



SXSW ANNOUNCES 2026 FILM & TV FESTIVAL JURY AND SPECIAL AWARDS

Film Stills can be found [here](#)

March 18, 2026 | Austin, Texas — **South by Southwest® (SXSW®)** today announced the 2026 SXSW Film & TV Festival Jury and Special Award winners, honoring the superlative creativity and talent demonstrated by filmmakers and designers in the SXSW Film & TV program.

Film & TV projects receiving Jury Awards were selected from the Narrative Feature and Documentary Feature Competition categories, plus all other juried sections, including Shorts, Independent TV Pilots, Music Videos, Poster Design and XR Experience Awards. Special Awards announced include the Agog Immersive Impact Award, Green Lens Award, Janet Pierson Champion Award, NEON Auteur Award, Redbreast Unhidden Award, SXSW Best of Texas Award, and the Vimeo Staff Pick.

"This week reminded me, once again, why we do this," said Claudette Godfrey, VP, Film & TV. "The world has felt heavy. But inside our theaters, something extraordinary happened. Strangers became collaborators, audiences showed up with their whole hearts, and filmmaker after filmmaker reminded us exactly why we gather. We are so proud to celebrate this year's jury and special award winners. Trust us, you're going to be hearing a lot more from them."

All 2026 Film & TV Festival projects will be eligible for category-specific Audience Awards that will be certified by the accounting firm of Maxwell Locke & Ritter. Audience Award voting will conclude on Wednesday, March 18. Winners will be announced via sxsw.com later this week.

See below for all SXSW Film & TV Festival Jury and Special Award winners, with quotes provided by category jurors:

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION presented by Kickstarter

Thank you to our sponsor Kickstarter, the leading crowdfunding and launch platform for creative projects of every size, for supporting the Narrative Feature Competition Film Screening section

Winner: *Wishful Thinking* directed by Graham Parkes

"Taking audiences on a funny, wild, and surprisingly poignant ride, this film follows an electric couple who have a once-in-a-lifetime connection, but soon realize their combustible energy has drastic consequences to the outside world. Remarkable performances conjure grounded, rarely

explored moments in everyday relationships while balancing dramedy with a genre twist in an impressive achievement that deserves high praise.”

Special Jury Award for Performance: Susan Kent, *The Snake*

“With a fearless attitude and a determined spirit, this actor won over the jury with her showstopping performance. Playing the film's central character, a wild child looking to make better decisions after a lifetime of antagonism from her mother and a string of disappointing men, she holds little back while living out her character's worst impulses. Yet she finds the tender, quiet moments for her character to rebuild her life away from anger. Her performance is a masterclass in how the right actor transforms a role and demands to be seen.”

Special Jury Award for Screenwriting: Robb Boardman, Cory Loykasek, Donny Divianian and Frankie Quinones, *Plantman & Blondie: A Dress Up Gang Film*

“How perfect that a caper comedy about solitary men connecting with their neighbors is itself a tribute to collaboration. Together, four screenwriters assembled a script of impressive intricacy and ambition that’s at once serious about the crisis of social isolation, while also being a super silly goodtime. The themes are universal; the jokes and callbacks are tight, specific and hilarious. Best of all, every character in this gigantic ensemble gets a moment to shine. Now that’s teamwork.”

Narrative Feature Competition Jury: *Monica Castillo, Freelance Critic, RogerEbert.com; Amy Nicholson, Film Critic, Los Angeles Times; and Gregory Ellwood, Editor At Large, The Playlist*

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION

Winner: *Summer 2000: The X-Cetra Story* directed by Ayden Mayeri

“Avidly weaving individual stories into a cohesive whole, this delightful and poignant ode to the creativity of childhood examines the bonds of its subjects, and how growing up eroded them. Rather than stepping into an account with a predetermined conclusion, the viewer bears witness to how these four women navigate the thorny road to mending their relationships and reconnect with a part of themselves they had long neglected.”

Special Jury Award: *The Last Critic* directed by Matty Wishnow

“A charming, smart, intimate and affectionate story with a likable down-to-earth subject. But what makes it exceptional is how the director seamlessly builds out a larger context. Through the lens of his subject’s astonishingly long-lived career, the film becomes a wistful memory of old New York, an examination of the ways the media and music industries have changed over the years, and a celebration of a frequently misunderstood but vibrant and essential art form.”

Special Jury Award: *Stormbound* directed by Miko Lim

“An exquisite example of visual storytelling, this film takes audiences into the eye of the most terrifying hurricanes. The Director, Cinematographer and the film’s protagonist used the camera to create a visceral experience that is unparalleled among this year’s competition.”

Documentary Feature Competition Jury: *Carlos Aguilar, Film Critic, Freelance; Tatiana Siegel, Writer at Large, The California Post; and Angie Han, Critic, The Hollywood Reporter*

SHORT FILM COMPETITION Presented by Vimeo

Thank you to our Shorts Program Presenting sponsor, Vimeo: the premier home for video professionals and the best short films on the internet.

NARRATIVE SHORT COMPETITION

Winner: *Souvenir* directed by Renée Marie Petropoulos

“Led by moving, raw performances, this film meets viewers in an intimate space. Layering the complexities of love, trust, and the vulnerability of being perceived, this short is a beautiful piece of storytelling that sheds light on the most intrinsic and intimidating aspects of relationships and girlhood.”

Special Jury Award: *Supper* directed by Savannah Braswell

“The Special Jury Award honors this project for refusing to be the film you expect, and for surprising the audience with a twist that challenges our assumptions. In this digital era of parasocial relationships, this story meets us exactly where we are and dismantles our assumptions about true connection through a moving and generous lens.”

Narrative Short Competition Jury: *Ryan Koo, Founder, No Film School; Rheagan Kearney, Creative Executive, Ley Line Entertainment; and Kara Durrett, President and Head of Film & TV, Pinky Promise Films*

DOCUMENTARY SHORT COMPETITION

Winner: *In The Morning Sun* directed by Serville Poblete

“This film thoughtfully captures the pull of returning to a place once called home. The beautifully crafted imagery reveals a family story full of humor, fear and heart. With honesty and care, it balances the lightness of childhood with the weight of loss, shaping a film that feels intimate, clear, and deeply human.”

Special Jury Award: *Eructation* directed by Victoria Trow

“A fun, informative, breath of fresh air that is visually playful and encourages sonic curiosity. This film is a quirky character study that demonstrates ambition can be applied to even the most obscure pursuits. Delightful and surprising.”

Documentary Short Competition Jury: *Opal H. Bennett, Senior Producer, POV, and Executive Producer, POV Shorts; Anna Klein, Director of Documentary Programming, HBO; Alexis Galfas, Manager, Cinetic Media*

ANIMATED SHORT COMPETITION

Winner: *Paper Trail* directed by Don Hertzfeldt

“Starting, as an artist must, on a blank page, the filmmaker takes us on an extremely intimate journey in an entirely novel way. To watch the protagonist grow across a lifetime – through nothing but his scribbles – is visceral, nostalgic, and emotional. It’s impossible for the audience not to be transported into their own memories, hopes, and fears.”

Special Jury Award: *Hag* directed by Anna Ginsburg

“The one word that all the jurors kept repeating for this short was VOICE. This story is both relatable and totally bonkers in the best way, thanks to the craftsmanship and auteurship of the filmmaker. Its zany, high-wire humor is matched by sharp deliberate creative choices that never lose sight of character. We would be excited to rewatch this film over and over again.”

Animated Short Competition Jury: *Ellen Willis Brenner, Creative Executive, Netflix Animation Studios; Adrian Molina, Director, Pixar Animation Studios; and Kirsten Lepore, Director and Animator*

MIDNIGHT SHORT COMPETITION

Winner: *Tongue* directed by Lim Da seul

“Offering a sharp, satirical taste of a wife suffering under the nonstop talking of her mansplaining husband, the director pulls us fully into the wife’s unique point of view without her uttering a single word, relying instead on an impressive score, meticulous sound design, and expert acting. The film demands our attention, marking Lim as a vital new voice whose transition into feature filmmaking cannot come soon enough.”

Special Jury Award: *Man Eating Pussy* directed by Emily Lawson

“For this special Avant-garde prize, we honor a work of uncompromising audacity that ventures far out to deliver a vision as imaginative as it unapologetic. A conceptually bold, daring, and visceral short that lingers long after the credits roll. With its gorgeous mise-en-scène, the film

strikes a decadent balance between lowbrow provocation and high-art sophistication. It shocked us and left us laughing uncomfortably in all the best ways.”

Midnight Short Competition Jury: *Rebekah McKendry, PhD, Professor of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California; Adam Hendricks, Co-Founder, Divide/Conquer; and Dana Gills Mycoo, EVP of Production & Development, Monkeypaw Productions*

TEXAS SHORT COMPETITION

Winner: *Forcefield of Love* directed by Liz Moskowitz and Riley Engemoen

“This film captivates through the vibrancy of its characters and an innovative, imaginative approach to storytelling. Balancing intimacy, truth, and authenticity, it reveals a deeply human search for an unconditional, nonjudgmental love that we can all aspire to.”

Special Jury Award for Standout Ensemble: *Stalin Boys* directed by Ora DeKornfeld and Bianca Giaever

“Within this distinctive coming-of-age story, a group of inspiring students navigate an evolving educational landscape with imagination and courage. What emerges is something boldly outside the box yet deeply personal—an exploration of identity through art that reflects a generation eager to learn beyond the limits of textbooks. In the end, Malachi, Cayden, Jurem, and Lyric stole our hearts.”

Texas Short Competition Jury: *Ryan McQuade, Executive Editor, AwardsWatch; Seckeita Lewis, Co-founder, Lewis Taylor Productions; and Andrew Logan, Screenwriter, Producer and Journalist*

MUSIC VIDEO COMPETITION

Winner: *Rawayana* and *Bomba Estereo - 'Fogata'* directed by Paola Ossa

“Through its nuanced, artistic approach, this video conveys a sense of emotion that’s powerful and sincere. A gorgeous narrative unfolds through the director’s choice of shots, cinematography, and sound design. The actors’ performances feel understated and natural, leaving the viewer invested in the connection between the characters. A sublime example of less being more, and art working through many small moments to achieve something universal.”

Special Jury Award: *Doechii - 'Anxiety'* directed by James Mackel

“This music video is an example of every element of filmmaking firing on all engines. Every choice is intentional, where the entire concept works brilliantly with the song’s theme of navigating neurosis born from mental chaos without being heavy-handed. A true collaboration

between a magnetic artist putting her vulnerability on display and a director who is able to bring a striking vision to life.”

Music Video Competition Jury: *Marc Fort, Radio Producer, Host and DJ, KUTX 98.9, KUT News, and KOOP 91.7; Warren Fu, Music Video Director; and Julyssa Lopez, Deputy Music Editor, Rolling Stone*

INDEPENDENT TV PILOT COMPETITION

Winner: *In My Blood* from Showrunner and Director Alex Bendo

“Driven by precise storytelling, stellar cinematography and a visceral sound design, this genre-bending pilot takes us on a gruesome journey that explores the obsessive nature in pursuit of perfection. In a grounded world, with twisted family dynamics, a riveting mystery to unfold and buried secrets to reveal for episodes to come, we're thrilled to present the jury award to *In My Blood*.”

Special Jury Award: *Son of a Bikram* from Showrunners and Screenwriters Ash T and Johnny Rey Diaz and Director Johnny Rey Diaz

“This unique spin on cultural identity crisis takes its viewer into a surreal and bizarre universe where you should never meet your heroes. For blending drama and comedy and infusing it with distinct and memorable characters Special Jury recognition goes to *Son of a Bikram*.”

Independent TV Pilot Jury: *Kat Candler, Writer, Director and Producer; Billy Luther, Writer and Director; and Lindsey Villarreal, Writer and Director*

XR EXPERIENCE COMPETITION

Winner: *Body Proxy* by Danny Cannizzaro and Samantha Gorman

“This project impressed the jury with its exemplary use of AI in service of truly innovative storytelling. Playful, sharp, and highly original, it was one of those rare works that is immediately fun while continuing to echo afterwards.”

Special Jury Award: *The Forgotten War* by Hayoun Kwon

“Through embodiment and testimony, this project reminds us that war leaves every body marked and every nation with wounds that can remain open for generations. For its powerful and deeply human use of immersive multiplayer storytelling, the jury is proud to award the Special Jury Prize to *The Forgotten War*.”

XR Experience Jury: *Katayoun Dibamehr, Producer; Fred Volhuer, Executive and Co-Founder, Atlas V; and Michele Ziegler, Executive Director, NewImages*

SPECIAL AWARDS

Agog Immersive Impact Award

Thank you to our sponsor: Designed to inspire creators and changemakers to use XR for good, the Agog Immersive Impact Award recognizes projects that help us all imagine and work toward a more just and sustainable world.

Winner: *A Long Goodbye* directed by Kate Voet and Victor Maes

“This project moved the jury with its hauntingly beautiful portrayal of love and memory at the edge of disappearance. By placing us in the characters' shoes, it uses VR with great sensitivity to make the experience of dementia intimate, tender, and deeply human. For its powerful artistic vision and lasting emotional impact, the jury is proud to award the Impact Prize to *A Long Goodbye*.”

Green Lens Award

Launched this year in partnership with the Sustainable Entertainment Alliance, the Green Lens Award honors the TV or Film project that best reflects our changing world, the human experience of living through the age of climate change, or pathways to a more sustainable future.

Winner: *Plantman & Blondie: A Dress Up Gang Film* directed by Robb Boardman

“A refreshingly creative reflection on connection, responsibility, and what it means to care for the world around us, this film uses humor and absurdity to explore our relationship with nature and the power it has to bring us together. The story's contrasts sharpen its environmental themes. The film highlights the quiet but meaningful act of nurturing life, reminding us that even small gestures of care can challenge apathy and spark change. We hope comedies like this encourage creatives to take on a ‘Green Lens’ in their stories across any genre, so that the future of climate and environmental content can continue to relate to a broad audience with laughter, love, and some truly crazy capers.”

Janet Pierson Champion Award

Winner: Benjamin Wiessner

“The Janet Pierson Champion Award highlights someone with an independent spirit, a collaborative nature, and a valiant supporter of the independent film ecosystem. This year's recipient is prolific producer Benjamin Wiessner, whose outstanding work ethic and clear passion fits all of the criteria and then some.”

NEON Auteur Award

As an award-winning champion of not just films, but filmmakers and film festivals, NEON is a guiding force in independent cinema.

Winner: *The Peril at Pincer Point* directed by Jake Kuhn and Noah Stratton-Twine

“It’s a miracle when any movie is made, but it’s particularly miraculous when a movie is so quixotic and singular that it somehow feels like it’s willing itself into existence as you’re watching it. That’s certainly the case with Jake Kuhn and Noah Stratton-Twine’s *The Peril at Pincer Point*, a truly wonderful discovery at this year’s festival.”

Redbreast Unhidden Award

In collaboration with SXSW Film & TV Festival and Andrew Scott, Redbreast Single Pot Still Irish Whiskey is championing the discovery of bold and original stories through the Redbreast Unhidden Award — an honour recognising an independent short filmmaker whose work brings fresh perspectives to the screen. The Redbreast Unhidden Award aims to celebrate the most exciting emerging talent in short film at this year's festival.

Winner: *We Were Here* directed by Pranav Bhasin

“A clever and funny perspective on the everyday infiltration of technology into our lives. The story is wonderfully simple, yet manages to ask big questions about humanity, our relationship with technology, and with each other. In just 10 short minutes, this director captures the balance between the absurd, the alarming, and the all-important power of imperfect love. This filmmaker has a bright future ahead of them!”

SXSW Best of Texas Award

Winner: *Stages* directed by Ryan Booth

“Ryan Booth’s *Stages* is both a heartfelt tribute to what it takes to endure in an often unforgiving industry, and a moving portrait of life as an artist in and around Texas. It’s filled with complex emotion, moving music, and a deep admiration for the Lone Star State.”

Vimeo Staff Pick

Winner: *Mantis Stream! Like & Subscribe* directed by Lincoln Robisch and Sarah Maerten (CLUSTERFUCK!)

“A disturbing downward spiral into the underworld of the internet, this film is a heart attack, a kink-fest, and a funeral for our attention span all in one. We applaud the way it holds up a mirror to the human choreography of shame online that is the insufferable, relentless pursuit of recognition and fame while never losing its savage comic nerve.”

About SXSW

SXSW dedicates itself to helping creative people achieve their goals. Founded in 1987 in Austin, Texas, SXSW is known worldwide for conferences and festivals that celebrate the convergence of technology, film and television, music, education, comedy and culture. The annual event serves global professionals through sessions, showcases, screenings, exhibitions, and networking that consistently generates unexpected discoveries when diverse communities come together. SXSW 2026 runs March 12-18 in downtown Austin, preceded by SXSW EDU March 9-12. Learn more at sxsw.com.

SXSW continues to connect creative communities around the world through its flagship event in Austin and SXSW London, which launched in 2025—reflecting SXSW’s commitment to fostering meaningful exchange across culture, technology, and creativity.

SXSW 2026 is Driven by Rivian.

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