



SXSW FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2021 JURY AND SPECIAL AWARDS

Austin, Texas, Tuesday, March 19, 2021—The South by Southwest® (SXSW®) Conference and Festivals announced the 2021 Jury and Special Award winners of the 28th SXSW Film Festival. Feature films receiving Jury Awards were selected from the Narrative Feature and Documentary Feature Competition categories. SXSW also announced all other juried sections, including Shorts, Design and Virtual Cinema Awards. Special Awards announced included: Louis Black “Lone Star” Award, Adobe Editing Award, Adam Yauch Hörnblowér Award, Final Draft Screenwriters Award, ZEISS Cinematography Award, the Mailchimp Support the Shorts Award and the Brightcove Illumination Award which honors a filmmaker on the rise, celebrating the innovation and creativity of new artists within the SXSW Film Festival official selections. The 2021 SXSW Film Festival Awards are presented by Brightcove.

All film categories, except Special Events, will be eligible for category-specific Audience Awards, which will be certified by the accounting firm of Maxwell Locke & Ritter. After screenings conclude at 11:59 CT on Saturday, registrants have Sunday until 11:59pm CT time to vote. More information [here](#). Winners will be announced via [sxsww.com](#) on Tuesday, March 23.

“We are so honored by the 2021 filmmakers who entrusted their work to us for this online version of our event, and joined us on this new adventure in such a beautiful way,” said Janet Pierson, Director of Film. “We are thrilled we could launch great new projects and talent in this pandemic year, and hope the films, sessions, music and gatherings online and in virtual reality, showcased the resilience, perseverance and creativity of our community.”

The 2021 SXSW Film Festival Juries consisted of:

Narrative Feature Competition: Amanda N’Duka, Jake Coyle, Joanna Robinson

Documentary Feature Competition: Jacqueline Coley, Sean Fennessey, Steven Zeitchik

Louis Black “Lone Star”: Joe Gross, Ann Hornaday, Stephen Saito

Brightcove Illumination Award: Clayton Davis, Kate Erbland, Inkoo Kang

Narrative Shorts Program: Janicza Bravo, Karen Han, Ina Pira

Documentary Shorts: Opal H. Bennett, Omid Fatemi, Sheila Nevins

Animated Shorts: Bryan Dimas, Chris Pynoski, Taylor K. Shaw

Midnight Shorts: Jason Blum, Arbi Pedrossian, Kristy Puchko

Music Videos: Hugo Burnham, Michael Kauffman, Kristian Mercado

Texas Shorts: Sarah Green, Paula Mejía, Monique Walton

Texas High School Shorts: Laura Kincaid, Hans-Martin Liebing, Cooper Raiff

Episodic Pilots: Jessica Derschowitz, Yassir Lester, Ben Wasserstein

Excellence in Title Design: Brian Mah, Brian Merrell, Erin Sarofsky

Excellence in Poster Design: Damon Nelson, Yen Tan, Erica Williams

Virtual Cinema Competition Jury: Myriam Achard, Jesse Damiani, Liz Rosenthal

The 2021 Film Festival program has 75 features including 57 World Premieres, 3 International Premieres, 4 North American Premieres, 1 U.S. Premieres, 8 Texas Premieres and 53 films from first-time filmmakers + 84 Short Films including Music Videos, 5 Episodic Premieres, 6 Episodic Pilots, 20 Virtual Cinema projects, 14 Title Design entries, plus 34 Special Events.

Films will continue to be available on the SXSW Online platform until 11:59 CT on March 20. SXSW will continue running the Online Shift72 Screening Library through **March 31, 2021**, for those films that have opted-in to the extended timeframe.

The 2021 SXSW Film Festival Awards:

Feature Film Grand Jury Awards

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION

Winner: *The Fallout*

Director: Megan Park

“*The Fallout* takes us through the emotionally charged healing journey of a young girl whose life is forever changed in the wake of a school tragedy. Writer and director Megan Park delivers a timely, riveting, and thought-provoking film on the toll it takes on a teenager who is facing a world where they no longer feel safe. It is an intense, moving piece that highlights an important issue to which one can’t help but feel connected.”

Special Jury Recognition for Multi-hyphenate Storyteller: *I’m Fine (Thanks for Asking)*

Directors: Kelley Kali, Angelique Molina

“Kelley Kali’s *I’m Fine (Thanks for Asking)*, financed in part by stimulus relief checks, is a marvel of multitasking and resourcefulness. Kali’s film, which she wrote, directed, produced and stars in, winningly captures the pandemic plight of a homeless, roller-skating single mother over a memorable daylong odyssey.”

Special Jury Recognition for Breakthrough Performance: *Islands*

Director: Martin Edralin

Actor: Rogelio Balagtas

“*Islands* gives us the story of a painfully shy man set adrift in the world by the declining health of the parents who sheltered him. This story, of someone blooming late in life, hinges on the tremendously compelling, interior performance from relative newcomer Rogelio Balagtas who can break hearts throughout with his tears and enables the movie to transcend with a single smile.”

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION

Winner: *Lily Topples the World*

Director: Jeremy Workman

“A joyful portrait of grace in artistry and commitment in engineering, *Lily Topples the World* shows a life online that transcends virality and touches something deeper. In Lily Hevesh, aka Hevesh5, the film features a collaborative, creative soul who comes by community and entrepreneurship naturally. A rare achievement in nonjudgmental subcultural exploration and a gorgeously rendered portrait of burgeoning adulthood that tumbles forward, like Lily’s domino art, into something beautiful.”

Special Jury Recognition for Exceptional Intimacy in Storytelling: *Introducing, Selma Blair*

Director: Rachel Fleit

“Selma Blair’s unflinching and raw vulnerability in *Introducing, Selma Blair*, coupled with director Rachel Fleit’s almost voyeuristic chronicling of her MS diagnosis, invites us not just to feel empathy for the star. More than that, it invites us into her fight, prompting anyone watching to feel joined with her in battle. That level of disarming intimacy is rarely witnessed on screen, particularly from a public figure, making the feat all the more incredible.”

Special Jury Recognition for Humanity in Social Action: *Not Going Quietly*

Director: Nicholas Bruckman

“Activist is a word much used in contemporary culture. But few give expression to it like Ady Barkan, a California organizer who, upon being diagnosed with ALS in his early 30s, responds not with self-pitying convalescence but by barnstorming his fight across the country, bringing a movement with him. Barkan’s tale suggests that grace is not incompatible with ardor, and hardship no obstacle to achievement. Bruckman’s film captures him and the powerful women who lead his fight in ways that are richly human, always affectionate and frequently rousing.”

Short Film Grand Jury Awards

NARRATIVE SHORTS

Winner: *Play It Safe*

Director: Mitch Kalisa

“We were so thrilled by the varied, inventive selection of films in the Narrative Shorts competition this year. Of the shorts, we have decided to award the Jury Award to *Play It Safe*, for approaching oft-addressed topics in a new way, for its incredible main performance, for its thoughtful direction, and compelling cinematography.”

Special Jury Recognition for Visionary Storytelling: *Don't Go Tellin' Your Momma*

Directors: Topaz Jones, rubberband.

“We are awarding *Don't Go Tellin' Your Momma* a Special Jury Recognition for Visionary Storytelling for its bold filmmaking and mix of music, visuals, and documentary footage.”

Special Jury Recognition for Direction: *Like the Ones I Used to Know*

Director: Annie St-Pierre

“We are awarding *Like the Ones I Used to Know* a Special Jury Recognition for Direction, as its weaving between reality and flights of fancy make it a Christmas tale to remember. Congratulations to all of the filmmakers this year, and thank you for your new works!”

DOCUMENTARY SHORTS

Winner: *Águilas*

Directors: Kristy Guevara-Flanagan, Maite Zubiaurre

“*Águilas* is a film that most poignantly displays the need immigrants feel to come to America — even at the cost of starvation and death. Failed attempts are presented by a backpack, a sweater, and scattered bones. How desperate the dream is of a perfect landing that ends so tragically.”

Special Jury Recognition for Courage: *Red Taxi*

Director: Anonymous

“*Red Taxi* is a film that is being recognized for its courage. The type of courage that spans the definition of the word. The subjects are courageous, the filmmakers are courageous and the film itself is courageous both stylistically and in the way it speaks on an issue through editing that is measured, considered and understanding of the complexities of the post-colonial project.”

Special Jury Recognition for Poetry: *I Ran From It and Was Still in It*

Director: Darol Olu Kae

“Its title invites audiences to expect a wholly distinct storytelling experience and this film delivers. For its audacious storytelling through textured imagery, bold structure and lyrical approach, we award this special achievement to *I Ran From It and Was Still In It*.”

MIDNIGHT SHORTS

Winner: *The Moogai*

Director: Jon Bell

“*The Moogai* is a haunting, psychological thriller that explores postpartum depression in an impressive display of disciplined filmmaking that stuck the landing at every pivotal moment. The cinematography is striking, the actor’s performances are brave, and the underlying commentary on a country’s forced removal of generations of children is heartbreaking. Filmmaker Jon Bell’s film affected us on so many levels that we proudly recognize it with the Jury Award prize.”

Special Jury Recognition for Bold Vision: *Stuffed*

Director: Theo Rhys

“*Stuffed* proudly presents a story grisly and grotesque yet beautifully bittersweet. Director and co-writer Theo Rhys stitches together a world of rot, flesh, and leather, then brings it to radiant life with curious characters and striking songs of dark dreams, lifting love, and the ultimate sacrifice. It is with shock and awe that we award this strange and sensational short a Jury Recognition for Bold Vision.”

ANIMATED SHORTS

Winner: *Nuevo Rico*

Director: Kristian Mercado

“Be prepared for this dystopian tragedy to rip your hair out by the roots and pour liquid vaporwave rainbows directly onto your brain’s tongue. A cautionary tale of friendship and fame, *Nuevo Rico* slaps convention to the ground and stomps on it with steel toed boots of satisfying stylistic innovation. Kristian Mercado Figueroa doesn’t give a fuck — and gives all the fucks at the same time. If you’ve never wrestled a laser snake in a Lambo going two hundred off a cliff into an iridescent volcano, *Nuevo Rico* will make you feel like you have.”

Special Jury Recognition for Innovation: *KKUM*

Director: Kang Min Kim

“An awe inspiring masterclass in creativity, resourcefulness, and innovative lighting and stop-motion techniques. This film manages to elevate simplistic materials to create mesmerizing sequences, while also taking you on a poetic, dreamy, and emotional journey that serves as a beautiful tribute to a mother’s love.”

Special Jury Recognition for Storytelling: *Your Own Bullshit*

Director: Daria Kopiec

“We the jury have selected *Your Own Bullshit* for a Jury Recognition for Storytelling for its masterful and experimental take on a vastly relatable human story. Its stylistic choices, humor, sound design, character development, and pace bring excitement to a topic under which it is not easy to push boundaries. Yet, it does just that.”

MUSIC VIDEOS

Winner: *Madame Gandhi - 'Waiting for Me'*

Director: Misha Ghose

“Of all the wonderful works nominated, *Madame Gandhi's 'Waiting for Me'*, directed by Misha Ghose, soared to the top for its compelling visuals, rich color palettes, and vital message of empowerment and self-expression. The video supported and enhanced both the song and the artist. This video and this artist deserve to be shared, seen, and heard by everyone. Everywhere.”

Special Jury Recognition for How the Hell Did They Do That?!: *Waze & Odyssey, George Michael, Mary J. Blige & Tommy Theo - 'Always'*

Director: Nelson de Castro

“The Jury would also like to award the music video for *'Always'* by Waze & Odyssey with a Special Jury *'How the Hell Did They Do That?!'* recognition.”

Special Jury Recognition for Pure Joy: *Kuricorder Quartet - 'Southpaw'*

Director: Sawako Kabuki

“The Jury would further like to recognize for pure joy, the music video, *'Southpaw'* by Kuricorder Quartet, directed by Sawako Kabuki.”

TEXAS SHORTS

Winner: *Summer Animals*

Director: Haley Elizabeth Anderson

“*Summer Animals*, Haley Elizabeth Anderson’s short film entry for SXSW 2021, captivated us with its naturalistic style and layered approach to storytelling. Ostensibly a story about three siblings and their quest to find a moment of relief — or a pool to cannonball into — during a particularly grueling summer, the film evolves into something else entirely, and is anchored by the cast’s stellar performances and Anderson’s clear-eyed direction.”

Special Jury Recognition for Vision: *O Black Hole!*

Director: Renee Zhan

“This imaginative journey explores a literal impression of its title and a figurative one. It’s

otherworldly imagery, music and sound design combined for an emotional experience that surprised us at every turn.”

TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL SHORTS

Winner: *A Really Dark Comedy*

Director: Manasi Ughadmathe

“*A Really Dark Comedy* is a well-crafted comedy short that weaves together great comedic timing, excellent chemistry between its two leads, and some surprising twists. We found it to be a breath of fresh air in a pandemic year where everyone could use a (really dark) laugh.”

Special Jury Recognition for Directing: *Beyond the Model*

Director: Jessica Lin

“The power of this documentary comes from the artistry and sensitivity of its director, Jessica Lin. Parts observational and parts reflexive, *Beyond the Model’s* clear voice stems from a desire to allow its subjects to breathe and share, making for an organic, poignant, and insightful short.”

EPISODIC PILOT COMPETITION

Winner: *4 Feet High*

Directors: Maria Belen Poncio, Rosario Perazolo Masjoan

“For its beautifully cinematic and heartfelt coming-of-age story, with a confident performance from a standout lead actress, the jury is awarding this year’s top prize to *4 Feet High*. The episode is thrillingly unique from its opening minutes, with a strong point of view and an engaging central character whose journey feels keenly specific but also evokes universal high school experiences — and while the story takes its time, there is never a wasted frame. We commend the cast and creative team for telling this a moving story in such an assured way.”

Special Jury Recognition for Best Duo: *Pretend Partners*

Director: Ron Najor

“For their witty script and genuine onscreen chemistry, the Special Jury Recognition for Best Duo goes to Kristin Erickson and Ron Najor for *Pretend Partners*. As showrunners, screenwriters, producers, and stars of the project (in addition to Najor directing), Erickson and Najor created an inventive take on the romantic comedy that was sweet and hilarious in equal measure, and then carried that story themselves as its central characters.”

SXSW Film Design Awards Presented by Adobe

POSTER DESIGN COMPETITION

Winner: *Bob Moses Featuring ZHU - 'Desire'*

Creative Director: Owen Brown, Art Director and Illustrator: Benjámín Kalászi, Graphic Designer: Diego L. Rodríguez (Paramoidme)

“A visually gripping design, this poster draws you into a surreal moment frozen in time where something you want so badly seems just out of reach. We were struck by the electric color palette, bold typography and dreamy illustration style that evokes flight, time travel and science fiction. Everything in this poster just feels intriguing and we are so excited to award the Excellence in Poster Design Winner to “*Desire*!”

Special Jury Recognition: *The Box*

Designers: James Burns and Shal Ngo, Aleksander Walijewski

“A mix of bold graphics, creative typography, and emotive imagery, this poster grabs attention and pulls you into the narrative of prisoners in criminal reform systems and isolation. Spending a moment with the imagery feels like a window into the film and the minds of those enduring their own boxes, both tangible and the ones built in our minds. Overall, this poster was interesting, thought provoking, and wove together narrative and design in striking ways. Brava! We’re thrilled to give a Special Jury Recognition to “The Box”!”

TITLE DESIGN COMPETITION

Winner: *The Queen’s Gambit Title Sequence*

Designer: Saskia Marka

“Using simple geometric forms and a restrained palette, these titles spring to life through elegant motion design that captures the spirit of the protagonist’s brilliant mental calculations.”

Special Jury Recognition: *Birds Of Prey and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn Title Sequence*

Designer: Michael Riley

“This sequence embodies everything a great title should: The tone is a perfect match for the movie, the style is unique and ownable, and the visual narrative keeps the audience engaged and delighted throughout.”

VIRTUAL CINEMA COMPETITION

Winner: *Samsara*

Director: Huang Hsin-Chien

“*Samsara* provokes existential questions about the future of humanity and consciousness. From the evolution of users’ hands to the rhythmic juxtaposition of vignettes, every detail is

weighted in metaphor. The result is a work that compresses a universe into a few minutes; audiences are left to reflect on humanity as a collective macro-organism—as experienced through the machine.”

Special Jury Recognition for Immersive Journalism: *Reeducated*

Director: Sam Wolson

“*Reeducated* offers a glimpse into a horrifying world obscured from public view. Through illustration and testimony from three people who lived through the internment camps in Xinjiang, we learn about the brutal practices used against the Uyghur ethnic minority. It’s a striking piece of 360 cinema that makes a clear argument for the unique affordances of immersive formats for telling stories, establishing a powerful logic and vocabulary through the use of composition, scale, pace, and perspective.”

SXSW Special Awards

Brightcove Illumination Award

The Brightcove Illumination Award honors a filmmaker on the rise, celebrating the innovation and creativity of new artists within the SXSW Film Festival official selections.

Brightcove Illumination Award

Presented to: *The Fallout*

Director: Megan Park

“For her empathetic and honest exploration of life after tragedy, inspired craft, and stellar guidance of a talented young cast, we award the Brightcove Illumination Award to Megan Park for her *The Fallout*.”

Adam Yauch Hörnblowér Award

In honor of a filmmaker whose work strives to be wholly its own, without regard for norms or desire to conform. The Adam Yauch Hörnblowér Award is presented to a filmmaker from our Visions screening category.

Adam Yauch Hörnblowér Award

Presented to: *Delia Derbyshire - the Myths and the Legendary Tapes*

Director: Caroline Catz

Adobe Editing Award

Adobe is committed to celebrating creativity for all and empowering everyone to bring their stories to life. By creating greater opportunity for all voices, we can enact change in our communities and move the world forward. We are proud to celebrate the art and craft of editing

as we grant the Adobe Editing Award at the SXSW Film Awards. We are also pleased to spotlight this year's incredible title and poster designers through the Film Design Awards presented by Adobe.

Adobe Editing Award

Presented to: *R#J*

Editor: Lam Nguyen

Final Draft Screenwriters Award

Final Draft, the industry standard in screenwriting software, is proud to support SXSW and provide the second SXSW Final Draft Screenwriters Award. We pride ourselves in shining a spotlight on new voices in the writing and filmmaking community, and coming together with like-minded organizations, such as SXSW, that share the same core values. A huge congratulations to this year's recipient from all of us at Final Draft!

Final Draft Screenwriters Award

Presented to: *Paul Dood's Deadly Lunch Break*

Screenwriters: Brook Driver, Matt White, and Nick Gillespie

Louis Black "Lone Star" Award

To honor SXSW co-founder/director Louis Black, a jury prize was created in 2011 called the Louis Black "Lone Star" Award, presented to a feature film world premiering at SXSW that was shot primarily in Texas or directed by a current resident of Texas. (Opt-in Award)

Louis Black "Lone Star" Award

Winner: *Without Getting Killed or Caught*

Directors: Tamara Saviano, Paul Whitfield

"This year's Lone Star Award goes to Tamara Saviano and Paul Whitfield's remarkable *Without Getting Killed or Caught*, an examination of not just the life of legendary Texas singer-songwriter Guy Clark but the complicated, fascinating relationship between himself, his wife Susanna and his best friend Townes Van Zandt, all of whom made extraordinary work together and apart. The storytelling was graceful, densely layered and immersive."

ZEISS Cinematography Award

ZEISS Cine Lenses is honored to be returning this year to support the SXSW film community in the Cinematography category. We believe that by supporting the art within the frame, ZEISS helps filmmakers realize their creative vision.

ZEISS Cinematography Award

Winner: *Gaia*

Cinematographer: Jorrie van der Walt

Mailchimp Support the Shorts Award

Mailchimp is committed to uplifting and supporting creators. We're so proud to support SXSW by helping short films win big. We congratulate the honorees of the Support the Shorts Award and Special Jury Recognition as well as the entire SXSW-invited filmmaking community.

Mailchimp Support the Shorts Award

Presented to: *Chuj Boys of Summer*

Director: Max Walker-Silverman

“With its gentle, observant eye, *Chuj Boys of Summer* offers a vision of unexpected compassion and tender masculinity. Director Max Walker-Silverman and writer Marcos Ordoñez Ixwalanhkej Mendoza know too much about the world to provide convenient answers to the film's complicated questions, so they instead focus on the little gestures that define their characters' lives. Against the grandeur of the San Juan Mountains, these small moments become unspeakably powerful.”

Mailchimp Support the Shorts Special Jury Recognition

Presented to: *Like the Ones I Used to Know*

Director: Annie St-Pierre

“Weaving a Christmas tale filled with familiar indignities, Annie St-Pierre and her talented ensemble deftly transform heartbreak into levity while always staying one step ahead of the audience. As every emotion imaginable plays across the cast's astonishing faces, it's the heroes' crumpled dignity that leaves us smiling.”

Mailchimp Support the Shorts Special Jury Recognition

Presented to: *Malignant*

Director: Morgan Bond, Nickolas Grisham

“In its combination of rich characterization and mysterious camera work, *Malignant* manages to conjure a uniquely cinematic sense of hallucinatory tension. We honestly can't pinpoint exactly what it is that directors Morgan Bond and Nickolas Grisham have done to create this much unease, but thanks to their mesmerizing talents, *Malignant's* climax floods the senses and lingers long after the film is over.”

SXSW is proud to be an official qualifying festival for the Academy Awards® Short Film competition. Winners of our Best Animated, Best Narrative and Best Documentary Short Film categories become eligible for Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awards (Oscars). Any British Short Film or British Short Animation that screens at SXSW is eligible for BAFTA nomination. Films are also eligible for the Independent Spirit Awards, more information on eligibility [here](#).

Film Stills and Headshots: <http://fif.sxsw.com/media>

Publicists for projects in program: [Publicists List](#)

About SXSW

SXSW dedicates itself to helping creative people achieve their goals. Founded in 1987 in Austin, Texas, SXSW is best known for its conference and festivals that celebrate the convergence of the interactive, film, and music industries. In 2021, the event moves to a digital format. SXSW Online offers conference sessions, music showcases, film screenings, exhibitions, and a variety of networking and professional development opportunities. An essential destination for global professionals, SXSW Online 2021 will take place March 16 - March 20. For more information, please visit sxsw.com.

SXSW Online 2021 Platinum Partners are White Claw, High Grade Hemp Seed, Showtime, Mountain Dew Rise Energy and *The Austin Chronicle*.

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