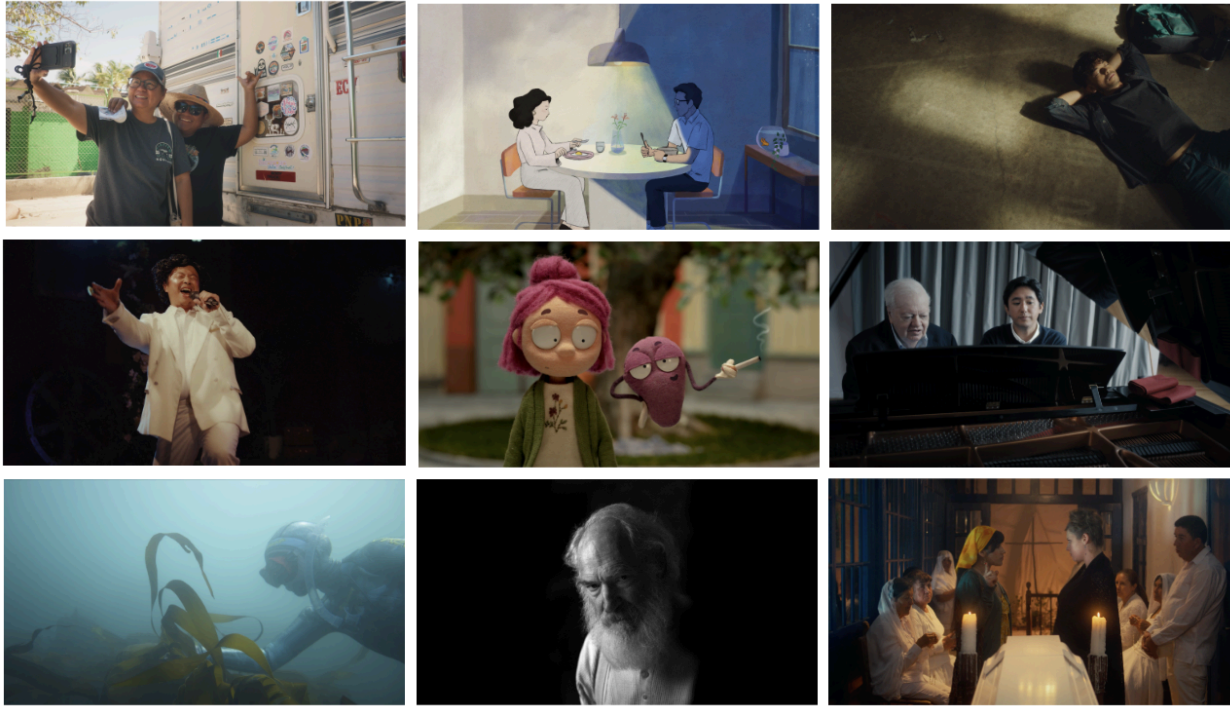


PRESS RELEASE

## 2026 SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED



**APRIL 30, 2026** — The Sony Future Filmmaker Awards have today revealed the shortlist for the 2026 edition. Spanning five categories — Fiction, Non-Fiction, Animation, Student, and Future Format — the filmmakers have been chosen to join an exclusive program of interactive sessions and masterclasses at Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City from **June 8-11**, culminating in a gala ceremony on **June 11** where the category winners will be announced.

Established by Creo in partnership with Sony, the Sony Future Filmmaker Awards provide career-defining opportunities for emerging talent, immersing them in the realities of professional filmmaking at the highest level, and equipping them with the tools to advance their work. The fourth edition of the Sony Future Filmmaker Awards received submissions from more than 8,400 filmmakers representing 162 countries and territories around the world.

The 2026 shortlist spans continents and perspectives: from the women freedivers of Tamil Nadu risking their lives daily in the waters off Ramanathapuram, to a Ukrainian ecologist in the Carpathian mountains tending to water buffalo and ancient horse breeds; from a newly qualified teacher struggling through the highs and lows of her first year in a London classroom, to two siblings growing up inside a Colorado alligator sanctuary. Elsewhere, when sheep begin disappearing a Welsh shepherd whose flock remain untouched becomes the target of his community's suspicion, a 90-year-old French piano legend prepares for his final concert, and three North Korean defectors give raw testimony about the invisible

forces that held them and what it took to leave. Together, the shortlisted films form a portrait of the world that is at once intimate and broad, rooted in the specific and alive to the universal.

The Sony Future Filmmaker Awards bring shortlisted filmmakers directly into the heart of Hollywood. Flown to Los Angeles for an immersive four-day program at Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City, they participate in interactive sessions and masterclasses led by Sony Pictures executives that cover topics such as cinematography, animation, script-writing, documentary filmmaking, global acquisitions marketing, technology demonstrations, and the art of soundtracking a story. The week culminates in a gala ceremony on June 11, hosted by Emmy Award-winning presenter Denny Directo (Entertainment Tonight), where category winners are announced and awarded cash prizes and Sony Digital Imaging equipment.

The shortlisted filmmakers now proceed to the next stage of judging, from which the category winners will be selected by the 2026 jury: Golden Globe-nominated director and producer **Will Gluck** (*Anyone But You*, *Peter Rabbit*, *Easy A*); acclaimed producer and President of Film and Television at Pascal Pictures **Rachel O'Connor** (*Challengers*, *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, *Little Women*); Sony Pictures Animation co-director **Adam Rosette** (*GOAT*, *The Wild Robot*, *Orion and the Dark*); and award-winning director **Justin Chadwick** (*Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom*, *The Other Boleyn Girl*, upcoming *Brothers Under Fire*), who returns as jury chair for the fourth consecutive year.

**Justin Chadwick, Chair of the Jury**, says: *“This shortlist is a testament to the vitality of emerging filmmaking right now. From intimate character studies to urgent documentaries, from experimental animation to fearless student work, these are films that command attention, bold in their vision, accomplished in their execution, and vital in what they have to say. This program exists to give filmmakers of this calibre something beyond accolades: direct, unprecedented access to the inner workings of the industry. The jury faces the enviable but difficult task of choosing winners from work this strong; these filmmakers have set the bar high.”*

The films and filmmakers shortlisted for the Sony Future Filmmaker Awards 2026 are:

## FICTION

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

- **Eduardo Braun Costa** (Argentina), [The Liars](#) - When his younger brother is caught stealing, a teenage boy must convince a stranger to pose as their father.
- **Jaap Deinum** (Netherlands), [Babel](#) - A Chinese immigrant anxiously awaiting a citizenship decision makes a fateful choice following a tense interaction with a new neighbor.
- **Gus Flind-Henry & George Malcher** (UK), [A Sisyphean Task](#) - Rooted in lived experience, this unflinching portrait follows a newly qualified teacher through the highs and lows of her first year in a South London classroom, asking why schools struggle to keep their best.
- **Mitchell Greenberg** (Canada), [Conditions of Release](#) - A socially isolated construction worker tries to end his parole early, only to realize that real freedom comes at a difficult cost.
- **Jack Hughes** (UK), [Deadheading](#) - When her husband is given months to live, a determined wife sets out to jump the waitlist for his dream allotment garden — by whatever means necessary.
- **Kevin Jin Kwan Kim** (Canada), [My Dad, the Rockstar](#) - A Korean father refuses to let go of his rockstar dreams, doing everything he can to shield his daughter from the financial and social cost of never giving up.
- **Jen Nee Lim** (Singapore), [Buah \(Fruit\)](#) - In a place where abortion is illegal, a pregnant woman's repeated attempts to end her pregnancy fail, until a mysterious bus driver crosses her path.
- **Mac Nixon** (UK), [FLOCK](#) - When a farming community's sheep mysteriously vanish, an elderly shepherd becomes the target of suspicion as his own flock are the only ones left untouched.

- **Andy Reid** (Canada), [Brief Somebodies](#) - While rehearsing a sexual assault scene, two actors form a connection they'll be forced to reconfigure once filming begins.
- **William Simmons** (UK), [Helping Hand](#) - After hearing concerning sounds from the flat above, Anna investigates, and what she finds there sets off a chain of events with an inconceivable outcome.

## 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.

- **Sophia Bihailo** (Ukraine), [Echoes of Menchul](#) - In the Ukrainian Carpathians, ecologist Michael Jacobi tends to water buffalo, Hutsul horses, and other ancient breeds — his life a quiet, ongoing dialogue with the land.
- **Abdoul Razak Ceesay** (UK), [Farming: Kemi's Story](#) - Between the 1950s and 1990s, thousands of West African children were privately fostered by white British families. Kemi is one of them, and this is her story.
- **Freddie Gluck & Matteo Moretti** (USA), [Gatorville](#) - Siblings Lily and Bodhi are growing up at a Colorado alligator sanctuary, but as Lily enters her teenage years, the bond forged by their extraordinary childhood begins to shift.
- **Olaf Lawrence & Charlie Greaves** (UK), [Green Ocean Gold](#) - Three ocean dwellers reckon with a mounting threat to the place they love most, and find an unlikely future in seaweed.
- **Prashant Madan** (India), [Showing Up](#) - A couple of amateur hikers attempt one of the world's hardest thru-hikes, a crossing of the Alps through eight countries, and quickly learns what it really means to succeed.
- **Muhammad Mehdi** (Pakistan), [Dreams in Dust](#) - An investigative portrait of two children trapped in Pakistan's cycle of child labor: one at a brick kiln, one at a car mechanic shop.
- **Greeshma Sathiaraj** (India), [Mermaids of Mannar](#) - Every day, a group of women freedivers off the coast of Tamil Nadu risk their lives collecting seaweed, their connection to the sea as profound as the social norms that shape life on land.
- **sawe\*** (Republic of Korea), [Darkness Has Gravity](#) - Three North Korean defectors give raw testimony, with the film exploring the complex psychological layers of the defectors throughout their process of displacement.
- **Christine Seow** (Singapore), [Two Travelling Aunties](#) - Two Singaporean women in their fifties trade conventional life for the open road, embracing newfound freedom and the joy of living life on their terms.
- **Hélène Sevaux** (France), [Four Hands](#) - At 90, legendary French pianist Philippe Entremont prepares for his final concert alongside his 35-year-old protégé in a portrait of mentorship, legacy, and the danger of 'lifeless perfection.'

## ANIMATION

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

- **Corin Anderson** (UK), [Expectation](#) - In the minutes before a table tennis match, a player battles the pressure of the moment, searching for composure and to remember what motivates him.
- **McKinley Benson** (USA), [Two Ships](#) - A couple working opposite schedules attempts to maintain their connection through fleeting encounters in this hand-drawn poem inspired by the filmmakers' own experience.
- **Michelle Brøndum & Ida Melum** (Denmark/Norway), [Ovary-Acting](#) - While stuck at her sister's baby shower, a thirty-something woman is forced to reflect on whether she wants to have children or not after unexpectedly giving birth to her reproductive organs.

- **Oscar Jacobson** (Sweden), [The Undying Pain of Existence](#) - A nude model holds statuesque stillness for an elite drawing class, until a mosquito bite pushes him to the edge of madness.
- **Young Chan Jeon** (United States), [The History of the Pitiful Humanity](#) - An exploration of human history and the endless efforts to survive.

## STUDENT

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

- **Ana A. Alpizar** (Cuba), New York University, USA, [Norheimsund](#) - A long-distance romance with an older Norwegian man promises to lift a Cuban girl and her mother out of poverty, until the fantasy begins to crack.
- **Frederik Bösing, Terry Kraatz, & Vera Kayh** (Germany), Filmakademie Baden Wuerttemberg, Germany, [Once in a Blue Moon](#) - A lonely vampire roaming the night in her camper van bites strangers for brief moments of closeness, but one chance encounter changes everything.
- **Talita Brits** (South Africa), The Open Window Institute, South Africa, [Ongeluk \(Accident\)](#) - An ordinary afternoon unfolds in real time, until a sudden accident shifts everything, and the weight of consequence becomes unavoidable.
- **Kleif Alexander Tan & Kai Ming Ng** (Singapore), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, [Mirage](#) - A ten-year-old girl's grip on reality begins to fracture as she witnesses the limits of her mother's mental deterioration.
- **Isabella Villalobos Figueroa, Manuela Ocampo Bustamante, & Juan Camilo Mejía Flórez** (Colombia), Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá. [Amará](#) - A Caribbean storyteller arrives in a village where children have vanished and stories are forbidden. When her son goes missing, she must confront a mysterious woman and pay a terrible price to try to save him.

## FUTURE FORMAT

Also announced today is the winner from this year's **Future Format** competition, which challenges filmmakers to respond to a technical brief that explores the creative possibilities of bold and innovative storytelling. This year entrants were invited to submit shorts created specifically for vertical viewing (9:16 aspect ratio). The winner is **Innocent Yama Lamido** (Nigeria) for *Creating Without Permission*, a meditation on creation and on 'the spaces between moments.' As part of his prize, Lamido receives Sony Digital Imaging equipment and is invited to join the program at Sony Pictures Studios in June.

The commended entries are:

- **Hamza Baig Humayun** (Pakistan), [Life is Like Ice Cream](#) - A tale of a little sister eager to surprise her brother on his birthday.
- **Nathan Burnby** (Australia) [Adrift](#) - A widowed father accepts a high-risk mission which may cost him his son.
- **Arthur Teo Hui Teck** (Malaysia) [The Night Shift](#) - Alone in the office late at night, a young woman is shaken by a series of strange events that make her fear she may not be alone after all.
- **Claudio Recenti** (Italy), [A Bed Story](#) - A poignant portrait of the relationship progression between a couple, all told through a camera placed above their bed.

The category winners of the Sony Future Filmmaker Awards 2026 will be announced on June 11 2026. For more information about upcoming announcements and to learn more about the shortlisted filmmakers, please visit [sonyfuturefilmmakerawards.com](https://sonyfuturefilmmakerawards.com).

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## FUTURE FORMAT

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Talita Brits (South Africa), *Ongeluk*  
The Open Window Institute, South Africa

Kleif Alexander Tan & Kai Ming Ng (Singapore), *Mirage*  
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Established by Creo and sponsored by Sony, the **Sony Future Filmmaker Awards** are a major annual awards program for short films devoted to supporting and elevating independent filmmakers and creators from across the globe. Set apart by an 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 five categories: Fiction, Non-Fiction, Student, Animation, and Future Format, and are judged by a panel of leading figures. By supporting talents in film, video and storytelling, the Sony Future Filmmaker Awards provide a gateway for the development of creative excellence. [sonyfuturefilmmakerawards.com](http://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](http://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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\***sawe** is a media artist collective composed of Jaehwan Lee, Haim Gong (Jangho Kim), Jeho Park, Youngjin Seo, and Uisuk Jeong.