

27th WOODSTOCK FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2026 MAVERICK WINNERS | Jessica Edwards Named Festival's New Executive Director

WOODSTOCK, NY, UNITED STATES,
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The Woodstock Film Festival today announced winners across multiple categories for the 27th annual edition, including its juried awards for films in competition: *Mouse* for Best Narrative Feature, *Rehearsals for a Revolution* for Best Documentary Feature, *Washed Up* for Best Ultra Indie, *They're Here* for Best Short Documentary, and more.

This year, a special Honorary Maverick Award was presented to Woodstock Film Festival Co-Founder Meira Blaustein, recognizing her visionary leadership, more than 26 years of dedication to independent cinema, and the enduring legacy she has built as she prepares to transition from her role as Executive Director.



For the first time in festival history, the Maverick Awards traded Saturday night for Sunday brunch. Set amid the sprawling fields, wooded trails, and mountain views of our sponsor Oz Farm in Saugerties, the reimagined celebration brought filmmakers, honorees, and guests together in a relaxed, intimate setting that feels distinctly Hudson Valley. The food and beverage sponsors included Griffin House, Empire Merchants North, Sawyer Motors, and Blue Duck Brewing Company with contributions from Bread Alone and The Station.

The Woodstock Film Festival is also delighted to announce that Jessica Edwards will step into the role of Executive Director.

Outgoing Executive Director and Co-Founder Meira Blaustein expressed her enthusiasm for Jessica's appointment. "I have had the pleasure of working with Jessica at the Woodstock Film Festival over the past few years, and I have nothing but the greatest respect for her. As a filmmaker, a distribution consultant, and a former publicist, Jessica brings with her deep understanding, creative vision, and vast and strong contacts in the film industry. As a resident of the Hudson Valley, she knows and loves the region and its community. I am confident that she will not only retain the vision of the Woodstock Film Festival, which I have worked so long and hard to build and nurture, but will lead it towards an exciting new growth. I can't wait to see what the next few years will bring. Welcome, Jessica!"



Claude Dal Farra, President of the Board, also welcomed Jessica's appointment, highlighting her understanding of the Festival's mission and her readiness to lead its next chapter. "From our very first meeting with Jessica, it was clear to us that she was the natural person to succeed Meira and carry forward the extraordinary work Meira has done over more than 25 years. Jessica understands what makes the Woodstock Film Festival special — its commitment to filmmakers, its independent spirit, and its deep connection to the Hudson Valley — while also bringing the experience, energy, and vision to lead it into its next chapter. On behalf of the Board, we are tremendously excited to welcome Jessica as our new Executive Director, and to work with her on the future of the Festival."

Jessica Edwards shared, "To call this a dream job would be an understatement. I'm honored to build on the founders' legacy and help shape the festival's future. Woodstock's history is shaped by its creativity, innovation, and independent spirit. I want to carry that spirit forward by bringing filmmakers and industry partners from around the world together with audiences here in the Hudson Valley. My vision for the festival is to create opportunities for people to meet, share ideas, and discover films together — connections that I hope will support filmmakers and inspire the next generation of cinema lovers."

Edwards' appointment marks an important moment for the Woodstock Film Festival as it looks to the future, building on the strong foundation established by Meira Blaustein and the community of filmmakers, artists, supporters, and audiences who have sustained the Festival for more than two decades.

Please see the full list of winners below:

GIGANTIC PICTURES AWARD FOR BEST FEATURE NARRATIVE: Mouse, by Kelly O'Sullivan and Alex Thompson

The winner of this award receives a \$5,000 cash prize.

□ Jurors: Aya Cash (You're the Worst, The Boys), Debra Granik, (Winter's Bone, Down to the Bone), William Horberg (The Talented Mr. Ripley, The Queen's Gambit)

**Honorable mention: Josephine, by Beth de Araújo

THE LEON GAST AWARD FOR BEST FEATURE DOCUMENTARY: Rehearsals for a Revolution, by Pegah Ahangarani

□ Jurors: Tia Lessin (Trouble the Water, Steal This Story, Please!), Michèle Stephenson (Going to Mars: The Nikki Giovanni Project, Black Girls Play: The Story of Hand Games), David Osit (Thank You for Playing, Mayor)

LAURENT REJTO MADE IN THE HUDSON VALLEY AWARD Sponsored by Kyotocolor Inc.: Rain Reign, by Erika Burke Rossa

For a filmmaker whose film was produced in the Hudson Valley, honoring the legacy of Laurent Rejto. The winner of this award receives a major studio-level digital color grading for their next film. It will include "Look Development" in Pre-Production, as well as full online conform & Full 4k Digital Intermediate Color Grading with a Deliverable Package — valued at \$80,000.

□ Jurors: Corbin Bernsen (L.A. Law, Major League), Peter Hutchings (The Hating Game, Which Brings Me to You), Stacey Cormier (Hudson Valley Film Commission)

GRAY SCHWARTZ ULTRA INDIE AWARD: Washed Up, by Isabel Moncloa Daly

The winner of this award receives a \$2,000 cash prize.

□ Jurors: Jason Klot (Coffee and Cigarettes, Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room), Delilah Napier (Floating Carousel), Lucy Powers (Floating Carousel)

BEST SHORT DOCUMENTARY: They're Here, by Laura Poitras & Rachel Lauren Mueller

□ Jurors: Rabab Haj Yahya (Coexistence, My Ass!, The Feeling of Being Watched), Robert Stone (Radio Bikini, Guerrilla: The Taking of Patty Hearst), Sasha Wortzel (River of Grass, How to Carry Water)

**Honorable mention: One Last Order, by Sam Soko & Lauren Defilippo

BEST SHORT NARRATIVE: Dongmei, by Rubing Zhang

□ Jurors: Isil Bagdadi (Cinema Arts Centre host and curator), Marshall Curry (The Neighbors' Window, Street Fight), Shelby Stone (Lackawanna Blues, The Chi)

BEST ANIMATION: Saba, by Liron Topaz

□ Jurors: Liz Blazer (Animated Storytelling, author), Joy Buran (Human Kind Of), and Noelle Melody (Human Kind Of)

**Honorable Mention: Virgin Fandango, by Marcy Page

WORLD OF HA CHANGEMAKER AWARD: Seized, by Sharon Liese

The Changemaker Award honors a filmmaker whose work, either narrative or documentary, most effectively delves deep into a pressing contemporary issue and generates a constructive conversation.

The winner of this award receives a \$5,000 cash prize.

HASKELL WEXLER AWARD FOR BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY: Nuisance Bear, by Jack Weisman & Gabriela Osio Vanden

□ Juror: Ellen Kuras (The Betrayal - Nerakhoon, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind)

**Honorable Mention: The Great Experiment, by Stephen Maing & Eric Daniel Metzgar

NYWIFT AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN DIRECTING A NARRATIVE FILM: Rain Reign, by Erika Burke Rossa

Presented by NYWIFT CEO Cynthia Lopez and Board Member Kim Jackson, the award is given to each Excellence in Narrative Filmmaking recipient, plus a certificate and a NYWIFT 6-month membership.

□ Jurors: Cynthia Lopez, Rasheik Smart, Easmanie Michel

NYWIFT AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN DIRECTING A DOCUMENTARY FILM: Our Dark Horse, by Grace Barry

Presented by NYWIFT CEO Cynthia Lopez and Board Member Kim Jackson, this award is given to each Excellence in Documentary Filmmaking recipient, plus a certificate and a NYWIFT 6-month membership.

□ Jurors: Cynthia Lopez, Rasheik Smart, Easmanie Michel

**Honorable Mention: Re/Pair, by Lacey Schwartz Delgado

BEST EDITING, NARRATIVE AWARD: Wicker, edited by Sofi Marshall, ACE

□ Jurors: Sabine Hoffman, ACE (Passing; The Glorias), Agnès Challe-Grandits (The Diplomat, American Rust), Keiko Deguchi (Task, Love + War)

BEST EDITING, DOCUMENTARY AWARD: To Hold a Mountain, edited by George Cragg

□ Jurors: Alex Bayer (100 Foot Wave, The Oratorio), Sabine Hoffman, ACE (Personal Velocity, The Ballad of Jack and Rose), Isabel Sadurni (Take Care of Maya, What She Said: The Art of Pauline Kael), Rachel Schuman (Storm Lake, Arrest the Midwife)

**Honorable mention: Rehearsals for a Revolution, edited by Arash Ashtiani

BEST STUDENT SHORT: Bless the Telephone, by K.D. Chalk

□ Jurors: Lori Singer (Footloose, Short Cuts), Amy Gossels (Something's Gotta Give, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart)

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