

# New York Comedy Film Festival Announces Industry Panel Lineup Exploring the Craft, Business and Culture of Comedy

*NYCFF Industry Panels on writing, casting, music, docs and festival circuit, with industry-leading writers, casting directors, execs, producers and more*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, February 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The New York Comedy Film Festival (NYCFF), running February 15–22, today announced its lineup of industry panels designed to give filmmakers, comedians and fans a behind-the-scenes look at the creative process, business realities and collaborative forces that bring comedy to life on screen.

Taking place throughout the week at Asylum NYC and the Baruch College Performing Arts Center, NYCFF's panels feature acclaimed writers, casting directors, festival leaders, documentarians and music experts sharing practical insights and candid stories from the front lines of comedy in film and television.

"Great comedy is the result of a lot of different creative forces coming together," said NYCFF Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer Bob Melley. "These panels go deep with people who are excelling at the top of their fields and are willing to share how they actually do the work. Whether you're a filmmaker, writer, performer or industry professional, we designed these conversations to speak to every corner of comedy and give audiences real insight they can take with them."

NYCFF's panel lineup spans every major discipline that brings comedy from ideas to screen:

Sketch to Screen: From Late Show with David Letterman to Saturday Night Live

The logo for the New York Comedy Film Festival (NYCFF). The letters "NYCFF" are rendered in a white, bold, sans-serif font. The "Y" and "C" are stylized with blue accents. The "F"s have blue horizontal bars at their top and bottom. The "C" has two blue dots on its right side.

New York Comedy Film Festival

This panel traces the evolution of sketch comedy from the writers' room to the screen. A trio of Emmy Award-winning writers, Saturday Night Live writer Ceara O'Sullivan and Emmy Award-winning former Head Writers for The Late Show with David Letterman Eric and Justin Stangel, unpack how ideas are developed, rewritten and sharpened under pressure, offering a candid look at what it takes to turn sketches into iconic television moments and why timing, collaboration and instinct matter as much as the punchline. The panel is presented by ALL OUT Broadway and moderated by NYCCFF Founder and CEO Norm Laviolette.

### Festival Circuit Survival Guide: Getting Your Film Seen

Navigating the festival circuit can be daunting. New York International Film Awards (NYFA) Festival Director Crickett Rumley moderates a conversation breaking down how filmmakers can stand out, from submissions strategy and

networking to making the most of screenings once you're accepted. The panel features Tribeca Festival Vice President of Shorts Programming Ben Thompson, Nantucket Film Festival Executive Director Mystelle Brabbée and Hamptons International Film Festival Programmer & Director of Publications Kristen McCracken.

“

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*Ceara O'Sullivan, Emmy-winning writer for Saturday Night Live*

### Comedy Documentary Filmmaker's Sneak Peek: Mitch Hedberg Project

This special sneak peek offers an inside look at the upcoming documentary celebrating the life and legacy of comedian Mitch Hedberg. Filmmakers behind the project discuss archival storytelling, creative challenges and why Hedberg's uniquely surreal voice continues to influence comedians and audiences years after his passing. Presented by Bruichladdich Single Malt Whiskey, the panel will be moderated by Emmy and Peabody-winning

comedian Paul Mecurio and feature the film's Director/Producer Jeff Siegel, Producer Michael Blieden, Producer Julie Seabaugh and Executive Producer Rob Guillermo.

### The Sound of Story: Where Film & Music Meet

Music plays a crucial role in shaping tone, emotion and rhythm in comedy. Award-winning music



Ceara O'Sullivan, Emmy Winning SNL Writer and NYCCFF 2026 Panelist

supervisors, producers and industry leaders explore how sound elevates storytelling, when to bring music into the creative process, and how filmmakers can navigate rights, budgets and creative partnerships. The panel brings together winner of the first-ever Emmy Award for Outstanding Music Supervision Susan Jacobs, YouTube Music executive Eric Elizalde-Knapp, Manhattan Production Music Vice President Ron Goldberg and Grammy-winning Producer, Mixer and Engineer Dave O'Donnell. The discussion will be moderated by NYCFF Co-Founder and Chief Creative Officer Jess Domain.

From Breakdown to Breakthrough: The Power of Casting in New York Film & Television

Featuring five of New York's leading casting directors, this timely conversation examines how casting decisions shape performances, launch careers and define projects. Panelists share insights into auditions, collaboration with directors, and why casting is often the invisible force behind breakthrough comedy

performances. Moderated by Los Angeles Times writer Stephen Battaglio, the panel comprises a powerhouse of Casting Directors, including Rori Bergman, Kate Geller, Amy Devra Gossels and Gayle Keller.

"The New York Comedy Film Festival truly pays homage to the creative process and that's what excites me most about being part of its inaugural year," said Ceara O'Sullivan, Emmy-winning writer for Saturday Night Live. "I love the chance to pull back the curtain on how comedy actually gets made with all the twists and turns on the journey from a blank page to something that hopefully lands with audiences laughing."

"This event covers everything I love – New York, comedy, films and festivals. If there's food and merch, I may never leave," said Emmy-winning Late Night with David Letterman Head Writer Eric Stangel.

"Very honored to be part of this event. I'm surprised actually. I have a feeling they only meant to invite my brother, Eric. Hope they don't realize their mistake," continued Justin Stangel, Emmy-winning Late Night with David Letterman Head Writer.

Every \$20 Industry Panel Ticket includes one complimentary ticket to an Almost Midnight screening (subject to availability), giving attendees a chance to take what they've learned during



Paul Mecurio, NYCFF 2026 Panel Moderator, Mitch Hedberg "Behind The Scenes Doc"

the day and experience comedy on screen the same night.

Across all five categories, NYCFF will showcase more than 75 films from established and emerging filmmakers during the weeklong festival. Audiences can be a part of the inaugural New York Comedy Film Festival by purchasing festival passes and tickets at [www.comedyfilmfestivals.com/tickets](http://www.comedyfilmfestivals.com/tickets).

A full schedule is available at [www.comedyfilmfestivals.com/program](http://www.comedyfilmfestivals.com/program). Media can request festival credentials and reserve screenings by contacting NYCFF@elevatecom.com.

#### ABOUT THE NEW YORK COMEDY FILM FESTIVAL

The New York Comedy Film Festival (NYCFF) is a film festival entirely dedicated to celebrating comedy in film, spotlighting the full spectrum of humor — from features and documentaries to shorts and episodic storytelling. The inaugural 2026 edition will showcase more than 70 films from established and emerging filmmakers, honoring comedy as both an art form and a cultural force. Screenings and events will take place across New York City, bringing filmmakers and audiences together for a week of films, conversations, and special events. To learn more, please visit [www.comedyfilmfestivals.com](http://www.comedyfilmfestivals.com).

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