



## **SXSW FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2020 JURY AND SPECIAL AWARDS**

**Austin, Texas, Tuesday, March 24th, 2020**—The South by Southwest® (SXSW®) Conference and Festivals announced the 2020 Jury and Special Award winners of the 27th SXSW Film Festival, which was cancelled by the City of Austin due to concerns surrounding Covid-19. The SXSW Film Festival had several Special Awards juries already in place, and expanded to all juried competitions once the majority of the filmmakers opted in and juries were available.

“When we curated and announced our slate for the 2020 SXSW Film Festival, filled with an array of wonderful films we were excited to share with our unique audience, we had no idea of the unprecedented impact that Coronavirus would have on all our lives,” said Janet Pierson, Director of Film. “Our hearts were broken for all the filmmakers who invested so much time and talent in their work, hoping for a transformative experience at our event. We’re honored to at least be able to present our juried and special awards. We know that it’s no substitute for the actual festival’s vitality, enthusiasm, and potential for surprising outcomes — and that it is only available to a small fraction of our program — but we hope it will help garner some well-deserved recognition for these wonderful works.”

Feature films receiving Jury Awards were selected from the Narrative Feature and Documentary Feature Competition categories. Short films and other juried sections, including Film Design Awards, are also included.

SXSW also announced Special Awards including: Adobe Editing Award, Adam Yauch Hörnblowér Award, Final Draft Screenwriters Award, Louis Black “Lone Star” Award, Vimeo Staff Pick Award, and the ZEISS Cinematography Award.

**The 2020 SXSW Film Festival Juries** consisted of:

**Narrative Feature Competition:** Rebecca Keegan, Rodrigo Perez, Kim Yutani

**Documentary Feature Competition:** Bilge Eberi, Naomi Fry, Dino Ramos

**Narrative Shorts Program:** Penelope Bartlett, Monica Castillo, Greta Fuentes

**Documentary Shorts:** Marjon Javadi, Allison Willmore

**Animated Shorts:** Katie Krentz, Hana Shimizu, Asalle Tanha

**Midnight Shorts:** Jonathan Barkan, Derek Kingongo, Brittany Klesic

**Music Videos:** Jason Baum, Chaka and Qi Dada

**Texas Shorts:** Denise Hernandez, Jenny Jacobi, Martin C. Jones

**Texas High School Shorts:** Jonathan Case, Jazmyne Moreno, Barton Weiss

**Episodic Pilots:** Mitch Hurwitz, Emily Nussbaum, Shelby Stone

**Louis Black “Lone Star”:** Kathy Blackwell, David Fear, Richard Whittaker

**Excellence in Title Design:** Ryan Butterworth, Alex Johnson

**Excellence in Poster Design:** Becky Cloonan, Barak Epstein, Kevin Tong

This year’s program would have had 135 Feature Films, including 99 World Premieres, 9 North American Premieres, 5 U.S. Premieres, and 75 films from first time filmmakers + 119 Short Films including 22 Music Videos, 12 Episodic Premieres, 7 Special Events, 14 Episodic pilots in 2 curated programs, 30 Title Design Entries, and 27 Virtual Cinema Projects.

Due to increased demand from press and industry, and at the request of filmmakers, SXSW will continue running the Online Shift72 Screening Library through **March 31, 2020**, for those films that have opted-in to the extended timeframe.

Due to the event cancellation, there will be no Audience Awards for 2020.

**The 2020 SXSW Film Festival Awards:**

### **Feature Film Grand Jury Awards**

#### **NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION**

**Winner:** *Shithouse*

Director: Cooper Raiff

“Imbued with the sweet, heart-on-sleeve sensibilities of *Before Sunrise*, triple threat writer/director/star, Cooper Raiff’s earnest portrait (and directorial debut) of a lonely college freshman and the girl he forges a magnetic connection with is refreshing and winningly sincere. The Grand Jury Prize goes to *Shithouse*.”

**Special Jury Recognition for Directing:** *Topside*

Directors: Celine Held, Logan George

“These two directors create a textured urban underground world to tell a poignant story of survival and sacrifice when a mother and daughter’s home is uprooted. The kinetic filmmaking that defines their film *Topside* results in a gripping and emotional viewing experience. The SXSW Special Jury Recognition for Directing goes to Celine Held and Logan George.”

**Special Jury Recognition for Acting:** *Really Love*

Director: Angel Kristi Williams  
Actors: Kofi Siriboe, Yootha Wong-Loi-Sing

“The power and excitement in this modern romance comes from the chemistry and depth of its two leads. Their subtle performances and undeniable screen charisma give this love story its emotional stakes. The SXSW Special Jury Recognition for Acting goes to Kofi Siriboe and Yootha Wong-Loi-Sing.”

## **DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION**

**Winner:** *An Elephant in the Room*  
Director: Katrine Philp

“Grief is one of the most challenging subjects for any filmmaker. The grief of young children even more so. In *An Elephant in the Room*, Katrine Philp follows a group of kids as they work with a grief counseling center in New Jersey. And while the resulting film is certainly heartbreaking, thanks to the director's artistry and sensitivity it is also inspiring, uplifting, and — especially in these troubled times — essential.”

**Special Jury Recognition for Achievement in Documentary Storytelling:** *The Donut King*  
Director: Alice Gu

“The many stories about Cambodian refugees arriving in America in the ‘70s are often overlooked. With *The Donut King*, first-time director Alice Gu puts a spotlight on entrepreneur Ted Ngoy and delivers a finely-crafted and timely immigrant narrative that is a story about the American dream as much as it is a story of redemption and overcoming adversity to leave a lasting legacy.”

**Special Jury Recognition for Breakthrough Voice:** *Finding Yingying*  
Director: Jiayan "Jenny" Shi

“This poignant documentary, which follows the story of Yingying Zhang, a Chinese graduate student whose disappearance in America leads her family to come search for her, combines the care and steadfastness of a true-crime procedural with a rare sensitivity to questions of cultural difference, family dynamics, and the immigrant experience.”

## **Short Film Grand Jury Awards**

### **NARRATIVE SHORTS**

**Winner:** *White Eye*

Director: Tomer Shushan

“This timely and profoundly layered story captivated judges with its quiet and artful approach. Its combination of virtuosic camerawork, powerful performances and deeply human message is sure to connect with all who see it for this reason we are pleased to award it the Narrative Short Film Competition Jury Award.”

**Special Jury Recognition for Acting: *Dirty***

Director: Matthew Puccini

Actors: Morgan Sullivan, Manny Dunn

“The jury were impressed by the way this deceptively simple short combined an uncompromising approach to sexuality with tenderness and humor, and by the nuanced, authentic performances of the two lead actors. The filmmaker courageously tackled a sexual situation that is rarely portrayed on screen, and made it feel intimate and real.”

**Special Jury Recognition: *Darling***

Director: Saim Sadiq

“This dramatic short wowed judges with its story, performances and execution. A stunning work about the complicated social dynamics of queer love that says so much through simple looks and gestures. Its most poignant moments are almost entirely speechless.”

**Special Jury Recognition: *Single***

Director: Ashley Eakin

“A comedic short with wit and bite, *Single* subverts viewers' expectations with purpose and an unapologetic voice. The layered performances are also worthy of commendation.”

**DOCUMENTARY SHORTS**

**Winner: *No Crying at the Dinner Table***

Director: Carol Nguyen

“The way that *No Crying at the Dinner Table* uses one of documentary's core components — the sit-down interview — to excavate undiscussed pain in the director's own family is insightful, raw, and, ultimately, extraordinary.”

**Special Jury Recognition: *Mizuko***

Directors: Katelyn Rebelo, Kira Dane

“By blending animation with live action footage, *Mizuko* defies expectations of what a nonfiction film can be and do, while offering up material that's both vulnerable and moving, elevating a

personal narrative seen through a new lens.”

**Special Jury Recognition: *Día de la Madre***

Directors: Ashley Brandon, Dennis Höhne

“Unexpected encounters that reveal themselves into just the sweetest thing ever.”

**MIDNIGHT SHORTS**

**Winner: *Regret***

Director: Santiago Menghini

“In *Regret*, the storytelling is simple but concise, allowing the tension to build at an effective pace. When paired with its strong lead actor, horrific creature design and precise visual execution, this film earns the top honor in this year's Midnight Shorts category.”

**Special Jury Recognition: *Laura Hasn't Slept***

Director: Parker Finn

“Filmmaker Parker Finn has created a terrifying vision of a nightmare world in *Laura Hasn't Slept*. This short's tone, pacing, and set design bring the viewer completely into the main character's experience, and it's shocking reveal is sure to leave viewers wanting more. We are proud to award *Laura Hasn't Slept* with a Special Jury Recognition.”

**Special Jury Recognition for Creature Design: *Stucco***

Director: Janina Gavankar, Russo Schelling

“We wish to highlight the beautifully grotesque and deeply unsettling creature design of *Stucco*. Clive Barker would be proud, which is why we award the short the Special Jury Recognition for Creature Design!”

**ANIMATED SHORTS**

**Winner: *Symbiosis***

Director: Nadja Andrasev

“Beautifully simplistic in style, but powerful in content... We were blown away at how this film tackles the complex emotions of betrayal, loneliness, and curiosity, all while exploring different expressions of femininity. It asks the viewer to contend with their own empathy and curiosity about how the tale will unfold. It left us genuinely engaged, and wondering what would happen next. In today's day and age seeing, this story told through the beautiful craft of animation was impactful and in an unexpected way.”

**Special Jury Recognition: *No, I Don't Want to Dance!***

Director: Andrea Vinciguerra

“This dark tale is told brilliantly with characters crafted meticulously from tactile materials and animated frame by frame. The end result is a relatable and laughable cautionary tale. The craftsmanship of this film and the balance of whimsy and dark humor was deserving of recognition.”

**Special Jury Recognition: *The Shawl***

Director: Sara Kiener

“The exuberant characters, whose story comes to life in this film, tickled our hearts. We were delighted as this film reminded us that animation in its simplest form when done right can capture the joy and nuance of our daily lives and love affairs.”

**MUSIC VIDEOS**

**Winner: *070 Shake - ‘Nice to Have’***

Director: Noah Lee

“A stunningly beautiful yet tragic exploration of the lives impacted by a fantastical traffic accident. Not only was it impressive in execution, but a poignant reminder to appreciate the people around us in this new world that we find ourselves in.”

**Special Jury Recognition for Animation: *Mitski - ‘A Pearl’***

Directors: Saad Moosajee, Art Camp

“The jury would also like to give a special recognition award to the music video “A Pearl” by Mitski for Outstanding Achievement in Animation, directed by Saad Moosajee and Art Camp.”

**Special Jury Recognition for Direction: *The Lumineers - ‘Gloria’***

Director: Kevin Phillips

“We would like to present a special recognition award to Kevin Phillips for Outstanding Achievement in Direction for the music video “Gloria” by The Lumineers.”

**TEXAS SHORTS**

**Winner: *Just Hold On***

Director: Sam Davis, Rayka Zehtabchi

“A lovely little documentary with a big giant Texas-sized heart, *Just Hold On* charmingly shares the story of an inspiring young girl that overcomes the odds and captures the hearts of an entire Houston, Texas stadium. The structure of the film creates a space of powerful and emotional storytelling. Sam and Rayka truly capture Texas soul and authenticity in this film.”

**Special Jury Recognition: *Coup d'etat Math***

Director: Sai Selvarajan

“*Coup D’etat Math* is an inventive and complex film about the struggles of the refugee community. The social realism captured in the film’s animation adds an element of vulnerability and rawness to the storyline. Sai’s intentional and thoughtful approach is illustrated in every detail of the film. It presents a rich visual tapestry of mixed media combining animation and live-action with gripping stories of pathos and human resilience.”

**TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL SHORTS**

**Winner:** *Wish Upon a Snowman*

**Director:** Miu Nakata

“*Wish Upon a Snowman* is a world unto itself. The imagination to conceive of as well as the discipline required to spin this yarn puts this disturbingly charming film in a class of its own.”

**Special Jury Recognition: *Narrative***

**Winner:** *Ultimatum*

Director: Kai Hashimoto

“*Ultimatum* is taut, twisted and terrifying. Chillingly economical with great sound and set design.”

**Special Jury Recognition: *Documentary***

Winner: *Unveiled*

Director: Sofia Bajwa

“Beyond the labels, the misconceptions, *Unveiled* confidently and proudly defies the stereotypes to reveal the girls beyond our prejudice.”

**Special Jury Recognition: *Animation***

Winner: *The Orchard*

Director: Zeke French

“*The Orchard* is ambitious and epic with a heartfelt yet comedic core.”

**EPISODIC PILOT COMPETITION**

**Winner:** *Embrace*

Director: Jessica Sanders

“For its originality of voice, its depiction of characters and relationships that are both enigmatic

and appealing, as well as telling an absorbing story in a world unseen on television at the moment — the jury is awarding its top prize to the Episodic Pilot Competition to *Embrace*. With real laughs and real heart, the presentation promises a wholly unique TV series with characters we're eager to learn more about. The jury offers congratulations to the whole creative team on this excellent, thoughtful, funny and professional project — and are thrilled to be able to give it our top commendation.”

**Special Jury Recognition for Drama: *Chemo Brain***

Director: Kristian Håskjold

“The Jury is pleased to bestow its Special Recognition for Drama Jury Award to the unapologetically honest, deeply touching yet unsentimental *Chemo Brain*. Told over four complete episodes — a huge achievement in itself — Kristian Håskjold directs a series he co-creates with Johan Wang that depicts the indignities of illness and the struggle of hope with an understatement that only the best dramas achieve.”

**Special Jury Recognition for Comedy: *Lusty Crest***

Director: Kati Skelton

“For its incredibly ambitious story-telling, stylistic extravagance, completely original blend of absurdist melodrama, confident comedic filmmaking and just pure lustiness the Special Recognition for Comedy Jury Recognition goes to *Lusty Crest*. Kati Skelton both writes and directs this technicolor fever dream with a commitment and confidence that both successful humor and absorbing surrealism demand.”

**SXSW Film Design Awards**

**EXCELLENCE IN POSTER DESIGN**

“There is no denying how much our work and lives have changed in a few short months, but in light of that we were so excited for the opportunity to come together and view all of the film posters in person at SXSW HQ. There was such a breadth of design, photography and illustration on display that it made our decisions that much more difficult. We all left feeling inspired, and secure in the knowledge that nothing can stop art.”

**Winner: *Laura Hasn't Slept***

Designer: Olivier Courbet

“The poster for *Laura Hasn't Slept* really stood out to us. It's a bold design with an excellent concept.”

**Special Jury Recognition: *The Donut King***



Designer: Andrew Hem, Charlie Le

“*The Donut King*'s poster is undeniably fun and makes us really want to see the movie. Personally, we love illustrated movie posters and the illustration is really good here.”

## **EXCELLENCE IN TITLE DESIGN**

**Winner:** *See*

Designer: Karin Fong

“*See* stands out to us as a unique and beautifully-executed main title. We love the quick glimpses into the darkness, giving you just enough time to comprehend your surroundings. CG ropes are artfully directed with a light, elegant and ultimately fleeting aesthetic. Along with the visuals, the environmental sound design used in the almost absence of a discernible musical theme adds to the feeling of losing sight.”

**Special Jury Recognition:** *Why We Hate*

Designers: Allison Brownmoore, Anthony Brownmoore

“*Why We Hate* is a haunting look at humanity’s past with scenes that contrast bright symbols with dark moments in time. Beautifully done transitions and color treatment bolster the power of the images. What is added to the photos is as powerful as what is lost.”

## **SXSW Special Awards**

### *Adam Yauch Hörnblowér Award*

In honor of a filmmaker whose work strives to be wholly its own, without regard for norms or desire to conform. The Adam Yauch Hörnblowér Award is presented to a filmmaker from our Visions screening category.

### **Adam Yauch Hörnblowér Award**

**Presented to:** *In & of Itself*

Director: Frank Oz

### *Adobe Editing Award*

Adobe is committed to celebrating creativity for all and empowering everyone to bring their stories to life. By creating greater opportunity for all voices, we can generate change in our communities and move the world forward. We are proud to celebrate the art and craft of editing as we grant the Adobe Editing Award at the SXSW Film Awards.

### **Adobe Editing Award**

**Presented to:** *You Cannot Kill David Arquette*

**Editors:** Paul Rogers, Additional Editing by David Darg

*Final Draft Screenwriters Award*

Final Draft, the industry standard in screenwriting software, is proud to support SXSW and provide the first SXSW 2020 Final Draft Screenwriters Award. We pride ourselves in shining a spotlight on new voices in the writing and filmmaking community, and coming together with like-minded organizations, such as SXSW, that share the same core values. A huge congratulations to this year's recipient from all of us at Final Draft!

**Final Draft Screenwriters Award**

**Presented to:** *Best Summer Ever*

**Screenwriters:** Michael Parks Randa, Will Halby, Terra Mackintosh, Andrew Pilkington, Lauren Smitelli

*Louis Black "Lone Star" Award*

To honor SXSW co-founder/director Louis Black, a jury prize was created in 2011 called the Louis Black "Lone Star" Award, presented to a feature film world premiering at SXSW that was shot primarily in Texas or directed by a current resident of Texas. (Opt-in Award)

**Louis Black "Lone Star" Award**

**Winner:** *Miss Juneteenth*

Director: Channing Godfrey Peoples

"The Louis Black "Lone Star" Award has always been about celebrating Texas filmmakers. With *Miss Juneteenth* we can also celebrate a view into a community and a culture that is often overlooked or stereotyped, but is as profoundly Texan as breakfast tacos and traffic jams on I-35."

**Louis Black "Lone Star" Award Special Jury Recognition for Acting:**

**Winner:** *Bull*

Actor: Rob Morgan

Director: Annie Silverstein

"The jury also wanted to recognize Rob Morgan's work in *Bull*, Annie Silverstein's moving look at the bond between an at-risk teen girl and an aging bull rider. There's a dignity and a humanity that the actor brings to his portrayal of a man beaten down (but not yet broken) by life — a reminder that there's a story behind even the most stoic Lone Star citizen."

**Louis Black "Lone Star" Award Special Jury Recognition for Documentary:**

**Winner:** *Boys State*

Directors: Amanda McBaine, Jesse Moss

“This impressive documentary is as polished as a scripted drama, but it pulses with real human complexity. Through these four captivating Texas teenagers, we see the best and worst of the American political system play out over a hot summer week in a way that’s at once alarming and uplifting. There’s hope for us yet.”

#### *Vimeo Staff Pick Award*

Vimeo is excited to announce the 3rd annual Vimeo Staff Pick Award for the 2020 SXSW Film Festival. Short films featured in the Narrative, Documentary, Animation, Midnight, 360/VR, and Texas Shorts competitions are eligible for this award, which includes a \$5,000 cash prize and, of course, a Vimeo Staff Pick. The winning film will be released on Vimeo on Wednesday, March 25.

#### **Vimeo Staff Picks Award**

**Presented to:** *Vert*

Director: Kate Cox

"The SXSW Vimeo Staff Pick Award goes to a film that takes its viewers into the future and tenderly conveys a very current and human subject. We are pleased to award [Vert](#) from director Kate Cox."

#### *ZEISS Cinematography Award*

ZEISS Cine Lenses is honored to be returning this year to support the SXSW film community in the Cinematography category. We believe that by supporting the art within the frame, ZEISS helps filmmakers realize their creative vision.

#### **ZEISS Cinematography Award**

**Winner:** *Echoes of the Invisible*

Director: Steve Elkins

**Film Stills and Headshots can be found at:** <https://filmmaker.sxsw.com/media>

**Publicists for projects in program:** [Publicists List](#)

#### **About SXSW Film Festival**

Now in its 27th year, SXSW Film Festival brings together creatives of all stripes over nine days to experience a diverse lineup and access to thousands of SXSW Conference sessions with visionaries from all corners of the entertainment, media, and technology industries.

#### **About SXSW**

SXSW dedicates itself to helping creative people achieve their goals. Founded in 1987 in Austin, Texas, SXSW is best known for its conference and festivals that celebrate the convergence of the interactive, film, and music industries. An essential destination for global professionals, the event features sessions, showcases, screenings, exhibitions, and a variety of networking opportunities. SXSW proves that the most unexpected discoveries happen when diverse topics and people come together. For more information, please visit [sxsw.com](http://sxsw.com). To register for the event, please visit [sxsw.com/attend](http://sxsw.com/attend).

SXSW 2020 is sponsored by White Claw, American Express, and The Austin Chronicle.

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