Artis—Naples
Naples International Film Festival
Home of The Baker Museum & Naples Philharmonic

For Immediate Release
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ARTIS—NAPLES ANNOUNCES FILMMAKER AWARD WINNERS FOR THE 2026 NAPLES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Feature-Length Jury Awards go to
A.R. Ephraim's *A Woman's Work* (Best Narrative Feature) and
Rebecca Tansley's *Tenor: My Name Is Pati* (Best Documentary Feature)

Expanded Juried Short Film Awards go to
Mohamed Taher's *32B – Internal Issues* (Best Live Action Short),
Dana Nachman's *The Second Life of Freddie Nole* (Best Documentary Short)
and Don Hertzfeldt's *Paper Trail* (Best Animated Short)

Audience Awards presented to
Jay Silverman's *Yale* (Best Narrative Feature),
Daniel E. Catullo III's *4000 Days* (Best Documentary Feature)
and Lauren DeFilippo & Sam Soko's *One Last Order* (Best Short Film)

Naples, FL (November 2, 2026) — The 2026 Naples International Film Festival (NIFF) announced the filmmaker award winners during a spirited Closing Night Awards Ceremony on Sunday, October 25, rounding off four days of screenings and celebrations. Cash prizes awarded totaled more than $18,000.

A.R. Ephraim's drama ***A Woman's Work*** won the Jury Award for Best Narrative Feature (and a cash prize of $2,500). The Jury Award for Best Documentary Feature (and $2,500) went to Rebecca Tansley's ***Tenor: My Name Is Pati***. NIFF expanded the presentation of jury awards for short films to recognize excellence in three categories. Those films were Mohamed Taher's ***32B – Internal Issues*** (Best Live Action Short), Dana Nachman's ***The Second Life of Freddie Nole*** (Best Documentary Short) and Don Hertzfeldt's ***Paper Trail*** (Best Animated Short). Each winning short film received a cash prize of $1,500.

NIFF's trio of jurors for the 2026 edition of the juried competition included industry professionals R.C. Samo (*FanboyNation*), Brian Sebastian (*Movie Reviews and More*) and PBS's Wendy Llinás.

The Audience Award for Best Narrative Feature (and $1,250) went to Jay Silverman's ***Yale***, while the Audience Award for Best Documentary Feature (and $1,250) was presented to Daniel E. Catullo III's ***4000 Days***. The Audience Award for Best Short Film (and $1,000) went to Lauren DeFilippo and Sam Soko's ***One Last Order***.

Additional filmmaker awards selected by the festival programmers included Arthur Egeli's ***Anne Packard: An Artist's Resolve*** receiving NIFF's Focus on the Arts Award (and a cash prize of $1,500), Lara St. John's ***Dear Lara*** receiving the Impact Award, Rob Arthur's ***Frampton*** earning the Programmers' Choice Award, and Jeff Dickamore and Aurora Florence's ***Too Soon*** taking Best First Feature honors. Emma Knott received the Rising Star Award for her performance in ***Line Cooks***, Eamonn Murphy's ***Solitary*** won NIFF's Indie Spirit Award, and Cassidy Rast and Odin Wadleigh's ***Body of Work*** received the Florida Film Award. The additional programmers' awards carried a $750 cash prize.

For the first time, the Naples International Film Festival added awards in two student filmmaking categories, with Hunter Nickless' ***The Hard Way Home*** receiving the Best Student Film, K-12 Division and a $250 cash prize and Harsh Vardhan Singh's ***Watchdog*** winning Best Student Film, College Division and receiving a $500 cash prize.

Throughout the awards ceremony, filmmakers expressed their appreciation for the enthusiastic support they received from NIFF and Artis—Naples staff and the Naples community. Among the evening's emotional highlights were remarks from Lara St. John about what the recognition of *Dear Lara* meant to the survivors featured in the film.

Another moving moment came when the sister of Eric Anfinson, the subject of *Body of Work*, accepted the film's award on his behalf. Anfinson discovered his calling as a painter after sustaining a spinal injury in high school. The ceremony capped a festival that once again demonstrated why NIFF continues to earn recognition from *MovieMaker* Magazine as one of its top film festivals.

NIFF opened with its signature Opening Night Film and Party, featuring a red carpet celebration and a program of short films in Hayes Hall on the Artis—Naples Kimberly K. Querrey and Louis A. Simpson Cultural Campus. For the third consecutive year, the event drew a full audience. Several films also screened to sold-out audiences at Paragon Theaters – Pavilion and during NIFF's popular Screenings Under the Stars in Norris Garden. The festival concluded with a special presentation of ***Superman* in Concert** in Hayes Hall, featuring the Naples Philharmonic performing John Williams' iconic score from the 1978 film live under the direction of Principal Pops Conductor Jack Everly—a fitting finale to NIFF's multidisciplinary celebration of film and the arts.

The 2026 Naples International Film Festival Award Winners:

NIFF JURY AWARDS

Best Narrative Feature – $2,500
A Woman's Work
Director: A.R. Ephraim

Best Documentary Feature – $2,500
Tenor: My Name Is Pati
Director: Rebecca Tansley

Best Live Action Short – $1,500
32B – Internal Issues
Director: Mohamed Taher

Best Documentary Short – $1,500
The Second Life of Freddie Nole
Director: Dana Nachman

Best Animated Short – $1,500
Paper Trail
Director: Don Hertzfeldt

NIFF PROGRAMMERS' AWARDS

Focus on the Arts Award – $1,500
Anne Packard: An Artist's Resolve
Director: Arthur Egeli

Impact Award – $750
Dear Lara
Director: Lara St. John

Indie Spirit Award – $750
Solitary
Director: Eamonn Murphy

Programmers' Choice Award – $750
Frampton
Director: Rob Arthur

Best First Feature – $750
Too Soon
Directors: Jeff Dickamore, Aurora Florence

Best Florida Film Award – $750
Body of Work
Directors: Cassidy Rast, Odin Wadleigh

Rising Star Award – $750
Emma Knott, actor
Line Cooks

Best Student Film (K-12 Division) – $250
The Hard Way Home
Director: Hunter Nickless

Best Student Film (College Division) – $250
Watchdog
Director: Harsh Vardhan Singh

NIFF AUDIENCE AWARDS

Best Narrative Feature – $1,250
Yale
Director: Jay Silverman

Best Documentary Feature – $1,250
4000 Days
Director: Daniel E. Catullo III

Best Short Film – $1,000
One Last Order
Directors: Lauren DeFilippo, Sam Soko

NIFF extends deep appreciation to Festival Presenting Sponsors Richard and Christine Lublin. Generous support is also provided by the Collier County Tourist Development Council and Media Sponsor Gulfshore Life.

Sincere thanks to Opening Night Film and Party Sponsor The Woodruff Institute; Friday and Saturday Night Norris Garden Screening Sponsors Vincent and Debra Maffeo; Closing Night Awards Ceremony, Film and Wrap Party Sponsor Scott Meloun; and Theater Sponsors Entech, Bobbi and David Drobis, FisherBroyles, and Tes and Brian Manley.

Images courtesy of Artis—Naples. Photos by Darron Silva.

ARTIS—NAPLES
Artis—Naples, home of The Baker Museum and Naples Philharmonic, creates and presents world-class visual and performing arts. Through our multidisciplinary offerings, we inspire, educate and entertain to engage and enrich the growing and diversifying community.

KIMBERLY K. QUERREY and LOUIS A. SIMPSON CULTURAL CAMPUS
Led by CEO and President Kathleen van Bergen and Artistic and Music Director Alexander Shelley, Artis—Naples offers more than 800 paid and free events annually across its 8.5-acre Kimberly K. Querrey and Louis A. Simpson Cultural Campus. Artis—Naples welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors each year for a broad array of artistic and educational opportunities perfect for audiences of all backgrounds and interests. The cultural campus is home to five buildings, including two performance halls (Frances Pew Hayes Hall and Myra J. Daniels Pavilion), The Baker Museum, the Toni Stabile Education Building and the Kohan Administration Building.

NAPLES PHILHARMONIC
The Naples Philharmonic has long been recognized as one of the cornerstones of Southwest Florida's arts community. As part of Artis—Naples, the Naples Philharmonic performs more than 140 orchestral and chamber music concerts, as well as opera and ballet, education, community and special event concerts annually between September and June in the 1,477-seat Hayes Hall, the 283-seat Daniels Pavilion and around Southwest Florida. The Naples Philharmonic has enjoyed a history of working with world-class artistic leadership, a tradition that continues in 2026-27 with Alexander Shelley in his third season as artistic and music director, following two successful years in the role and an extended commitment through the end of the decade. Podium leadership also includes Principal Pops Conductor Jack Everly, marking 17 years in this role in the 2026-27 season and bringing pops performances that celebrate music across genres. Renowned violinist James Ehnes continues as artistic partner through 2026-27, working with Naples Philharmonic musicians in a variety of settings with a focus on inspiring and embodying a high level of artistry.

THE BAKER MUSEUM
The Baker Museum is the foremost fine art museum in Southwest Florida, presenting an ambitious slate of exhibitions annually to complement installations of works from its permanent collection. Comprising more than 3,000 objects, the museum's broad holdings of 20th- and 21st-century art reflect particular strengths in modern art of the United States and Mexico. The Baker Museum's collection demonstrates the generosity and commitment of area collectors, including significant gifts from the collection of the late Olga Hirshhorn.

In 2025, The Baker Museum was accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the highest national recognition for museums in the United States, affirming the museum's commitment to excellence, accountability and public service.

With more than two decades of collecting and exhibiting, the museum is committed to the stewardship and scholarship of its collections and to fostering inspiring and transformative experiences with the visual arts. At the same time, The Baker Museum partners with the world's leading arts institutions to make extraordinary exhibitions accessible to the Southwest Florida community—including the National Portrait Gallery, London and the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. In 2020, Artis—Naples celebrated the renovation and expansion of The Baker Museum and adjoining Norris Garden, designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architecture/Landscape/Urbanism, which created new spaces for multidisciplinary exploration and social interaction.

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY
In addition to creating and presenting visual and performing arts, Artis—Naples provides robust education and community activities for students of all ages in Collier and Lee counties. Each season, thousands of Collier County Public School students interact with Artis—Naples education programming, both on our cultural campus and in their classrooms. Beyond our commitment to youth education, the Lifelong Learning program provides informative lectures and study opportunities for adults seeking to engage more deeply with the arts.

The Friends of Artis—Naples, comprised of more than 3,500 donor households, offers activities, travel experiences and events designed to foster a deeper relationship between patrons and the arts.

In 2017, Artis—Naples acquired the Naples International Film Festival (NIFF), expanding its film offerings and providing a platform for the festival's continued excellence and growth. In 2023, the festival's 15th anniversary year, NIFF was named one of *MovieMaker* Magazine's "20 Great Film Festivals in Vacation Destinations."

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