33rd RAINDANCE FILM FESTIVAL
18 – 27 JUNE 2025

PRESS KIT

Opening Gala: WORLD PREMIERE OF CHRISTOPHER M. ANTHONY'S **HEAVYWEIGHT**
starring NICHOLAS PINNOCK, JASON ISAACS, JORDAN BOLGER
at Vue West End + opening party at the Waldorf Hilton

Closing Gala: INTERNATIONAL PREMIERE OF CAMILLA GUTTNER'S **THE ACADEMY**

RAINDANCE ICON AWARD 2025 RECIPIENTS: **CELIA IMRIE** AND **JASON ISAACS**

MAIN SPONSOR**: CANON EUROPE**

THE UK'S LEADING INDIE FILM FESTIVAL returns to Vue Piccadilly with
70 narrative and documentary features (a 90% increase on last year)
including **29 WORLD PREMIERES**

EMILY BEECHAM, NATASCHA McELHONE, IWAN RHEON, THEO BARKLEM-BIGGS,
IAIN GLEN, NG CHOON PING, JO HARTLEY AMONG FESTIVAL JURORS

World Premieres include powerful Ukrainian doc **CHILDREN IN THE FIRE**, Catholic Church exposé **GOD AS MY WITNESS**, football doc **EMMA: ONE LAST DANCE**, gun crime doc **THE TWO OF US.**

World Premieres of UK features include open sea set thriller **ROW**,
queer drama **BREAKWATER**, found-footage folk horror **LONER**.
International features include Brazilian UFO mocumentary **ABDUCTED FILES**, Australian organ-harvesting horror-comedy **SNATCHERS**, Indian mystery-drama **SRISHTI**, US weight-loss horror-comedy **THINESTRA**, lavish Thai musical **DREAM!**

10th RAINDANCE IMMERSIVE celebrates a decade of championing
independent XR creators, defining the future of storytelling

With support of German Films, award-winning director BURHAM QURBANI presents
a masterclass + UK Premiere of his latest film **NO BEAST. SO FIERCE.**

www.raindance.org/festival



The UK's leading indie film festival, Raindance is fighting fit and ready to challenge, provoke, and entertain. The past five editions saw Raindance batten down the hatches as the festival navigated the choppy waters of the post-pandemic world – but now Raindance has re-charted its course. The **33rd Raindance Film Festival comprises 70 narrative and documentary features** – that's a 90% increase on last year's edition, and the first time since 2019 that Raindance will champion so many films.

Similarly, Raindance returns for the first time since 2019 to Vue Piccadilly. Situated in the heart of London's West End, this landmark cinema will host Raindance exclusively and entirely for the festival's full duration, complemented by an opening gala at Vue Leicester Square and a party at the Waldorf Hilton's lavish Palm Court. In recent editions, Raindance adapted its mandate to focus primarily on first features – and although this year Raindance upholds its commitment to emerging filmmakers (40 films i.e. 58% of the feature programme are debut features), this generously-sized edition has the capacity to showcase much more, including new films by more seasoned indie auteurs. The programme also includes **113 short films and 32 immersive projects**.

With support from **main sponsor Canon Europe**, the festival will take over not only Vue Piccadilly but also One Ninetyfour, which will be utilised by filmmakers and guests as **Raindance's industry hub, the Canon Lounge.** Industry highlights include a special Cinematography Day Presented by Canon.

Intrinsically poised to embrace the vanguard, this year Raindance also marks **a decade of XR innovation with the 10th edition of Raindance Immersive,** incorporating the Immersive Showcase and Immersive Summit at Vue Piccadilly plus a month-long online festival in VRChat (6 - 29 June).

"Raindance is always one to punch above its weight, so it's appropriate that the festival's 33rd edition should open with the World Premiere of a British debut feature about a wildcard boxer," **says Raindance founder Elliot Grove**. "Throughout this edition, Raindance continues to champion new voices and under-the-radar films that many other festivals overlook. With our new main sponsor Canon Europe, we have an even greater ability to enable filmmakers to focus on the stories they are determined to tell. We're also celebrating a decade of XR innovation at Raindance with the 10th Raindance Immersive – proving that being a wildcard equals being ahead of the curve. Stay ahead of the curve by joining our celebration of indie cinema in the heart of London."

OPENING GALA: HEAVYWEIGHT (WORLD PREMIERE)

The 33rd Raindance Film Festival opens 18 June at Vue Leicester Square with the **World Premiere of Christopher M. Anthony's debut feature HEAVYWEIGHT** (dir: Christopher M. Anthony, UK). Starring Nicholas Pinnock (*Top Boy, Marcella, For Life*), Jordan Bolger (*Peaky Blinders, The Woman King*), Jason Isaacs (*Harry Potter series, Death of Stalin*) and cast including Jamie Bamber, Sienna Guillory, Blake Harrison and Joplin Sibtain, it follows wildcard boxing contender 'Diamond' Derek Douglas and his support team ahead of a title fight he doubts he can win. The pressure escalates in realtime, as dirty tricks and revelations are revealed. An intense and visceral experience exploring a side of elite sport rarely seen. Followed by a gala opening party at the Waldorf Hilton's Palm Court, plus this year's **Raindance Icon Award** presentation.

CLOSING GALA: THE ACADEMY (INTERNATIONAL PREMIERE)

The festival closes with the **International Premiere of Camilla Guttner's feature THE ACADEMY** (dir: Camilla Guttner, Germany) with a strong lead performance from Maja Bons (award-winner for German TVs *Everyone Is F*cking Crazy*) as Jojo, a student who experiences a baptism of fire when she's accepted by a prestigious art school. But the dazzling art world soon reveals itself to be a ruthless terrain, and Jojo does everything she can to stay true to herself in this toxic environment. Presented with the support of German Films.

MAIN SPONSOR: CANON EUROPE

The 33rd Raindance Film Festival welcomes Canon Europe as Main Sponsor. As Main Sponsor, Canon's presence will be central to many aspects of the festival. This year's industry hub will occupy One Ninetyfour: located under the BAFTA building at 194 Piccadilly, this space will be re-branded the **Canon Lounge**, a film-focused place created to inspire a new and upcoming generation of indie filmmakers. Within the Canon Lounge will be a dedicated area where filmmakers can interact with Canon experts throughout the festival, alongside showcase elements that demonstrate the full scope and potential of Canon products including a 360-degree photobooth.

Raindance's Industry Programme of talks and masterclasses will feature a special **Cinematography Day Presented by Canon**, with guest speakers and brand ambassadors exploring Canon's wide-ranging product lines. This year's festival trailer was shot using the latest Canon equipment, and Canon cameras will be utilised by Raindance's production and marketing/social media teams throughout the festival.

Raindance founder Elliot Grove says: "In film as in life, it can be arduous without a partner – but having the wrong partner can also be challenging. That's why I'm delighted to welcome Canon Europe as Raindance's Main Sponsor. Their dynamic range of cameras are indispensable to so many independent filmmakers, making the magical art of filmmaking more readily accessible. Exactly like Raindance, Canon enables filmmakers to focus on the stories they are determined to tell."

Jack Adair, Cinema & Broadcast Marketing Lead at Canon Europe, adds: "Canon has long championed the next generation of filmmakers, and our partnership with Raindance reflects our shared commitment to empowering independent voices and bold storytelling. From hands-on experiences with our latest tech to thought-provoking industry sessions, it'll be incredible to see the creativity and passion this inspiring event brings to life."

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTS

>> INTERNATIONAL FEATURES: premieres of maverick independent films

DREAM! (dir: Paul Spurrier, Thailand) World Premiere. One of the biggest independent films ever made in Thailand, this lavish and cinematic Christmas-set musical follows a young girl who flees her mountain home, beginning a magical journey across Thailand to find a new family.

GRANNY MUST DIE (dir: Yi Jung Chen, Taiwan) International Premiere. Debut feature. This dark absurdist comedy portrays three generations of a family living in a tiny Taipei apartment when love, duty and lunacy spiral delightfully out of control.

LOVE SONG FROM HIROSHIMA (dir: Hideyuki Tokigawa, Japan) European Premiere. A call to peace and togetherness as a benevolent alien wanders around present-day Hiroshima.

NAWI: DEAR FUTURE ME (dir: Vallentine Chelluget, Apuu Mourine, Kevin Schmutzler, Kenya) UK Premiere. Debut feature. Highlighting the plight of child brides in Africa, and acclaimed at multiple film festivals and at the African Movie Academy Awards, it 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.

NO BEAST. SO FIERCE. (dir: Burhan Qurbani, Poland/France/Germany) UK Premiere. Following its World Premiere at Berlin, this adaptation of Richard III by award-winning director Burhan Qurbani sees actress Kenda Hmeidan dazzle as the daughter of an Arab clan who, in the aftermath of a bloody gang war, plots against her male siblings to become the undisputed boss of the Berlin underworld.

PATERNAL LEAVE (dir: Alissa Jung, Germany/Italy) UK Premiere. Debut feature. A champion at Berlin and BCN film festivals, it follows a teenage girl's journey to Italy's northern coast, seeking her unknown biological father.

SHAKESPEARE'S THE TEMPEST (dir: Garret Replogle, USA) European Premiere. Debut feature. *Star Trek* meets Shakespeare in this tale of a spaceship captain marooned on a desert planet who orchestrates a series of events to confront the crew who betrayed him.

SRISHTI (dir: Paul Antar, India) World Premiere. Debut feature. 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.

TAPE (dir: Bizhan Tong, UK/Hong Hong) UK Premiere. Set in modern-day Asia, this bold reimagining of Richard Linklater's cult classic sees three high school friends reunite, only to confront a harrowing secret from their past.
THE PARTY'S OVER (dir: Elena Manrique, Spain/Belgium) UK Premiere. Debut feature. Beatriz Arjona won "Best Lead Actress" Carmen Award for her role as a wealthy divorcée in southern Spain whose life is disrupted when a young Senegalese immigrant seeks shelter in her toolshed.
WET MONDAY (dir: Justyna Mytnik, Poland). UK Premiere. Debut feature. When repressed trauma from a sexual assault resurfaces, a teenage girl develops a strange fear of water. Thanks to a new-found friend, she confronts it in an unusual way.

>> INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARIES: powerful & relevant global stories

BEAM ME UP, SULU (dir: Timour Gregory, Sasha Schneider, USA) World Premiere. Debut feature. The search for a lost fan film made by young Trekkies in 1985 opens a window into the extraordinary life of *Star Trek* star George Takei and the ongoing fight for equality and representation.
CHILDREN IN THE FIRE (dir: Evgeny Afineevsky, Ukraine) World Premiere. Debut feature. War-wounder Ukrainian children share their stories through a blend of live footage and animation, bringing their experiences to life.
GOD AS MY WITNESS (dir: Lindsay Q. Pitre, USA) World Premiere. Debut feature. Decades after losing his brother, a man begins to uncover dark secrets within the Archdiocese of New Orleans, exposing a generations-long cover-up of betrayal, sexual abuse and corruption.
I HOPE THIS HELPS! (dir: Daniel M. Freed, USA) UK Premiere. Debut feature. Executive produced by Matthew Modine and Adam Rackoff, this multi-award winner sees journalist Daniel Freed enlist the help of Google's first AI chatbot "Bard" to collaborate on a documentary about AI, exploring the benefits and risks of this world-changing innovation.
SAINT DAMIAN (dir: Gregorio Sassoli, Alejandro Cifuentes, Italy) UK Premiere. Debut feature. Following a Polish man who arrives at Rome's Termini Station with just 50€ to his name, this is an uncompromising, no-holds barred look at homelessness and mental illness.
THE SOCIAL TRAP: 5 WOMEN VS THE BIG 5 (dir: Elisa Jadot, France) UK Premiere. Adolescents who use smartphones for more than 5 hours a day are 66% more likely to suffer suicidal symptoms than those who use it for 1 hour a day. Facing tech giants like Meta, TikTok, X and Snapchat, five women decide to take action.

>> UK: discover the best homegrown narrative features & documentaries

BREAKWATER (dir: Max Morgan, UK) World Premiere. Debut feature. Portraying the tentative romance between young Oxford student Otto and retired angler John, and with a cast including William Gao (*Heartstopper*), this is the second film to be made with the involvement of Oxford University – the first being 1982's *Privileged*, which famously launched the Hollywood career of Hugh Grant amongst others.
DALI (dir: Mickey Angelov, UK) World Premiere. Debut feature. Exploring themes of cultural identity and nature vs nurture, we follow a Bulgarian-born American-raised rapper who dies and so must relive his tumultuous past to determine whether he belongs Above or Below.
EMMA: ONE LAST DANCE (dir: Maya Amin-Smith, UK) World Premiere. Debut feature. The story of Emma Hayes, the most successful manager in WSL history, charting her last six months at Chelsea Football Club as she attempts to lead her team to victory one more time.
IN SYMBIOSIS (dir: Helena Berndl, Francesco Maria Gallo, UK) World Premiere. From land to lab, this environmental doc unveils the driving forces behind a broken food system.
POISED (dir: Toby Robson, UK) European Premiere. Debut feature. Nominated for Best Documentary Feature at Cinequest, it charts a man's hopes to use mixed martial arts (MMA) to save a group of disadvantaged young people in a post-industrial north-east England.
ROW (dir: Matthew Losasso, UK) World Premiere. Debut feature. Shot on the open sea, and with a cast including Bella Dayne (*Humans*) and Sophie Skelton (*Outlander*), this thriller 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.
THE RENDLESHAM UFO: THE BRITISH ROSWELL (dir: Roderick Godman, Mark Christopher Lee, UK) World Premiere. Narrated by William B. Davis of *X-Files* fame, this thrilling and sometimes hilarious investigation delves into the 1980 Rendlesham UFO incident where a mysterious craft was reportedly seen landing near a U.S. airbase.

THE TWO OF US (dir: Owen Ward, UK). World Premiere. Debut feature. Tim Edwards, whose daughter Elle was a victim of gun crime, tries to deal with the trauma of loss by embarking on an epic walk spanning the length of the UK, accompanied by comedian and actor John May. A rare and deeply human perspective on the impact these violent crimes have on the victims' families.
THIS IS YOUR CAPTAIN SPEAKING (dir: Tristan Loraine, Sandra Skibsted, UK) World Premiere. Former airline captain Tristan Loraine explores what the aviation industry really knows about the quality of the air you breathe onboard aircraft.

>> RAINDANCE HORROR: rebooted & expanded horror strand + "New Blood" debuts
DEFORMELODY: AN AMERICAN NIGHTMARE (dir: Joshua Rivera, USA) International Premiere. Debut feature. Shot by a crew of two over 3 years for $4,000 on a mobile phone, this horror satire follows a pop-culture-obsessed serial killer who terrorizes L.A.
DIRTY BOY (dir: Doug Rao, UK) UK Premiere. Debut feature. Graham McTavish (*Outlander*, *The Hobbit* trilogy) stars in this tale of a reclusive schizophrenic raised in an oppressive cult, who discovers he's being framed by cult leaders for a series of ritualistic murders.
DUI SHAW (dir: Nuhash Humayun, Bangladesh) UK Premiere. A portmanteau of unsettling tales from Bangladesh, including a deadly curse, a magic village, and a morbid marriage. A sequel to *Pett Kata Shaw*, winner of Raindance's Best International Feature in 2023.
THE RUN (dir: Paul Raschid, USA/Italy) World Premiere. A famous fitness influencer's morning run turns into a fight for survival in this interactive film, where the audience gets to vote on her choices. With cameos from horror icons Dario Argento and Franco Nero.
WHITE GUILT (dir: Marcus Flemmings, UK) World Premiere. Set on a US plantation, affluent white individuals sample an 'inverted slavery experience' through a pay-to-play service.
ZHAZA (dir: Darkhan Tulegenov, Kazakhstan). UK Premiere. In this action thriller, a corrupt mayor learns that his daughter has been raped by the chief-of-police. He takes him hostage and fights off the rape squads, while trying to save his daughter and establish a relationship with her.

20th ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE SCREENING: MRS PALFREY AT THE CLAREMONT

Starring the incomparable Dame Joan Plowright alongside Rupert Friend, **MRS PALFREY AT THE CLAREMONT (dir: Dan Ireland, UK/USA)** tells of an elderly woman, all but abandoned by her family in a London retirement hotel, who strikes up a curious friendship with a young writer. Twenty years after the film's release, and almost a decade since its director Dan Ireland passed away, **Raindance will present in tribute a 20th anniversary screening of this heartfelt film**. As a tireless champion of independent films, both as a director and as co-founder of the Seattle International Film Festival, Dan Ireland epitomized the spirit of indie cinema. *Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont* is both a love letter to London and a testament to his storytelling.

"Dan Ireland understood the soul of cinema and the power of connection. I remember *Mrs Palfrey* was originally estimated to cost £10 million or more to make in London, but longtime Raindance collaborator Matthew Devlen made it possible to get the film off the ground for under £1 million by first creating a full backlot in and around Hyde Park. As Raindance marks its 33rd year, we're proud to celebrate Dan's unwavering indie spirit and to pay tribute to the late Dame Joan Plowright for her radiant performance in this beloved film." – **Elliot Grove, Founder, Raindance Film Festival**.

ACADEMY AWARD® QUALIFYING SHORT FILM PROGRAMMES

Raindance is an **Oscar-qualifying festival**. The recipient of Raindance's Best Live Action Short, Best Animation Short, and Best Documentary 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 the Academy rules).

Highlights this year include **THE MAN WHO COULD NOT REMAIN SILENT (dir: Nebojša Slijepčević, Croatia).** Winner of the 2024 "Best Short Film" Palme d'Or at Cannes and nominated for an Oscar®, it's set on a passenger train that is stopped by paramilitary forces in an ethnic cleansing operation in Bosnia & Herzegovina in 1993 – and only one man dares to stand up to them. Winner of "Best International Short" at this years' Sundance, **GRANDMA NAI WHO PLAYED FAVOURITES (dir:**

Chheangkea, Cambodia) sees dead Grandma Nai sneak away from her afterlife after hearing that her queer grandson is about to get engaged to a woman. A night in the life of a Tokyo taxi driver is portrayed in **MIDNIGHT (dir: Takashi Miike, Japan),** a vibrant short film by the renowned director of classic features including *Ichi the Killer* and *Audition*. A man grapples with personal demons while pursuing a seemingly mundane goal in **O (dir: Rúnar Rúnarsson, Iceland/Sweden)**, the latest short by this Oscar® nominated director.

A young woman ponders life's mysteries in a confession box in **OUR FATHER (dir: Aisling Bea, Ireland)**, the directorial debut of acclaimed actor, stand-up comedian and writer Aisling Bea. Actor Susan Wokoma writes and directs her second short **DARK SKIN BRUISES DIFFERENTLY (dir: Susan Wokoma, UK)**, and stars as a teacher whose integrity is threatened when one of her students lies. Oscar® winning actor Cate Blanchett features in sci-fi short **BOZO OVER ROSES (dir: Matty Sidle, Hungary/USA**). And Oscar® nominated actor Barkhad Abdi features in **MAGAN'S FARE (dir: Christopher Knoblock, Dana White, USA**) as a driver taking a woman back to her nursing home, only to find they have given up her bed.

Altogether there are 113 short films across shorts programmes including: *Abstract Notions, Animation, B-reel, Documentary, Female Shorts, Gone Astray, Horror Show, LGBTQIA+, Lost Cause, Nova Express, Radical Agendas, Relative States, Traditional Cuts, Transient Ventures, Young Bloods*.

RAINDANCE x NETFLIX DOCUMENTARY TALENT FUND

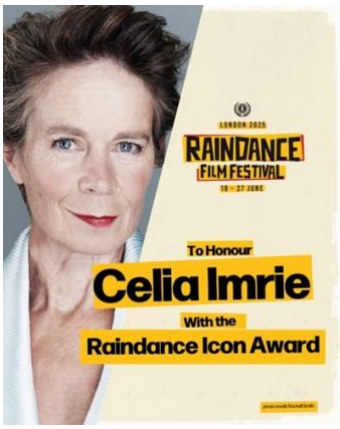
Raindance are pleased to announce as part of this year's festival the **Global Premiere of six films created as part of the Netflix Documentary Talent Fund.**

In its third year, the Netflix Documentary Talent Fund supports emerging filmmakers to nurture and support a new generation of documentary storytellers. The six films were selected out of thousands of applications inspired by the prompt "you're never gonna believe this…" Each received a budget of £30,000 to produce a short documentary between 8-12 minutes long, participated in Netflix hosted workshops covering all aspects of production including legal, creative, HR, production and finance along with year-long guidance on their films from Netflix and filmmaking professionals.

The fund aims to champion underrepresented voices – values that Raindance also share and uphold. Now completed, these six powerful and relevant stories will have their World Premieres on Thursday 26 June during the 33rd Raindance Film Festival, ahead of their release on Netflix's YouTube channel. Screening as part of Raindance's Official Selection, these documentary shorts will each be eligible to be considered for Raindance's Oscar®-qualifying "Best Documentary Short" jury award.

Full list of films: **BEYOND THE DIVIDE** (dir: Imoje Aikhoje), **THE ANGRY BIRD** (dir: Lisa Smith & Jack Lilleywhite), **THE GOOD FARMER AND THE FAILED SON** (dir: Ailill Martin & Peter Kilmartin), **BAND** (dir: David Chabeaux & Owen Tooth), **THE HERRING QUEEN** (dir: Eilidh Munro & Isabella Bassett), **TOO DISGUSTING TO BE CONFUSED** (dir: Maya Avidov & Savannah James-Bayly).

RAINDANCE ICON AWARD 2025: CELIA IMRIE and JASON ISAACS





Celia Imrie photo credit: Rachell Smith / Jason Isaacs photo credit: David Reiss

Acclaimed British actors **Celia Imrie** and **Jason Isaacs** are the recipients of **this year's Raindance Icon Awards**, presented as part of the festival's 33rd edition (18-27 June).

Both will receive their Icon Award at the Opening Gala on 18 June, the **World Premiere of Christopher M. Anthony's debut feature HEAVYWEIGHT.** Starring Nicholas Pinnock (*Top Boy, Marcella, For Life*), Jordan Bolger (*Peaky Blinders, The Woman King*), Jason Isaacs (*Harry Potter series, Death of Stalin*) and cast including Jamie Bamber, Sienna Guillory, Blake Harrison and Joplin Sibtain, it follows wildcard boxing contender 'Diamond' Derek Douglas and his support team ahead of a title fight he doubts he can win. The pressure escalates in realtime, as dirty tricks and revelations are revealed. An intense and visceral experience exploring a side of elite sport rarely seen.

"As part of the 33rd Raindance, it's an honour for us to celebrate this year's Raindance Icon Award recipients," **Raindance founder Elliot Grove says**. "Both are the epitome of our industry with careers that include iconic film and television roles – and both remain champions of independent cinema here in the UK and internationally. Celia Imrie graced Raindance's jury in 2017 and Jason Isaacs co-stars in this year's opening film *Heavyweight*. We are proud to recognise and honour their achievements with this award."

RAINDANCE ICON AWARD 2025: CELIA IMRIE

CELIA IMRIE CBE is an Olivier and Screen Actors Guild Award-winning actress, soon to be seen in the film adaptation of ***THE THURSDAY MURDER CLUB***, starring alongside Dame Helen Mirren, Pierce Brosnan, and Sir Ben Kingsley, and directed by Chris Columbus.

Her celebrated film work includes ***THE BEST and THE SECOND BEST EXOTIC MARIGOLD HOTEL, CALENDAR GIRLS, MAMMA MIA! HERE WE GO AGAIN,*** the ***BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY*** series, ***FINDING YOUR FEET, LOVE SARAH*** *and* ***GOOD GRIEF***. Her other screen roles include ***STAR WARS: EPISODE I – THE PHANTOM MENACE, HIGHLANDER, NANNY McPHEE,*** and ***ST TRINIAN'S.***

On television, she starred in Netflix's ***THE DIPLOMAT*** and all five seasons of the critically acclaimed US series ***BETTER THINGS.***

Celia recently returned to the West End in the Donmar Warehouse's ***BACKSTROKE***. She is also the author of five novels, all of which have appeared on the Sunday Times bestseller list.

This autumn, she will appear in the upcoming series of BBC's ***THE CELEBRITY TRAITORS***.

Celia Imrie says: "What an absolute thrill to be accepting the honour of this year's Raindance Icon Award. I adore films and the Raindance Festival gives fabulous chances to new and international writers and directors. Keeping fresh our ever-lasting passion for cinema. I also love dancing, especially in the rain."

RAINDANCE ICON AWARD 2025: JASON ISAACS

JASON ISAACS is a multi-award-winning British actor with a wide range of film credits across various genres: Fantasy – Lucius Malfoy in the ***HARRY POTTER*** series; Comedy – ***THE DEATH OF STALIN*** and ***FRIENDS WITH MONEY***; War – ***THE PATRIOT***, ***BLACK HAWK DOWN***, ***FURY***, ***GREEN ZONE***, ***OPERATION MINCEMEAT***; Horror – ***A CURE FOR WELLNESS***, ***EVENT HORIZON***, ***LOOK AWAY***; Action-Adventure – ***ARMAGEDDON***, ***ABDUCTION***, ***SKYFIRE***, ***THE TUXEDO***; Drama – ***HOTEL MUMBAI***, ***GOOD***, ***SWEET NOVEMBER***, ***THE END OF THE AFFAIR***; Children's Films – ***PETER PAN***, ***DRAGONHEART***. In 2021, he starred in ***MASS***, earning multiple awards, including the Independent Spirit Robert Altman Award.

This year, he can be seen in ***THE SALT PATH*** with Gillian Anderson, ***WORDS OF WAR***, ***JULIET & ROMEO*** as Lord Montague, and Canadian horror ***HONEY BUNCH***. It has recently been announced that he will be starring in psychological-horror, ***VICTORIAN PSYCHO, MISTLETOE & WINE,*** *and* ***HEAVYWEIGHT*** with Nicholas Pinnock.

Jason can currently be seen in the third season of HBO's ***THE WHITE LOTUS***, and has appeared in ***ARCHIE***, ***THE CROWDED ROOM***, ***THE OA***, ***SEX EDUCATION***, ***STAR TREK: DISCOVERY***, ***GOOD SAM***, ***THE GREAT***, and more.

His voice work includes ***STAR WARS REBELS***, ***BALDURS GATE 3***, ***AVATAR: THE LAST AIRBENDER***, ***SCOOB***, ***CARS 2***, ***SUPERMAN: RED SON***, and more. He has also been cast in ***PIERRE THE PIGEON-HAWK*** and ***WHAT IF...?***.

On stage, he has performed in ***ANGELS IN AMERICA***, ***THE DUMB WAITER***, and ***WHITE RABBIT RED RABBIT*** in 2024.

Jason has earned nominations and wins from the **Golden Globes**, **BAFTA**, **International Emmys**, **SAG**, among others.

Jason Isaacs says: ""Raindance has always championed people making films who believe in the power of stories, and who are telling them with few resources other than imagination and determination. Those are my people and those are my stories, so I'm thrilled to be receiving their Icon award (even if I still feel like I'm just getting started)."

ABOUT THE RAINDANCE ICON AWARD

The Raindance Icon Award is the festival's signature award, honouring and celebrating the icons of independent cinema in the UK and internationally: those who make an authentic and iconic impression via the medium of film. Previous Raindance Icon Award recipients**: Chiwetel Ejiofor, Michael Winterbottom, David Yates, Vanessa Redgrave, Jonathan Pryce, Gemma Arterton, Sir Michael Caine, Sally Hawkins, Jude Law, Olivia Colman, Terry Gilliam, Guy Richie, Ken Loach**.

A-Z OF ALL FEATURES

500 DAYS IN THE WILD (dir: Dianne Whelan, Canada) UK Premiere. Documenting Dianne Whelan's 6-year journey to film and complete all 24,000km of the land and water trails across North America.

A CELL PHONE MOVIE (dir: Will Sterling, USA) European Premiere. A scrappy meta comedy shot entirely on a cellphone, it stars writer/director/producer/actor Will Sterling as...himself, an out-of-work actor trying to make a movie on his phone. It's lo-fi, low-budget, and high on self-deprecation.

ABDUCTED FILES (dir: Filippo Capuzzi Lapietra, Brazil) World Premiere. In this mocumentary, a crew of ufologists revisit lost UFO footage from 2016. When shocking evidence resurfaces, they uncover a government conspiracy – and must decide whether to expose the truth or vanish into silence.

AIMING TO THE TOP: ACCRA UNDERGROUND (dir: Orçun Behram, Turkey) World Premiere. Raw, emotional documentary following six artists in the slums of Accra, using their creativity to rise above poverty, crime and hardship.

BEAM ME UP, SULU (dir: Timour Gregory, Sasha Schneider, USA) World Premiere. Debut feature. The search for a lost fan film made by young Trekkies in 1985 opens a window into the extraordinary life of *Star Trek* star George Takei and the ongoing fight for equality and representation.

BREAKWATER (dir: Max Morgan, UK) World Premiere. Debut feature. Portraying the tentative romance between young Oxford student Otto and retired angler John, and with a cast including William Gao (*Heartstopper*), this is the second film to be made with the involvement of Oxford University – the first being 1982's *Privileged*, which famously launched the Hollywood career of Hugh Grant amongst others.

CHILDREN IN THE FIRE (dir: Evgeny Afineevsky, Ukraine) World Premiere. Debut feature. War-wounder Ukrainian children share their stories through a blend of live footage and animation, bringing their experiences to life.

CORINA (dir: Urzula Barba, Mexico) UK Premiere. For the past 20 years, Corina has rarely left her house, except to work at a local publishing house. When she makes a grave mistake at work, her world is thrown into turmoil. To save her job she must confront her deepest fears.

DALI (dir: Mickey Angelov, UK) World Premiere. Exploring themes of cultural identity and nature vs nurture, we follow a Bulgarian-born American-raised rapper who dies and so must relive his tumultuous past to determine whether he belongs Above or Below.

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DIRTY BOY (dir: Doug Rao, UK) UK Premiere. Debut feature. Graham McTavish (*Outlander*, *The Hobbit* trilogy) stars in this tale of a reclusive schizophrenic raised in an oppressive cult, who discovers he's being framed by cult leaders for a series of ritualistic murders.

DREAM! (dir: Paul Spurrier, Thailand) World Premiere. One of the biggest independent films ever made in Thailand, this lavish and cinematic Christmas-set musical follows a young girl who flees her mountain home, beginning a magical journey across Thailand to find a new family.

DUI SHAW (dir: Nuhash Humayun, Bangladesh) UK Premiere. A portmanteau of unsettling tales from Bangladesh, including a deadly curse, a magic village, and a morbid marriage. A sequel to *Pett Kata Shaw*, winner of Raindance's Best International Feature in 2023.

EMMA: ONE LAST DANCE (dir: Maya Amin-Smith, UK) World Premiere. Debut feature. The story of Emma Hayes, the most successful manager in WSL history, charting her last six months at Chelsea Football Club as she attempts to lead her team to victory one more time.

FLAMINGO CAMP (dir: Chris Coats, USA) European Premiere. In an off-grid squatter town in the California desert, a group of young queer and trans anarchists create a thriving safe space known as "Flamingo Camp" – but an unthinkable tragedy fractures this vulnerable community.

GOD AS MY WITNESS (dir: Lindsay Q. Pitre, USA) World Premiere. Debut feature. Decades after losing his brother, a man begins to uncover dark secrets within the Archdiocese of New Orleans, exposing a generations-long cover-up of betrayal, sexual abuse and corruption.

GOD TEETH (dir: Robbie C Williamson, Costa Rica) European Premiere. Created entirely from found internet footage, this fantastical odyssey tells of four recently deceased souls who find themselves on an abandoned ship at sea, who must recount the circumstances which led to their untimely deaths.

GRANNY MUST DIE (dir: Yi Jung Chen, Taiwan) International Premiere. This dark absurdist comedy portrays three generations of a family living in a tiny Taipei apartment when love, duty and lunacy spiral delightfully out of control.

HEAVYWEIGHT (dir: Christopher M. Anthony, UK) World Premiere. Debut feature. Starring Nicholas Pinnock, Jordan Bolger and Jason Isaacs, it 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.

HOLE (dir: Dejan Babosek, Slovenia) UK Premiere. A couple of con artists seduce and rob wealthy women. One robbery goes awry. Believing they have killed her, they drive to a remote forest to bury her body. She wakes up and escapes, and a lethal game of cat-and-mouse ensues.

I HOPE THIS HELPS! (dir: Daniel M. Freed, USA) UK Premiere. Debut feature. Executive produced by Matthew Modine and Adam Rackoff, this multi-award winner sees journalist Daniel Freed enlist the help of Google's first AI chatbot "Bard" to collaborate on a documentary about AI, exploring the benefits and risks of this world-changing innovation.

IF YOU SHOULD LEAVE BEFORE ME (dir: J. Markus Anderson & Boyd Anderson, USA) World Premiere. A devastating loss drives a rift between Mark and Joshua after many years of marital bliss, and they immerse themselves in their work: guiding the recently deceased to the afterlife.

IMMORTALS (dir: Maja Tschumi, Switzerland/Iraq) UK Premiere. 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.

IN SYMBIOSIS (dir: Helena Berndl & Francesco Maria Gallo, UK) World Premiere. Debut feature. From land to lab, this environmental doc unveils the driving forces behind a broken food system.

JAMES (dir: Max Train, Canada) UK Premiere. A comedy about an East Vancouver nihilist who finds new purpose after restoring a race bicycle salvaged from the trash. When a crooked dealer, aware of the bike's true value, steals it, our anti-hero becomes trapped in a relentless pursuit.

LONER (dir: Charlie Robb, Douglas Tawn, UK) World Premiere. Debut feature. This raw, found-footage folk horror follows an aspiring vlogger who embarks on a wilderness retreat to make videos about nature and disconnecting from city life. But he is held at the mercy of a higher natural order.

LOVE SONG FROM HIROSHIMA (dir: Hideyuki Tokigawa, Japan) European Premiere. A call to peace and togetherness as a benevolent alien wanders around present-day Hiroshima.

MRS PALFREY AT THE CLAREMONT (dir: Dan Ireland, UK/USA) Special Tribute Screening**.** Starring Joan Plowright and Rupert Friend, it tells of an elderly woman, all but abandoned by her family in a London retirement hotel, who strikes up a curious friendship with a young writer.

NAWI: DEAR FUTURE ME (dir: Vallentine Chelluget, Apuu Mourine, Kevin Schmutzler, Kenya) UK Premiere. Debut feature. Highlighting the plight of child brides in Africa, and acclaimed at multiple film festivals and at the African Movie Academy Awards, it 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.

NO BEAST. SO FIERCE. (dir: Burhan Qurbani, Poland/France/Germany) UK Premiere. Following its World Premiere at Berlin, this adaptation of Richard III by award-winning director Burhan Qurbani sees actress Kenda Hmeidan dazzle as the daughter of an Arab clan who, in the aftermath of a bloody gang war, plots against her male siblings to become the undisputed boss of the Berlin underworld.

ONE-WAY TICKET TO THE OTHER SIDE (dir: Jérôme Vandewattyne, Severine Cayron, Edgar Pêra, Guillaume Campanacci, David Gregory, Douglas Buck, Truman Kewley, Martina Schöne-Radunski, Buddy Giovinazzo, Andreas Horvath, Patrycja Planik, Jen Gatien, Katsuki Kuroyanagi, Belgium/Germany). UK Premiere. Anthology film that presents a series of deeply personal shorts centred around the debut album of the musical duo Pornographie Exclusive.

OUR HAPPY PLACE (dir: Paul Bickel, USA) International Premiere. A woman repeatedly awakes in a shallow grave on the forest floor – shivering, disoriented and alone. She has no memory of how she got there, and each time the grave deepens. Back at her cabin, the supernatural torment intensifies.

OUR JOURNEY WITH LOBULAR BREAST CANCER (dir: Tristan Loraine, UK) World Premiere. The true story of some remarkable ladies diagnosed with lobular breast cancer, and their campaign to get the 2nd most common type of breast cancer its own specific treatment.

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.

PATERNAL LEAVE (dir: Alissa Jung, Germany/Italy) UK Premiere. A champion at Berlin and BCN film festivals, it follows a girl's journey to Italy's northern coast, seeking her unknown biological father.

PET PEEVES (dir: Javier Polo, Spain/Mexico) International Premiere. An eccentric watchmaker seems to have the power to influence the townspeople, pushing them to their limits and challenging them to take control of their chaotic destinies.

POISED (dir: Toby Robson, UK) European Premiere. Debut feature. Nominated for Best Documentary Feature at Cinequest, it charts a man's hopes to use mixed martial arts (MMA) to save a group of disadvantaged young people in a post-industrial north-east England.

REACHING FOR LIGHT (dir: Matt Lanning, Eva Yap, Alex Keen, UK) World Premiere. A team of high-altitude filming experts set out to document the Northen Lights from closer than ever before.

REGINA (dir: Ashley De Grandy, USA) UK Premiere. Regina's sense of reality unravels, and as strange encounters accumulate, she's forced to confront unsettling truths in this surreal mystery about loss, identity, and the quiet collapse of control.

ROW (dir: Matthew Losasso, UK) World Premiere. Debut feature. Shot on the open sea, and with a cast including Bella Dayne (*Humans*) and Sophie Skelton (*Outlander*), this thriller 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.

SABA (dir: Maksud Hossain, Bangladesh) UK Premiere. Acclaimed at festivals including Toronto, Göteborg and Busan, it sees a mother-daughter bond under strain due to divided views on end-of-life care, reflecting opposing perspectives within a complex relationship.

SAINT DAMIAN (dir: Gregorio Sassoli, Alejandro Cifuentes, Italy) UK Premiere. Debut feature. Following a Polish man who arrives at Rome's Termini Station with just 50€ to his name, this is an uncompromising, no-holds barred look at homelessness and mental illness.

SATURNALIA (dir: Daniel Lerch, USA) World Premiere. After the mysterious death of both her parents, a newcomer to a prestigious boarding school realizes that it is a front for something evil. The film is scored by Claudio Simonetti, composer of *Suspiria, Deep Red,* and *Dawn of the Dead.*

SHAKESPEARE'S THE TEMPEST (dir: Garret Replogle, USA) European Premiere. *Star Trek* meets Shakespeare in this tale of a spaceship captain marooned on a desert planet who orchestrates a series of events to confront the crew who betrayed him.

SHAMAN (dir: Daniel Negret, Ecuador/UK/USA) European Premiere. While working to convert an Indigenous community in Ecuador, a devout missionary's son falls mysteriously ill. As tensions rise, she uncovers a darker truth: her son is possessed by a malevolent, ancient force.

SNATCHERS (dir: Craig Alexander & Shelly Higgs, Australia) World Premiere. A pair of old friends try to make a quick buck selling the organs of a fresh corpse – but get thrown a curveball when she wakes up on the operating table.

SOCK (dir: Josh Farrell, UK) World Premiere**.** When Jerry masturbates into it one too many times, his crusty old sock comes to life and immediately declares its love for Jerry. This proves to be a problem when Jerry's girlfriend demands he throw the sock away.

SOMEWHERE IN LOVE (dir: Morgan Simon, France/Belgium) UK Premiere. Single mother Nicole and her teenage son live a fusional love that flourishes against all odds. As financial pressures mount, their relationship fractures – whilst Nicole's own horizons are broadened by the beguiling Nora.

SRISHTI (dir: Paul Antar, India) World Premiere. 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.

TAPE (dir: Bizhan Tong, UK/Hong Hong) UK Premiere. Set in modern-day Asia, this bold reimagining of Richard Linklater's cult classic sees three high school friends reunite, only to confront a harrowing secret from their past.

THE ACADEMY (dir: Camilla Guttner, Germany) International Premiere. The story of a student who experiences a baptism of fire when she's accepted by a prestigious art school. But the dazzling art world soon reveals itself to be a ruthless terrain.

THE DARK FANTASTIC (dir: Lg White, UK) UK Premiere. Debut feature. This music documentary is a psychedelic dive into the mind and work of renowned film composer Simon Boswell, exploring his innovative approach to music and his impact on cinema.

THE INVISIBLE HALF (dir: Masaki Nishiyama, Japan) World Premiere. A "half" Japanese high school girl struggles with the feeling she's not Japanese. She discovers she is being watched by a monster that can only be seen through her smartphone.

THE LAST GRAIL HUNTER (dir: Mark Christopher Lee, UK) World Premiere. Shot in 4 days guerrilla-style, and starring John Altman (*EastEnders* 'Nasty' Nick Cotton), it's set in a post-apocalyptic future run by a secret society, where life is a mystical game and one man is on a quest for the truth.

THE LAST OF THE WHALE SHARK (dir: Ramtin Balef, Iran) UK Premiere. The tale of the final surviving whale shark in the Persian Gulf, on a quest to find its mate. The film is rooted in the multitude of accidents and tragedies inflicted upon the marine environment by our generation.

THE LONELY MUSKETEER (dir: Nicolai Schümann, UK/Germany) London Premiere. Debut feature. In this psycho-thriller, a man wakes up in a locked, windowless room with no memory—only his phone. As he investigates, fragments of his past resurface, and he's forced to confront the horrifying truth.

THE LOST EPISODE (dir: Nick Wernham, Canada) European Premiere. Utilising supposedly found footage, we follow two police officers as they navigate the streets of a sleepy town on Halloween in 2004, uncovering a chain of horrifying events.

THE PARTY'S OVER (dir: Elena Manrique, Spain/Belgium) UK Premiere. Beatriz Arjona won "Best Lead Actress" Carmen Award for her role as a wealthy divorcée in southern Spain whose life is disrupted when a young Senegalese immigrant seeks shelter in her toolshed.

THE RED LIST (dir: Ross Pierson, Wales/UK). World Premiere. Narrated by Iolo Williams, we follow botanist Dr. Kevin McGinn on a year-long race to save twenty-five of Wales' most endangered plants.

THE RENDLESHAM UFO: THE BRITISH ROSWELL (dir: Roderick Godman, Mark Christopher Lee, UK) World Premiere. Narrated by William B. Davis of *X-Files* fame, this thrilling and sometimes hilarious investigation delves into the 1980 Rendlesham UFO incident where a mysterious craft was reportedly seen landing near a U.S. airbase.

THE RUN (dir: Paul Raschid, USA/Italy) World Premiere. A famous fitness influencer's morning run turns into a fight for survival in this interactive film, where the audience gets to vote on her choices. With cameos from horror icons Dario Argento and Franco Nero.

THE SOCIAL TRAP: 5 WOMEN VS THE BIG 5 (dir: Elisa Jadot, France) UK Premiere. Adolescents who use smartphones for more than 5 hours a day are 66% more likely to suffer suicidal symptoms than those who use it for 1 hour a day. Facing tech giants like Meta, TikTok, X and Snapchat, five women decide to take action.

THE TWO OF US (dir: Owen Ward, UK). World Premiere. Debut feature. Tim Edwards, whose daughter Elle was a victim of gun crime, tries to deal with the trauma of loss by embarking on an epic walk spanning the length of the UK, accompanied by comedian and actor John May. A rare and deeply human perspective on the impact these violent crimes have on the victims' families.

THINESTRA (dir: Nathan Hertz, USA) World Premiere. Having taken a mysterious Ozempic-like drug, a woman violently expels masses of fat. But the flesh returns, twisted and ravenous as her doppelgänger, and wreaks bloody havoc.

THIS IS YOUR CAPTAIN SPEAKING (dir: Tristan Loraine, Sandra Skibsted, UK) World Premiere. Former airline captain Tristan Loraine explores what the aviation industry really knows about the quality of the air you breathe onboard aircraft.

TURTLE WALKER (dir: Taira Malaney, India/USA). UK Premiere. Debut feature. In the 1970s, Satish Bhaskar embarked on an epic journey along India's coastline, uncovering the vital nesting beaches of sea turtles. After a devastating tsunami strikes in 2004, Bhaskar grapples with a pressing question: What happens to sea turtles when their nesting beaches disappear?

WET MONDAY (dir: Justyna Mytnik, Poland). UK Premiere. Debut feature. When repressed trauma from a sexual assault resurfaces, a teenage girl develops a strange fear of water. Thanks to a new-found friend, she confronts it in an unusual way.

WHITE GUILT (dir: Marcus Flemmings, UK) World Premiere. Set on a US plantation, affluent white individuals sample an 'inverted slavery experience' through a pay-to-play service.

ZHAZA (dir: Darkhan Tulegenov, Kazakhstan). UK Premiere. In this action thriller, a corrupt mayor learns that his daughter has been raped by the chief-of-police. He takes him hostage and fights off the rape squads, while trying to save his daughter and establish a relationship with her

PRESS SCREENERS AVAILABLE FOR ADVANCED REVIEWS:

500 Days in the Wild ** A Cell Phone Movie ** Abducted Files ** Aiming To The Top - Accra Underground ** Beam Me Up, Sulu ** Breakwater ** Children in the Fire ** Corina ** Dali ** Deformelody: An American Nightmare ** Dirty Boy ** Dream! ** Dui Shaw ** Flamingo Camp ** God As My Witness ** God Teeth ** Granny Must Die ** Heavyweight ** Hole ** If You Should Leave Before Me ** Immortals ** James ** Loner ** Love Song from Hiroshima ** One-Way Ticket to the Other Side ** Our Happy Place ** Palestine Comedy Club ** Paternal Leave ** Pet Peeves ** Poised ** Reaching for Light ** Regina ** Row ** Saba ** Saint Damian ** Saturnalia ** Shakespeare's The Tempest ** Shaman ** Snatchers ** Somewhere in Love ** Srishti ** Tape ** The Academy ** The Dark Fantastic ** The Invisible Half ** The Last Grail Hunter ** The Last of the Whale Shark ** The Lonely Musketeer ** The Red List ** The Rendlesham UFO: The British Roswell ** The Social Trap: 5 Women vs The Big 5 ** Thinestra ** Turtle Walker ** White Guilt **

IN COMPETITION: AWARDS AND JURY

The 33rd Raindance Film Festival jury awards honour features in ten categories: *Best International Feature*, *Best Documentary Feature*, *Discovery Award for Debut Feature*, *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*.

Raindance further honours shorts in four categories: *Best UK Short, Best Live Action Short, Best Animation Short, Best Documentary Short*.

AND THE NOMINEES ARE:

>> BEST INTERNATIONAL FEATURE:

ABDUCTED FILES (dir: Filippo Capuzzi Lapietra, Brazil)
DREAM! (dir: Paul Spurrier, Thailand)
LOVE SONG FROM HIROSHIMA (dir: Hideyuki Tokigawa, Japan)
NAWI: DEAR FUTURE ME (dir: Vallentine Chelluget, Apuu Mourine, Kevin Schmutzler, Kenya)
NO BEAST. SO FIERCE. (dir: Burhan Qurbani, Poland/France/Germany)
SOMEWHERE IN LOVE (dir: Morgan Simon, France/Belgium)
TAPE (dir: Bizhan Tong, UK/Hong Hong)
THE ACADEMY (dir: Camilla Guttner, Germany)
THE PARTY'S OVER (dir: Elena Manrique, Spain/Belgium)
WET MONDAY (dir: Justyna Mytnik, Poland)
ZHAZA (dir: Darkhan Tulegenov, Kazakhstan)

>> BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE:

CHILDREN IN THE FIRE (dir: Evgeny Afineevsky, Ukraine)
EMMA: ONE LAST DANCE (dir: Maya Amin-Smith, UK)
FLAMINGO CAMP (dir: Chris Coats, USA)
GOD AS MY WITNESS (dir: Lindsay Q. Pitre, USA)
IMMORTALS (dir: Maja Tschumi, Switzerland/Iraq)
POISED (dir: Toby Robson, UK)
THE LAST OF THE WHALE SHARK (dir: Ramtin Balef, Iran)
THE SOCIAL TRAP: 5 WOMEN VS THE BIG 5 (dir: Elisa Jadot, France)
THE TWO OF US (dir: Owen Ward, UK)
TURTLE WALKER (dir: Taira Malaney, India/USA)

>> DISCOVERY AWARD FOR BEST DEBUT FEATURE:

A CELL PHONE MOVIE (dir: Will Sterling, USA)
DALI (dir: Mickey Angelov, UK)
GOD TEETH (dir: Robbie C Williamson, Costa Rica)
GRANNY MUST DIE (dir: Yi Jung Chen, Taiwan)
REGINA (dir: Ashley De Grandy, USA)
SABA (dir: Maksud Hossain, Bangladesh)
SHAKESPEARE'S THE TEMPEST (dir: Garret Replogle, USA)
SNATCHERS (dir: Craig Alexander & Shelly Higgs, Australia)
SRISHTI (dir: Paul Antar, India)

>> BEST UK FEATURE:

BREAKWATER (dir: Max Morgan, UK)
DALI (dir: Mickey Angelov, UK)
DIRTY BOY (dir: Doug Rao, UK)
HEAVYWEIGHT (dir: Christopher M. Anthony, UK)
LONER (dir: Charlie Robb, Douglas Tawn, UK)
ROW (dir: Matthew Losasso, UK)
THE LONELY MUSKETEER (dir: Nicolai Schümann, UK/Germany).
WHITE GUILT (dir: Marcus Flemmings, UK)

>> BEST DEBUT DIRECTOR:

Alissa Jung, Paternal Leave
Ashley De Grandy, Regina

Elena Manrique, The Party's Over
Javier Polo, Pet Peeves
Justyna Mytnik, Wet Monday
Mausud Hossain, Saba
Max Morgan, Breakwater
Max Train, James
Paul Antar, Srishti
Urzula Barba, Corina

>> BEST PERFORMANCE IN A DEBUT FEATURE:
Amata Masmalai, Dream!
Dylan Beatch, James
Edith Martínez Val, The Party's Over
Julia Polaczek, Wet Monday
Juli Grabenhenrich, Paternal Leave
Lisa Siera, The Invisible Half
Li-Yin Yang, Granny Must Die
Mehazabien Chowdhury, Saba
Michelle Lemuya Ikeny, Nawi: Dear Future Me
Sumeet Thakur, Srishti

>> BEST DIRECTOR OF A UK FEATURE:
Doug Rao, Dirty Boy
Max Morgan, Breakwater
Mickey Angelov, Dali
Helena Berndl & Francesco Maria Gallo, In Symbiosis
Maya Amin-Smith, Emma: One Last Dance
Christopher M. Anthony, Heavyweight
Charlie Robb & Douglas Tawn, Loner
Tristan Loraine, Our Journey With Lobular Breast Cancer
Matthew Losasso, Row
Lg White, The Dark Fantastic
Roderick Godman & Mark Christopher Lee, The Rendlesham UFO: The British Roswell

>> BEST PERFORMANCE IN A UK FEATURE:
Bella Dayne, Row
Charlie Robb, Loner
Daniel McNamee, Breakwater
Edward Hogg, The Lonely Musketeer
Graham McTavish, Dirty Boy
John Altman, The Last Grail Hunter
Jordan Bolger, Heavyweight
Mickey Angelov, Dali
Temica Thompson, White Guilt

>> BEST UK CINEMATOGRAPHY:
Bruce Jackson, The Lonely Musketeer
Chas Appeti, Heavyweight
Diego Rodriguez, Poised
Evan Bridges, Breakwater
Eva Yap, Reaching For Light
Luke Musharbash, The Two Of Us
Ross Yeandle, Dirty Boy
Zoran Veljkovic, Row

>> SPIRIT OF RAINDANCE AWARD:
To be announced on the day

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:

BULLDOZER (Andrew Leeds, USA)
DARK SKIN BRUISES DIFFERENTLY (Susan Wokoma, UK)
GRANDMA NAI WHO PLAYED FAVOURITES (Chheangkea, Cambodia/France/USA)
LITTLE REBELS CINEMA CLUB (Khozy Rizal, Indonesia)
MAGAN'S FARE (Chris Knoblock & Dana E White, USA)
O (Rúnar Rúnarsson, Iceland)
ORAL TRADITION (Graham Seely, Ireland)
SARDINIA (Paul Kowalski, Poland)
THERE WILL COME SOFT RAINS (Elham Ehsas, UK)
THE JUNCTION (AJ Lambert, USA)

>> BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT:

A WILD KINDNESS (Mattias Evangelista, USA)
DARU/N (PASSED/MOTHER) (Benjamin Hindrichs, Spain)
LOVE IMMORTAL (Ömer Sami, Denmark/UK)
MY DANCE WITH ROSA (Esben Thode Schultz, Denmark)
SEANA (Audrey Lane, USA)
THE ANGRY BIRD (Lisa Smith & Jack Lilleywhite, UK) *
THE FINAL COPY OF IION SPECHT (Ben Proudfoot, USA)
THE GOOD FATHER AND THE FAILED SON (Ailill Martin & Peter Kilmartin, UK) *
THE GRANNY AND FISHES (Maria Mavati & Ehsan Farokhi Fard, Iran)
THE HERRING QUEEN (Eilidh Munro & Isabella Bassett, UK) *

**Netflix Documentary Talent Fund shorts – World Premiere presentation at Raindance on 26 June*

>> BEST ANIMATION SHORT:

BIRTH CONTROLLED (Isa Fraga-Abaza, USA)
EXTREMELY SHORT (Koji Yamamura, Japan)
IL BURATTINO E LA BALENA (Roberto Catani, Italy)
LARVAL (Alice Bloomfield, UK)
MOTHER'S CHILD (Naomi Noir, Netherlands)
PARADISE BUFFET (Santi Amézqueta & Héctor Zafra, Spain)
PERCEBES (Alexandra Ramires & Laura Gonçalves, Portugal)
STRANGER IN PARADISE (Gabriela Fernanda Orozco, France)
THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH (Rune Callewaert, Belgium)
THERE WILL BE NO OTHER END (Piotr Milczarek, Poland)

>> BEST UK SHORT:

A FRIEND OF DOROTHY (Lee Knight, UK)
DARK SKIN BRUISES DIFFERENTLY (Susan Wokoma, UK)
FIEND (Barnaby Boulton, UK)
FOREIGN BODY (Sára Ní Eithir, UK)
HOT YOUNG GEEK SEEKS BLOOD-SUCKING FREAK (Heath Virgoe, UK)
OUR FATHER (Aisling Bea, UK)
THE LAST DANCE (Hayden Mclean, UK)
THE PARISH (Matt R. Smith, UK)
THERE WILL COME SOFT RAINS (Elham Ehsas, UK)
TRIPTYCH (Sophia Ray, UK)

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 Misra** (head, NFDC Film Bazaar India).

RAINDANCE INDUSTRY SESSIONS @ CANON LOUNGE (194 Piccadilly)

This year's **Raindance Industry Sessions** present a dynamic lineup of talks, panels, and workshops, all hosted at the Canon Lounge (Neon, 194 Piccadilly), named in celebration of the festival's main sponsor Canon. Designed to empower emerging filmmakers, the sessions are themed by day, covering key areas of the industry such as cinematography, post-production, and distribution.

Highlights include talks on the Future of Storytelling hosted by **TOOFAR MEDIA**, a panel with **NETFLIX** to discuss their new Documentary Talent Fund, and an interview with the filmmakers behind the 2024 **BIFA Raindance Maverick Award winner, *Grand Theft Hamlet***. Unique features this year include an AI filmmaking masterclass by **MOONMAX**, part of a wider focus on creative AI and its impact on film production, and Oscar®-winning guidance by **LONDON FLAIR PR**.

10th RAINDANCE IMMERSIVE: "STEP INTO THE LIGHT"

Celebrating a decade of championing independent XR creators, Raindance Immersive's vanguard programme continues to define the future of storytelling with a dynamic array of 32 projects, including World Premieres and first-look previews. Notably, 27 projects are showcased on immersive social VR platforms like VRChat, Resonite, and Orion Drift, underscoring the growing power of these social spaces for both creation and play.

For the landmark 10th edition, the Raindance Immersive festival beckons you to **Step Into The Light**, and witness stories unfold around you, blurring the lines between observer and participant. The visionary curation team of **Mária Rakušanová, Joe Hunting, Joanna Leigh, Mary Lee Desmond** and **Jiyue Hu** present Raindance Immersive's standout selections. Among their top VR game picks are the gripping dark fantasy claymation adventure **THE MIDNIGHT WALK (creators: Moonhood Games)**, the blockbuster puzzle sensation **GHOST TOWN (creators: Fireproof Games)**, the thrilling e-sports contender **ORION DRIFT (creators: Another Axiom)**, and iconic VRChat masterpiece **BULLET TIME AGENT (creator: Lakuza**).

Beyond gaming, Raindance Immersive extends into VRChat and Resonite, where attendees can embark on unique guided tours of fully hand-crafted art worlds led by their visionary world builders and immerse themselves in the palpable energy of live performances, from electrifying music shows and immersive theatre to captivating dance, spoken word artistry, and even insightful spiritual sessions with meditation guides and tarot card readers. **HOMMAGE (creators: Nanotopia and Rixx)** is a love letter to Jean "Moebius" Giraud's visionary legacy, paying tribute to his seminal collaborations with Alejandro Jodorowsky, René Laloux, and the revolutionary spirit of Metal Hurlant. **NATURA'S QUEENDOM (creator: Anders Fray and Starheart**) is a surreal, hand-painted world brought to life by whimsical music. **CINEMATIC NEON CLUB: MONA LISA OVERDRIVE (creators: Cinematic Neon Club)** is a cyberpunk-inspired world created for a unique live music show. **A CHRISTMAS CAROL (creators: Agile Lens)** is a groundbreaking VR adaptation of Dickens' timeless classic, blending full-body motion capture, real-time theatrical storytelling, and an interactive audience experience.

Furthermore, this year's narrative category strongly emphasizes VR for impact documentaries, underscoring XR's powerful potential to drive social justice. Having been presented at COP29 in Baku, **BREAK THE SILENCE (creators: Dnipro NGO, Mriya Production)** illustrates the environmental catastrophe unfolding in Ukraine as the fourth year of the full-scale invasion progresses. Journey to Tanzania in **SANDS OF TIME (creator: Dopay)** to learn about the devastating costs of unchecked sand mining. A deeply personal interactive mixed-media piece, **THE TIME BEFORE (creator: Leo Metcalf**)

delves into the elusive nature of childhood, glimpsing fractured memories of an abusive father and a mother lost in the haze of the past. And **ANCESTRAL SECRET VR (creators: Francisca Silva, María José Díaz)** is an immersive glimpse into the living traditions of the Q'ero community of Peru, the last inheritors of Inca culture.

For the third year, Raindance proudly spotlights emerging talent with a dedicated showcase of short films from the burgeoning VRChat filmmaking community. The selection of short films created within VRChat is curated by **Joe Hunting**, the acclaimed filmmaker whose Sundance-nominated documentaries *We Met in Virtual Reality* and *The Reality of Hope* were groundbreaking for being filmed entirely in VRChat. This programme includes **A DUTCHMAN IN VIRTUAL JAPAN (creator: Madame Kana, cast: Kaerun), BROKEN PAST (creator: SlapNap), OUR PRECIOUS AUTUMN (creator: Penrose Studios), STARCROSS COAST (creator: Danny Grey).**

This year's **Raindance Immersive Showcase will run in London from June 19th to 22nd at Vue Piccadilly,** including the annual Immersive Summit on June 20th. The virtual festival will run from **June 6th to 29th within VRChat** with additional events in Resonite and Orion Drift. The nominated immersive experiences will compete for 8 awards: *Best Narrative for Impact, Best Game, Best Art World, Best Art Experience, Best Music Show, Best Live Performance, Best Immersive Theatre* and *Best Short Film of VR*. www.raindanceimmersive.com

Full Raindance Immersive press release available by request.

For more information, images, screeners, or interview requests:

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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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