

Edinburgh International Film Festival announces winners of the new Sean Connery Prize for Feature Filmmaking Excellence and The Thelma Schoonmaker Prize for Short Filmmaking Excellence Competition



The winner of the *Sean Connery Prize for Feature Filmmaking Excellence* is *THE CEREMONY*, directed by Jack King
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The winner of the *Thelma Schoonmaker Prize for Short Filmmaking Excellence Competition* is *MANNY WOLFE*, directed by Trevor Neuhoff
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22th August 2024

Wednesday 21 August , Edinburgh: The relaunched Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF) has today announced the winners of its new prize for feature filmmaking and its new prize for short filmmaking.

The awards were presented at a special ceremony at Cameo Cinema in Edinburgh by Jason Connery on behalf of The Connery Foundation and by legendary film editor Thelma Schoonmaker.

The winner of the inaugural *The Sean Connery Prize for Feature Filmmaking Excellence*, decided on by an audience vote and funded by The Connery Foundation is *THE CEREMONY*, directed by Jack King.

Two migrant workers are forced to bury a colleague in the Yorkshire hills. When one demands to perform the dead man his rightful Islamic burial, nerves begin to fray and a righteous power struggle emerges as the long and bitter winter night closes in on them. Beautifully directed and performed and shot in stark black and white with a vivid sense of visual splendour, this humane and moving film packs quite the emotional punch.

Director Jack King is a self-taught writer/director & film-maker from Bradford, Yorkshire. He started out making music videos for independent and major record labels, and his work has racked up repeated Vimeo staff picks and millions of views online. He has since made several short films, both publicly funded and independent, including *PRINTS* which was shot on location in Japan and premiered at Clermont Ferrand in 2019 before going on to play at festivals worldwide. His most recent short *PREDATORS* supported by BFI Network was nominated for a UK critics circle award earlier this year after premiering at BFI London Film Festival in 2023.

Whilst working on debut 'The Ceremony' Jack has also been developing a handful of features for international collaboration, including *SUNBURN* which was selected for EIFF Talent Lab Connects in 2022 and *SNOWBIRD* recently awarded a development grant from the Great British Sasakawa Foundation.

Ten feature-length World Premieres were presented at EIFF as part of the competition with the winning filmmaker being awarded £50,000 to support their future projects.

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LOLLIPOP (Daisy-May Hudson, UK) World Premiere

A stirring drama about a mother desperate to maintain custody of her children, following her release from prison. When things seem dark for Molly (Posy Sterling), an encounter with an old friend may spark something new.

A SHRINE (Abdolreza Kahani, Iran, Canada France) World Premiere

A mobile religious shrine acts as a get-rich-quick scheme for an ambitious man. But there may be consequences... This subversive comedy drama also offers an intriguing and offbeat window into the diasporic Iranian community in Montreal.

SMILES AND KISSES YOU (Bryan Carberry, US) World Premiere

The relationship between a man and his life-size AI-animated doll is explored in this moving documentary. A clear eyed and open hearted take on machine learning and loneliness, in an age of algorithmic dating apps.

SUNLIGHT (Nina Conti, UK) World Premiere

An absurd, original and darkly comic road movie about a monkey, a man and a dead man's watch. Written, produced and directed by EdFringe favourite Nina Conti, the comedian stars as a life-size iteration of her stand-up sidekick.

TO KILL A WOLF (Kelsey Taylor, US) World Premiere

Reimagining the classic fable Little Red Riding Hood, a young girl is discovered in the snowy Oregon landscapes by a social pariah. This dark psychological drama interrogates trauma, grief and redemption in a dangerous world.

XIBALBA MONSTER (MONSTRUO DE XIBALBA) (Manuela Irene, Mexico) World Premiere A young boy forms an unlikely friendship with an ageing hermit while struggling to make sense of the death of his parents. This delicately moving film explores the circle of life, the human experience and the order of the natural world.

The Thelma Schoonmaker Prize for Short Filmmaking Excellence Competition

PATERNAL ADVICE (Lisa Clarkson, Scotland) World Premiere

A starkly realist short from Scottish director Lisa Clarkson exploring tough love and masculinity passed down the generations.

HOMEWORK (Jamie di Spirito, UK) World Premiere

A powerful film about the secrets kept between a mother and her daughters from British director Jamie di Spirito. Director: Jamie di Spirito.

MY DAD AND THE VOLCANO (Gavin Reid, Scotland) World Premiere

Scottish director Gavin Reid explores his relationship with his father and his art in this quirky and poignant documentary short.

MY EXPLODING HOUSE (Liberty Smith, UK) World Premiere

An experimental documentary by British director Liberty Smith investigating her mother's thirty-year-old memory of their old house being blown up for a television film.

NICO (Max Olson, US) World Premiere

American director Max Olson debuts their unique visual style, in this bold and haunting short about a trans man who reminds an elderly widow of her late husband.

MANNY WOLFE (Trevor Neuhoff, US) World Premiere

A funny and moving spin on classic noir featuring a werewolf actor who can't catch a break in Hollywood, directed by Trevor Neuhoff.

SHOAL (CARDUMEN) (Inés Villanueva, Argentina) World Premiere

Given the task of writing a song about molluscs and existentialism, a young singer works on her entry during a birthday party in this beautiful Argentine comedy from Inés Villanueva.

THE JUBILEE (Wilma Smith, Scotland) World Premiere

Blending live-action with napkin-based stop-motion animation, this Scottish short directed by Wilma Smith explores dementia through a new and potent lens.