

Pan African Film & Arts Festival Announces Winners of 2025 Film Festival at Awards Brunch Presented by Apple TV+

"Severance" Actor Tramell Tillman Honored with "Rising Star Award"

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, February 18, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Pan African Film & Arts Festival (PAFF), the largest Black film festival in the United States, proudly announces the winners of its 2025 competition. This year's festival, which ran from February 4 to February 17, showcased a dynamic lineup of films from across the African diaspora, amplifying powerful storytelling, diverse voices, and cultural narratives that redefine the cinematic landscape. The awards were handed out at PAFF's Filmmaker Awards Brunch presented by Apple TV+ in Culver City, CA at Palm Sophia on Mon., Feb. 17.

"Each year, PAFF continues to serve as a global stage for Black creatives, and 2025 was no exception," said Oduduwa Olatunji, PAFF Executive Director. "The winning films this year not only pushed artistic boundaries but also reflected the richness and depth of Black storytelling. We are honored to celebrate these visionary filmmakers and their extraordinary work."

The PAFF Filmmaker Awards Brunch serves as the grand finale to the festival, celebrating the best in global Black cinema. The event unveiled the winners of PAFF's jury and audience-selected films, alongside the festival's Festival and Programmers' Awards, recognizing industry pioneers and emerging voices who are shaping the future of film.

PAFF is an Oscars qualifying film festival for the Academy Awards in the categories of: Best Short Narrative Film Award, Best Short Documentary Award, and Best Animated Short.



PAFF 2025 "Rising Star Award" recipient actor Tramell Tillman ("Severance") at the PAFF Filmmaker Awards Brunch presented by Apple TV+ at Palm Sophia in Culver City, CA, Mon. Feb. 17, 2025. Credit: PAFF

About the Ceremony

The festival's awards ceremony was hosted by acclaimed actress Essence Atkins, adding a vibrant and engaging presence to the celebration of Black excellence in cinema.

This year's PAFF Filmmaker Awards Brunch was further elevated by a dynamic lineup of celebrity presenters who brought star power and charisma to the stage. Kent Faulcon (*For Better or Worse*, *Selma*), Kiki Haynes (*All the Queens Men*), Malika Blessings (*Wicked City*), and Nadine Ellis (*Let's Stay Together*, *One Kind of People*) lent their talents to honor the exceptional filmmakers whose work captivated audiences and pushed the boundaries of Black storytelling. Their presence underscored PAFF's commitment to celebrating both established and emerging voices in the industry, making the awards brunch an unforgettable tribute to cinematic excellence.

Adding to the prestige of the PAFF Filmmaker Awards Brunch, Culver City Mayor Dan O'Brien, Vice Mayor Freddy Puza, and Councilmember Bubba Fish were in attendance, underscoring the city's commitment to supporting Black art, culture, and storytelling. Their presence highlighted the vital role PAFF plays in the creative landscape of Culver City and beyond, reinforcing the festival's impact as a cultural and cinematic institution that uplifts diverse voices and fosters community engagement.

About the Awards

A defining feature of the PAFF Filmmaker Awards is the prestigious ceremonial staff, designed by renowned Ghanaian artist Allohn Agbenya. Handcrafted from rich ebony wood sourced from Togo and adorned with stainless silver, each staff is a stunning work of art that embodies African craftsmanship and cultural heritage. Rooted in West African tradition, the presentation of a staff is a symbolic honor bestowed upon those who have achieved greatness in their field. By receiving this distinguished award, PAFF winners are not only celebrated for their artistic excellence but also inducted into a legacy of leadership and storytelling that spans generations.

Special Honors



Front row: PAFF Executive Director Oduduwa Olatunji, actress Essence Atkins, PAFF celebrity ambassadors Jonathan Majors and Meagan Good, PAFF Associate Programmer Mabasa Mathope and Special Operations Director J'Tasha St. Cyr flanked by PAFF's 2025 Filmma

PAFF proudly honored “Severance” actor Tramell Tillman with the Rising Star Award at today’s prestigious PAFF Filmmaker Awards Brunch, presented by Apple TV+. Recognized for his undeniable talent and magnetic on-screen presence, Tillman joins an esteemed list of past recipients who have shaped the industry with bold storytelling and authentic representation.

Presented by actress, producer, and Hollywood favorite Yvette Nicole Brown, the award celebrates an artist on the brink of superstardom—one whose work not only captivates but also challenges narratives and pushes boundaries. Tillman, known for his gripping performance in “Severance”, has continued to make waves in the industry, proving that he is a force to be reckoned with.

This year’s festival saw an incredible turnout of industry professionals, film enthusiasts, and cultural leaders, reaffirming PAFF’s role as a vital platform for Black storytelling. With over 150 films from 34 countries and in 19 languages, PAFF 2025 continued its tradition of celebrating the past, present, and future of Pan-African cinema.

PAFF, celebrating its rich legacy of amplifying Black voices in film, continues to be a premier platform for both emerging and established talent, fostering a space where stories from the African diaspora take center stage. The PAFF Filmmaker Awards Brunch remains one of the festival’s most anticipated events, bringing together industry leaders, creators, and changemakers to celebrate Black excellence in film and television.

2025 PAFF Jury Award Winners

Best Narrative Feature: *Nawi: Dear Future Me* (Kenya) – Directed by Vallentine Chelluget, Apuu Mourine, Kevin Schmutzler & Tobias Schmutzler

Best Documentary Feature: *Legacy: The De-Colonized History of South Africa* (South Africa) – Directed by Tara Moore

Best First Feature – Narrative: *Color Book* (US) – Directed by David Fortune

Best Short Documentary: *Can’t Retire From This* (US)– Directed by Melanie Page

Best Short Narrative: *Advent* (US) – Directed by Rachael Danae Bass

Audience Award Winners

Best Feature Narrative: *Til Death...Do You* (US)– Directed by Andra Fuller

Best Feature Documentary: *Memories of Love Returned* (Uganda/US)– Directed by Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine

Best Short Narrative: *For Sale* (US)– Directed by Nika King

Best Short Documentary: *The Devil is Busy* (US) – Directed by Geeta Gandbhir & Christalyn Hampton

[To see the complete list of winners at the 2025 PAFF, please visit paff.org.](https://paff.org)

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