

PRESS RELEASE

Sony Future Filmmaker Awards Announce Shortlist for 2025 Edition



APRIL 29, 2025 — The Sony Future Filmmaker Awards announce today the shortlist for the 2025 edition. Selected for their outstanding originality, the 30 shortlisted filmmakers across four categories—Fiction, Non-Fiction, Animation, and Student—are awarded the unique opportunity to attend a four-day immersive program behind-the-scenes at the Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City from **June 2-5, 2025**, and culminating in the Awards ceremony on **June 5, 2025** where the four category winners are revealed.

Now in their third year, the Awards were established by Creo in partnership with Sony to nurture the filmmaking talent of tomorrow and to provide a portal into the industry for filmmakers from across the globe. Each year the shortlisted filmmakers are flown to Los Angeles for an extensive program of workshops, screenings and events, fostering talent through opportunities to expand filmmakers' networks and giving them direct experiences right in the heart of Hollywood.

The 2025 shortlist was chosen from over 11,750 films submitted by more than 7,500 filmmakers across 158 countries and territories. The shortlist features a truly global panorama of filmmaking; with entries from Australia, Burundi, Chile, Colombia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and the United States. The selected works span a diverse array of stories, including a tense drama about an inmate firefighter battling parole denial amidst a historic blaze, a poignant tale of Chilean shellfish divers

searching for answers about a missing relative under Pinochet's regime, an animated fable of a piglet and a wolf forging an unlikely friendship, an elderly fieldworker outshining her AI substitute, and a stirring exploration of Australia's First Nations using fire to renew the land.

The 30 shortlisted filmmakers proceed to the next stage of judging from which the four category winners will be chosen by a panel of industry leaders which includes filmmaker and writer **Minhal Baig** (*We Grown Now, Hala, BoJack Horseman*); President of 3000 Pictures **Elizabeth Gabler** (*Where the Crawdads Sing*, upcoming *Klara and the Sun, Life of Pi*); Academy Award®-nominated filmmaker **Jason Reitman** (*Saturday Night, Ghostbusters: Afterlife, Juno*); and award-winning theater, television and film director and Chair of the Jury **Justin Chadwick** (*Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom, The Other Boleyn Girl, Shardlake*).

Justin Chadwick, Chair of the Jury, says: *"These 30 filmmakers don't only tell stories—they create whole new cinematic worlds. From tales of defiance in the face of adversity, to stories of hope for our planet, the films that make up this year's shortlist have the power to transport their audiences. Chairing this jury for the third year, I am once again deeply impressed and encouraged as we look to the future of filmmaking through the eyes of these brilliant talents."*

Taking center stage at the Sony Pictures Studios' historic Scenic Arts Building, the Awards ceremony on June 5 is hosted by Emmy-award winner Denny Directo (Entertainment Tonight), unveiling the four category winners who are awarded with cash prizes and Sony Digital Imaging equipment. The ceremony follows an extensive four-day program for the shortlisted 30 filmmakers at the iconic Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City, offering an exclusive opportunity to learn from and connect with both their peers and industry leaders. Peeling back the curtain on Hollywood's inner workings, through sessions led by Sony Pictures executives the filmmakers dive into everything from cinematography masterclasses, to navigating talent deals, demonstrations of cutting-edge tech, and learning about the art of soundtracking a story.

The films and filmmakers shortlisted for the Sony Future Filmmaker Awards 2025 are:

FICTION

The **Fiction** category rewards narrative-led submissions that convey an original fictional story or event.

- **Miguel Angel Caballero & Luis Antonio Aldana** (USA), [*The Ballad of Tita and the Machines*](#) - In an AI-driven future, an elderly fieldworker is forced to contend with her robot substitute, but when it fails to compete with her she draws the attention of its creators.
- **Ethan Evans & Jess Bartlett** (UK), [*Outside Noise*](#) - A woman's sleep app blurs reality and conjures a terrifying presence in her room.
- **Alexis Gómez** (México), [*Bumbumpapá*](#) - A father fights to preserve his daughter's innocence amid the darkness and uncertainty of war.
- **Meng Han Hsieh** (Taiwan) & **Menna Morgan** (UK), [*The Test*](#) - A woman taking her UK citizenship tests faces hostility and micro-aggressions, escaping into her imagination to express herself.
- **Irene Lopez & Robin Asselmeyer** (Sweden), [*Killing R*](#) - In an AI-integrated future a mother fantasizes about destroying her household clone.
- **Linda Ludwig** (Germany) & **James Curle** (UK), [*Under the Blue*](#) - A worn out police officer on a late shift is brought in to investigate a petty crime, finding more than meets the eye.

- **Andrew McGee** (UK), [*First Sight*](#) - Luna is finally ready to re-enter the world of dating, but her reliance on her smart contact lenses takes a dark turn.
- **Rossana Montoya** (Colombia), [*My Demon*](#) - As they race to the hospital for the imminent birth of their first child, Eva and Jacobo clash over their relationship.
- **Florine & Kim Nüesch** (Switzerland), [*Marriage Unplugged*](#) - A couple's sex robot experiment exposes hidden fractures in their marriage.
- **Robin Takao D'Oench** (USA), [*Fireline*](#) - An inmate firefighter who has been denied parole battles a wildfire while yearning to return home.

NON-FICTION

The **Non-Fiction** category awards short films that are predominantly factual in content. These can include archive footage, documentary footage, reenactments and animation.

- **César Flores Correa** (México), [*A Field That No Longer Smells of Flowers*](#) - In the municipality of Villa Guerrero in Mexico flower growers and their families grapple with the impact of the toxic chemicals used to cultivate the flowers.
- **Will Hewitt & Austen McCowan** (UK), [*Have You Seen The Beast?*](#) - The filmmakers probe a mysterious big cat sighting in Wales through a series of eerie local testimonies.
- **Kieran Hodges** (New Zealand) & **Eduardo Vento** (Portugal), [*Justice Brothers*](#) - Young surfers in Ghana help to empower local women through a surf school.
- **Juliet Klottrup** (UK), [*Travelling Home*](#) - An English Romany Traveller reflects on his heritage and the annual pilgrimage to Appleby Fair.
- **Annabel Moodie** (UK), [*Friends on the Outside*](#) - An incarcerated man finds solace in foraging and connecting to nature.
- **Loic Niyonkuru & Floriane Kaneza** (Burundi), [*Before 16*](#) - A woman recounts her experiences raising her child after a traumatic assault at age 16.
- **Stefan Pollak** (UK), [*ALT Jay*](#) - A disabled man's passion for CrossFit helps break barriers and create community with support from his identical twin.
- **Kirsten Slemint** (Australia), [*Burnt Country*](#) - First Nations wisdom, 65,000 years in the making, uses fire to fight fire and offers lessons for Australia's ecological future.
- **Riah Taipodia** (India), [*Khiew Ranei \(Black Clay\)*](#) - A 9-year-old inherits her village's pottery tradition, passed down through generations and carefully preserved.
- **Shaquille Zaki Nathandra & Quina Qaumitaquna Mirxela** (Indonesia), [*Tanah Kitai \(Our Land\)*](#) - Borneo's Iban youth fight to preserve their land and identity against encroaching loss.

ANIMATION

The **Animation** category embraces filmmakers using stop-motion, motion graphics, computer animation, drawn-on-film, rotoscoping, experimental animation, and additional available techniques.

- **Rich Farris** (UK), [*From The Top*](#) - Robin grapples with letting go of her drum kit and her passion.
- **Case Jernigan** (USA), [*Noggin*](#) - Through a deeply personal narrative, the filmmaker builds 'a memory palace of love and ink' exploring life with multiple sclerosis.
- **Santiago O'Ryan & José Navarro** (Chile), [*Hermanos Casablanca \(Casablanca Brothers\)*](#) - At the height of the Pinochet dictatorship, two divers agree to help an army official in the hope of receiving information on their missing sister in return.

- **Fadi Syriani & Jana Wehbe** (Lebanon), [*The Day Vladimir Died*](#) - In Beirut, the day-to-day life of an elderly man is punctuated by grief and mourning both for lost friends and for a city undergoing rapid change.
- **Leo Wright** (UK), [*The Big Bad Wolf*](#) - Set in an industrial pig society, a wolf and a pig form an unlikely friendship, defying prejudices and the cautionary words of the age-old parable.

STUDENT

The **Student** category rewards filmmakers studying a film course at a registered institution at a diploma or degree level worldwide.

- **Luis J. Arellano** (México), Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica, [*Long Journey Till Dawn*](#) - After the death of her young daughter, a grieving mother kidnaps a baby, confronting the darkness within herself.
- **Muhammed Ashfaq** (India), K R Narayanan National Institute of Visual Science and Arts, [*URA*](#) - In Bethlehem, the unexpected arrival of Maria, a pregnant nun, into an isolated convent run by a community of elderly nuns sets off a chain of events.
- **Gianfranco Fernández-Ruiz & Gus Murray** (USA), American Film Institute, [*When Big People Lie*](#) - Eight-year-old Elvis witnesses a dramatic family shift when his mother arranges a green card marriage.
- **Hayder Hoozeer** (UK) & **Franz Böhm** (Germany), The National Film & Television School, [*Rock Paper Scissors*](#) - Based on a true story, a father and son in a warzone hospital face life-or-death choices as their hideout becomes increasingly compromised.
- **Faith Olaewe & Doyinsola Ajayi** (Nigeria), EbonyLife Creative Academy, [*Angel in the Stone*](#) - Shalewa, a reclusive autistic teenager, uses her metalworking skills to save her family from ruin.

FUTURE FORMAT

Also announced today is the winner and shortlist from this year's **Future Format** competition, which champions a new generation of aspiring filmmakers by welcoming short films shot exclusively on a smartphone.

The winner of this year's Future Format competition is **Bijan Gashti** (Islamic Republic of Iran) for [*Select/Or*](#), exploring the tension between control and free will when individuals are left with a single instruction. As part of his prize, Gashti receives Sony Digital Imaging equipment and is invited to join the four-day immersive program at the Sony Pictures Studios in June. The shortlisted filmmakers for the Future Format competition are Joni Astin Ariadi (Indonesia) with [*Sleeping Monster*](#), and Siwei Yu (China Mainland) with [*Love is the End*](#).

The four category winners of the Sony Future Filmmaker Awards 2025 will be announced on 5 June 2025. For more information about upcoming announcements and to learn more about the shortlisted filmmakers, please visit sonyfuturefilmmakerawards.com.

2025 SHORTLIST

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Leo Wright (UK), *The Big Bad Wolf*

FUTURE FORMAT

Winner

Bijan Gashti (Islamic Republic of Iran), *Select/Or*

Shortlist

Joni Astin Ariadi (Indonesia), *Sleeping Monster*

Siwei Yu (China Mainland), *Love is the End*

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American Film Institute

Hayder Hoozeer (UK) & Franz Böhm (Germany), *Rock Paper Scissors*
The National Film & Television School

Faith Olaewe & Doyinsola Ajayi (Nigeria), *Angel in the Stone*
EbonyLife Creative Academy

NOTES TO EDITORS

For media inquiries, please contact:

Polly Brock, Hugo Ximenes (Creo) – media@creoarts.com

Steven Wilson, Kylie Elliot, Austin Good (Scenario Communications) – sffawards@scenariopr.com

Film press kits are available to download on press.creoarts.com.

Established by Creo and sponsored by Sony, the **Sony Future Filmmaker Awards** is a major annual awards program for short films devoted to supporting and elevating independent filmmakers and creators from across the globe. Set apart by its exceptional prize, the Awards provide successful filmmakers with invaluable opportunities in the form of a trip to Los Angeles and to the historic Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City, California, where they gain exclusive access to experts and unparalleled insight into the inner workings of the industry. Winners additionally receive cash prizes and a range of Sony Digital Imaging equipment. Free to enter, the Awards comprise four categories: Fiction, Non-Fiction, Student and Animation, and are judged by a panel of leading figures. By supporting talents in film, video and storytelling, the Sony Future Filmmaker Awards provides a gateway for the development of creative excellence. sonyfuturefilmmakerawards.com

Creo initiates and organizes events and programming across three key strands: photography, film and contemporary art. Since 2007 Creo's mission has been to develop meaningful opportunities for creatives and to expand the reach of its cultural activities. Its flagship projects include the Sony World Photography Awards, Sony Future Filmmaker Awards, PHOTOFAIRS and Photo London. Working in partnership with Angus Montgomery Arts (AMA), Creo helps deliver the group's ventures, comprising some of the world's leading art fairs. Taking its name from the Latin for "I create," it is in this spirit that Creo sets out to empower and give agency to creative voices. creoarts.com

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**Kando is a Japanese word that roughly translates to the sense of awe and emotion you feel when experiencing something beautiful and amazing for the first time.*

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