Kansas City FilmFest International Announces 2026 Award Winners

KANSAS CITY, MO, UNITED STATES, September 21, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Kansas City FilmFest International (KCFFI) announced the winners of its 2026 juried and special awards Saturday evening as part of the festival's 30th anniversary celebration at AMC Ward Parkway 14.



2026 30th Anniversary KCFFI

The awards recognize outstanding work across documentary and narrative filmmaking, Heartland student films, acting, emerging filmmakers and films that showcase the Kansas City and Heartland filmmaking community.
"For 30 years, KCFFI has brought filmmakers and audiences together to celebrate independent storytelling," said Kevin Mullin, President of the KCFFI Board of Directors. "This year's filmmakers represent another remarkable group of artists, and we are thrilled to recognize their work during this milestone anniversary."

KCFFI's 30th anniversary festival is made possible with support from the Missouri Film Office, Kansas City Film Office and City of Kansas City, along with the festival's sponsors, community partners and supporters.

Documentary Awards
The 2026 Documentary jury included Max Thomas, Sue Vicory and Caitlin Horsmon.
Best Documentary Feature — $500 Prize
Burn Scar, directed by Hillary Bachelder
The Best Documentary Feature winner also receives one-year licenses to Movie Magic Budgeting and Movie Magic Scheduling, provided by Entertainment Partners.

Documentary Feature — Honorable Mention for Emerging Documentary Voice
Tight & Nerdy, directed by Jeff Nucera and Jonathan Ruane
Documentary Feature — Honorable Mention for Cinematic Technique
The Lorraine, directed by Sam Pollard

Documentary Short — Winner — $250 Prize
MUKUNÃ APPRENTICE SHAMAN, directed by Rodrigo Sena
The Documentary Short winner also receives one-year licenses to Movie Magic Budgeting and Movie Magic Scheduling, provided by Entertainment Partners, and an encore screening during the festival.
Documentary Short — Honorable Mention for Emerging Documentary Voice
Naaz, directed by Bakhtawar Tagar
Documentary Short — Honorable Mention for Cinematic Technique
The Bridge, directed by Brian Ducoffe

Narrative Short & Heartland Student Awards
The 2026 Narrative Shorts and Heartland Student Film jury included Caleb Worcester, Dalton Homolka and Bety Le Shackleford.
Narrative Short — Winner — $250 Prize
Whale 52, directed by Daniel Neiden
The Narrative Short winner also receives one-year licenses to Movie Magic Budgeting and Movie Magic Scheduling, provided by Entertainment Partners, and an encore festival screening.
Narrative Short — Honorable Mention
Meeting Your Maker, directed by Gregory Kasunich
Narrative Short — Honorable Mention
Arman, directed by Farzad Kiyafar

Heartland High School Student Short — Winner — $150 Prize
Pedal Faster, directed by Ira Good
The Heartland High School Student Short winner also receives one-year licenses to Movie Magic Budgeting and Movie Magic Scheduling, provided by Entertainment Partners.
Heartland College Student Short — Winner — $150 Prize
Hex My Ex, directed by Sofia Voss
The Heartland College Student Short winner also receives a $500 equipment rental credit from Frameline Studios.
Heartland College Student — Honorable Mention
The Sacred Sip, directed by Joey A. Heintz

Narrative Feature Awards
The 2026 Narrative Feature jury included Jamie Addison, Justin Begnaud and Shawn Edwards.
Best Narrative Feature — $500 Prize
The King of Black Goo, directed by Andrew Zappin
The Best Narrative Feature winner also receives one-year licenses to Movie Magic Budgeting and Movie Magic Scheduling, provided by Entertainment Partners, and an encore festival screening.
Narrative Feature — Honorable Mention
Miss Matched, directed by Jonathan Green
Best Actor in a Narrative Film
Jonathan Green, Miss Matched

Women in Film Kansas City Pitch-A-Thon Contest
Best Pitch Dust Riders by Jamie Hoyt
2nd Place and Audience Choice Granny's Shot by Toni Berrie

Fred Andrews Emerging Filmmaker Award
Winner — Sueños, directed by Valerie Tiscareno
The Fred Andrews Emerging Filmmaker Award recognizes an emerging filmmaker whose work demonstrates exceptional promise.
The award includes a $500 cash prize provided by Jane Andrews in honor of Fred Andrews, as well as a $750 production credit from Frameline Studios.

Rick Cowan Award for Best Cinematic Heartland Film Locations
Winner — Numerology (My Love Scale), directed by Bart Vandever
The Rick Cowan Award for Best Cinematic Heartland Film Locations recognizes exceptional use of the Heartland and its locations in cinematic storytelling.

Heartland Filmmaker Award
Winner — Seized, directed by Sharon Liese
The Heartland Filmmaker Award recognizes filmmakers creating work in the region, telling stories here and contributing to the continued growth of independent filmmaking in the Heartland.
Seized receives a $500 equipment rental credit from Frameline Studios and an encore screening at KCFFI.

Audience Choice Awards
The Audience Choice Awards will be announced on KCFFI social platforms and website.

Award & Prize Partners
KCFFI's 2026 filmmaker awards are supported by industry partners providing cash awards, professional filmmaking tools, production resources and in-kind prizes to this year's recipients.

Entertainment Partners is providing one-year licenses to Movie Magic Budgeting and Movie Magic Scheduling for select juried award winners, giving filmmakers access to professional production budgeting and scheduling tools.

Frameline Studios is providing production and equipment rental credits, including a $750 production credit for the Fred Andrews Emerging Filmmaker Award recipient and $500 equipment rental credits for the Heartland College Student Short and Heartland Filmmaker Award recipients.

Jane Andrews is providing the $500 Fred Andrews Emerging Filmmaker Award cash prize in honor of Fred Andrews and his legacy of supporting filmmakers.

KCFFI also recognizes the Missouri Film Office, Kansas City Film Office and City of Kansas City for their support of the festival during its 30th anniversary
About Kansas City FilmFest International

About Kansas City FilmFest International
Kansas City FilmFest International celebrates independent filmmaking by bringing filmmakers and audiences together in Kansas City. In 2026, KCFFI marks its 30th anniversary, continuing three decades of showcasing independent films, supporting filmmakers and creating connections between storytellers and audiences.

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