wins Best Silent Film at Italy's 2026 Absurd Film Festival

Gary Hanna and Adam Nelson's sun-struck short takes top honors at Milan, Italy's Absurd Film Festival as the duo prepares their next collab "BUSE!"

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, April 10, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "Food for Thought," the surreal short directed, shot, and edited by Gary Hanna and written by and starring Adam Nelson, has been named Best Silent Film at the 9th annual Festival Del Cinema Assurdo — the [Absurd Film Festival](#) — held at the Auditorium Centro Culturale "Il Pertini" in Cinisello Balsamo, just outside Milan, Italy.

The film will next screen stateside will be at the 26th annual Coney Island Film Festival, playing as part of Program 7 — Music Video/Experimental on Saturday, May 2, 2026 at 7:00 PM at the Coney Island Museum in Brooklyn.

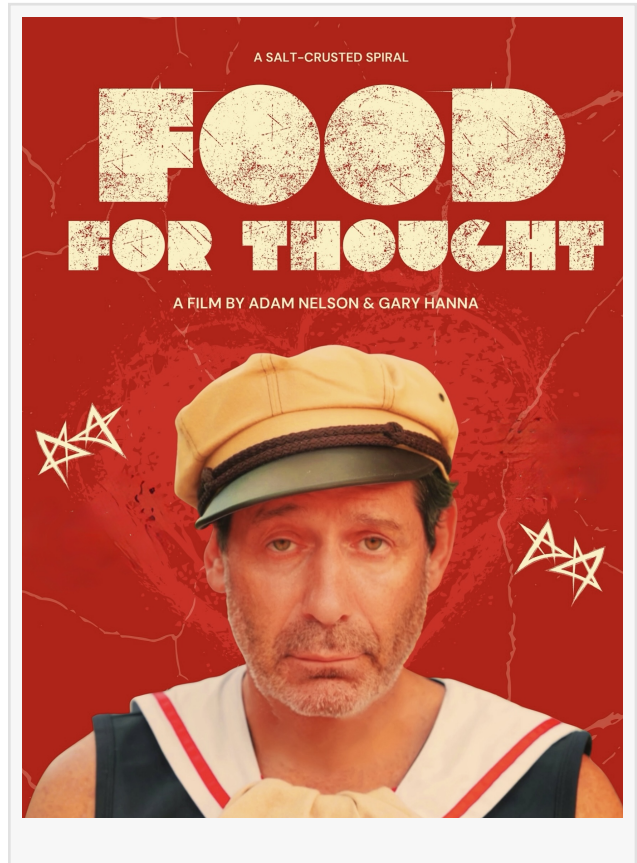
Adrift on the Asbury Park boardwalk, a half-starved sailor searches for scraps — of food, of memory, of meaning. Sun-struck and drifting between hallucination and history, he wanders through the ruins of a world that left him shipwrecked. The result is a salt-rusted meditation on hunger, erasure, and the price of progress.

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*Italy's 2026 Absurd Film
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The Absurd Film Festival celebrates filmmakers who dare to be different, challenge conventions, and break the mold, a fitting home for a film built under extreme creative pressure. "Food for Thought" was created for the AP'N3 Film Challenge, the Asbury Park Arts Council's fiercely

inventive three-week filmmaking competition. On Day One, each team received a theme, prop, line of dialogue, and location, the only ingredients allowed. Competing in the On Location category, every frame had to be filmed entirely within Asbury Park's borders, transforming the city itself into both subject and character.



The win marks the latest chapter in an unlikely creative partnership. Nelson and Hanna first met when Hanna cast Nelson as a subject in *University of the Arts – We're Still Here*, his ongoing documentary series investigating the abrupt 2024 collapse of the nearly 150-year-old Philadelphia institution where both filmmakers studied at very different times — Hanna as a Film major in the Class of 2004, Nelson as a Theatre student in the Class of 1991.

What began as an interview about the shuttered school became a working friendship, and then a creative engine.

Hanna is an accomplished director, cinematographer, editor, and 3D artist whose multi-decade career spans filmmaking, animation, and digital storytelling. He began at Banyan Productions, assisting on *Trading Spaces* and *Ambush Makeover*, before spending more than a decade as a camera operator and live editor at Crystalline Studios, capturing high-profile corporate events with the precision of a newsroom and the polish of a studio feature. As the founder of [Psynema](#), he expanded into 3D animation and game asset production, developing the Houdini-based plugin *Hairdini*, adopted by mainstream gaming studios and featured on 80.lv. His production credits include a Little Caesars commercial for Current TV and an NHL Winter Classic highlight picked up by the league. He continues contract work with New Pace Productions, New Cape Pictures, and ES3D Studios, contributing camera, lighting, and advanced 3D modeling for Unreal Engine medical simulations and RPG environments. Hanna's work blends cinematic instinct with technical innovation — a restless, evolving artist grounded in story, texture, and the drive to elevate every frame.

Nelson is an actor, writer, filmmaker, and founder of Workhouse, the nationally recognized PR agency he has run for nearly three decades. Trained at Houston's High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, the University of the Arts, Yale, and the British American Drama Academy at Oxford, he was a founding member of New York's Workhouse Theater alongside Adrienne Shelly, Mira Sorvino, Calista Flockhart, and Tom Sizemore, and later secured



Absurd Film Festival



Director Gary Hanna

rights from the Lenny Bruce estate to adapt *How to Talk Dirty and Influence People* into an Off-Broadway one-man show. In 2001 he co-produced *The 24 Hour Plays: Broadway for the World Trade Center Relief Fund* and was named a winner of the Writer's Digest International Writing Competition for screenwriting. His previous short, *Flower*, shot on an iPhone during COVID lockdown, won Best Mobile Short at the Berlin Indie Film Festival.

He also serves as Professor and Academic Lead for the New Jersey Film Academy's Script to Screen program, a workforce-development course preparing students for New Jersey's rapidly expanding film and television industry. The curriculum moves from story development and pre-production through on-set protocols, departmental structure, and distribution, bridging the classroom and the working set.

His debut novel, [Huckleberry Jim](#), was developed over six years at The Novelry under a former Penguin Random House editor, and revolves around two actors trying to hold a children's tour of Huckleberry Finn together — while the country tries to tear them apart. The debut novel that rips the curtain down on America's oldest performance.

The Coney Island screening marks the film's Brooklyn debut. Now in its 26th year, the Coney Island Film Festival has been named one of *MovieMaker Magazine's* "25 Film Festivals Worth the Entry Fee" and "25 Coolest Film Festivals," with a reputation for grit, whimsy, and an unapologetically independent spirit fitting for a beachside festival whose past honorees include Darren Aronofsky. The fest is produced by the nonprofit Coney Island USA and screens a deliberately eclectic slate across every genre imaginable.

With the Italian win in hand, Hanna and Nelson are already deep into their next collaboration: *BUSE!*, a factory-inspired comedy that will serve as their official entry in the 2026 AP'N3 Short Film Challenge. Production will begin this summer in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

"Food for Thought" — Awards & Selections

Winner: Best Silent Film, 2026 Absurd Film Festival (Milan, Italy)

Finalist: 2025 AP'N3 Film Challenge, Asbury Park

Credits

Directed by Gary Hanna

Written by Adam Nelson

Produced by Adam Nelson and Gary Hanna

Cinematography & Edited by Gary Hanna

Original Music by Adam Nelson, in collaboration with ElevenLabs

Key Cast

Adam Nelson - "Sailor"

Edmondo Abbruzzese - "Signore"

Nicole Abbruzzese Nelson - "Senora"

Janet Abbruzzese - "Signora"

Jessica Abbruzzese - "Senorita"

And introducing Viva June Nelson as "Baby"

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