** Under Embargo until 1pm on Friday 27 June **

NAWI: DEAR FUTURE ME wins 'Best International Feature' & its lead **Michelle Lemuya Ikeny** wins 'Best Performance in a Debut Feature'
+
IMMORTALS wins 'Best Documentary Feature'
SRISHTI wins 'Discovery Award for Best Debut Feature'
Alissa Jung wins 'Best Debut Director' for **PATERNAL LEAVE**
+
Christopher M. Anthony wins 'Best UK Director' for **HEAVYWEIGHT**
ROW wins 'Best UK Feature'
+
Edward Hogg wins 'Best Performance in a UK Feature' & **Bruce Jackson** wins 'Best UK Cinematography' for **THE LONELY MUSKETEER**
+
PALESTINE COMEDY CLUB wins 'Spirit of Raindance' award
+
LITTLE REBELS CINEMA CLUB, THE FINAL COPY OF ILON SPECHT, LARVAL win Oscar®-qualifying short awards and **THERE WILL COME SOFT RAINS** wins 'Best UK Short'

www.raindance.org/festival

FRI 27 JUNE, Raindance Jury Awards @ The Canon Lounge, 194 Piccadilly: to celebrate the outstanding achievements of the films screening in competition at the 33rd Raindance Film Festival (18 – 27 June, 2025), jury awards are presented to features and shorts.

The festival this year honours features in 10 categories: Best International Feature, Best Documentary Feature, Discovery Award for Best Debut Feature (the Elisar Cabrera Award), Best Debut Director, Best Performance in a Debut Feature, Best UK Feature, Best Director of a UK Feature, Best Performance in a UK Feature, Best UK Cinematography and the Spirit of Raindance Award. An Oscar® qualifying festival, Raindance further honours the work of short filmmakers with four awards.

During the festival's Opening Gala, Raindance additionally presented its signature **Icon Award to Celia Imrie and Jason Isaacs**, while **Dame Joan Plowright received a posthumous Icon Award**.

AND THE WINNERS ARE:

BEST INTERNATIONAL FEATURE: **NAWI: DEAR FUTURE ME (dir: Vallentine Chelluget, Apuu Mourine, Kevin Schmutzler, Kenya)**
Highlighting the plight of child brides in Africa, and acclaimed at multiple film festivals and at the African Movie Academy Awards, *Nawi: Dear Future Me* follows a 13-year-old whose father is selling her to a much older man for a herd of goats, and so she embarks on a journey to reclaim her dream of joining high school. ***Honourable mention: The Party's Over***

BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE: **IMMORTALS (dir: Maja Tschumi, Switzerland/Iraq)**
An insight into a new generation that has known nothing but war since the US-led occupation, *Immortals* follows strong-willed feminist Milo and ambitious filmmaker Khalili who, in the aftermath of the 2019 revolution, are the faces, eyes, and voices of an Iraqi youth that is relentlessly fighting for a better future. ***Honourable mention: Children In The Fire***

DISCOVERY AWARD FOR BEST DEBUT FEATURE (THE ELISAR CABRERA AWARD): **SRISHTI (dir: Paul Antar, India)**
The story of a photographer, haunted by childhood guilt, who travels to remote Himalayan Sector K to investigate a mysterious phenomenon – this mystery/drama highlights the plight of children forced to work trawling through giant rubbish heaps in search of things that can be monetised.

BEST DEBUT DIRECTOR: **ALISSA JUNG, PATERNAL LEAVE (Germany/Italy)**
A champion at Berlin and BCN film festivals, *Paternal Leave* follows a teenage girl's journey to Italy's northern coast, seeking her unknown biological father.

BEST PERFORMANCE IN A DEBUT FEATURE: **MICHELLE LEMUYA IKENY, NAWI: DEAR FUTURE ME**
Having previously won the African Movie Academy Award for Best Promising Actor for her performance in *Nawi: Dear Future Me*, teenage actress Michell Lemuya Ikeny now wins Raindance's 'Best Performance in a Debut Feature' for her debut acting role, playing a schoolgirl in north-western Kenya forced to marry an older man.

BEST PERFORMANCE IN A UK FEATURE: **EDWARD HOGG, THE LONELY MUSKETEER**
Nominated for Most Promising Newcomer at the BIFAs in 2009 for his first film lead role in *White Lightnin'*, and with further credits including *A Good Woman is Hard to Find* and *Imagine*, English actor Edward Hogg now wins Raindance's 'Best Performance in a UK Feature' for his role in unique closed-room thriller *The Lonely Musketeer*.

BEST UK FEATURE: **ROW (dir: Matthew Losasso, UK)**
Shot on the open sea, and with a cast including Bella Dayne (*Humans*) and Sophie Skelton (*Outlander*), *Row* sees a woman wash ashore on a blood-stained rowing boat after a failed trans-Atlantic world record attempt. With all her crewmates missing, presumed dead, she must piece together fractured memories of the ordeal to prove her innocence.

BEST DIRECTOR OF A UK FEATURE: **CHRISTOPHER M. ANTHONY, HEAVYWEIGHT**
Starring Nicholas Pinnock, Jordan Bolger and Jason Isaacs, *Heavyweight* follows a wildcard boxing contender and his support team ahead of a title fight he doubts he can win. An intense & visceral experience exploring a side of elite sport rarely seen. ***Honourable mention: Helena Berndl and Francesco Maria Gallo, In Symbiosis***

BEST UK CINEMATOGRAPHY: **BRUCE JACKSON, THE LONELY MUSKETEER**
Shot in monochrome in one claustrophobic main location, *The Lonely Musketeer* is a taut, stripped-back mystery thriller and a masterclass in low budget filmmaking.

SPIRIT OF RAINDANCE AWARD: **PALESTINE COMEDY CLUB (dir: Alaa Aliabdallah, UK)**
When six Palestinian comedians hit the road to tour a stand-up show, their search for humour amidst the injustice of everyday Palestinian life becomes a plea for humanity in the face of brutal war. This documentary-feature is directed by Alaa Aliabdallah and produced by Raindance alumni Charlotte Knowles, previously CEO of the Independent Film Trust.

ACADEMY AWARD® QUALIFYING SHORTS PROGRAMME

Raindance is an **Oscar-qualifying festival**. The recipient of Best Live Action Short, Best Documentary Short, and Best Animation Short are eligible for consideration in the three Short Films categories of the Academy Awards® without the standard theatrical run (provided the film otherwise complies with Academy rules). Honouring homegrown talent, Raindance also presents an award to Best UK Short.

BEST LIVE ACTION SHORT: **LITTLE REBELS CINEMA CLUB (dir: Khozy Rizal, Indonesia)**
Set in 2008, Doddy, a 14-year-old boy, tries to recreate an iconic scene of a zombie film with three of his best friends.

BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT: **THE FINAL COPY OF ILON SPECHT (Ben Proudfoot, USA)**
From two-time Oscar® winner Ben Proudfoot comes this intimate deathbed account of the unsung advertising genius Ilon Specht who coined L'Oréal's iconic "Because I'm Worth It" slogan in 1971, a four-word feminist manifesto that, against all odds, changed advertising forever.

BEST ANIMATION SHORT: **LARVAL (dir: Alice Bloomfield, UK)**
Living life in isolation, a girl dreams of luxury and beauty, fantasizing about possessing the looks of her celebrity idol and winning the heart of her unrequited love.

BEST UK SHORT: **THERE WILL COME SOFT RAINS (dir: Elham Ehsas, UK)**
Haunted by rising sea levels, a daughter digs up her father's grave to move his body to higher ground.

RAINDANCE 2025 JURY

This year's jury: **Antonia Campbell-Hughes** (filmmaker: *It Is In Us All, Cordelia, 3096 Tage*), **Cristo Fernández** (actor: *Ted Lasso*), **Emily Beecham** (actor: *Pursuit Of Love, Cruella, Little Joe*), **Iain Glen** (actor: *Game of Thrones, Resident Evil, The Rig*), **Iwan Rheon** (actor: *Vicious, Misfits, Game of Thrones*), **Jason Flemyng** (actor: *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels, The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, Boiling Point*), **Jo Hartley** (actor: *Swede Caroline, In My Skin, After Life*), **Natascha McElhone** (actor: *Laurel Canyon, Carmen, Surviving Picasso*), **Ng Choon Ping** (director: *Femme, What It Feels Like for a Girl*), **Theo Barklem-Biggs** (actor: *Rogue Heroes, Cherry, Make Up*), **Tosin Cole** (actor: *Supacell, Children of Blood and Bone, Till*), **Waad Al-Kateab** (director: *For Sama, We Dare To Dream, Death Without Mercy*), **Fred Hogge** (co-founder & original producer of BIFA), **Joshua Trigg** (director: *Satu - Year Of The Rabbit*, World Premiere at 32nd RDFF), **Kemal Akhtar** (producer), **Neil Norman** (film critic), **Sam Crane** (director: BIFA winning *Grand Theft Hamlet*), **Sonja Klaus** (production designer: *Gladiator, American Gangster*), **Vineeta Mishra** (head, NFDC Film Bazaar India), **Vinnie Shergill** (producer, *Strictly Come Dancing*), **Pavel Cortes** (Director of Programming for Guadalajara International Film Festival), **Bianca Gavin** (Head of Production, Scripted), **Louisa Connolly-Burnham** (writer/director/actress, *Sister Wives*), **India Rose Meade** (Drama Commissioning Coordinator at the BBC), **Natalie Coffen** (Creative Executive at Push It Productions). Full bios & categories: https://raindance.org/festival/jury-2025/

RAINDANCE 2025 BEST UNPRODUCED SCREENPLAY WINNERS

Half Hour: **Access Village** by Brian Koukol
One Hour: **The Nightshift** by Shiv B
Feature: **Porridge** by Fenton Queens
Short: **Summer Came Early** by Miquel Sierra Altarriba

For more information:
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EDITORS NOTES:
Raindance Film Festival is the largest independent film festival in the UK and it has been recognised by Variety as "one of the world's top 50 unmissable film festivals". Raindance showcases the boldest, freshest content from British and international filmmakers. Industry and the public attend cutting-edge panels, talks and workshops. Raindance is a qualifying festival for Oscars®, BAFTA and BIFA. www.raindance.org/festival

Raindance is dedicated to fostering and promoting independent film around the world. Founded in 1992, it combines the Raindance Film Festival, film training courses, and Raindance Higher Education. Training courses are at the heart of the Raindance structure, aiming to give individuals the tools to start shooting their film, and covering screenwriting, production, directing, and virtual reality. Moreover, Raindance has developed three fully accredited Higher Education Film Programmes, becoming the only major film festival in the world to offer higher education. www.raindance.org

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