

Durban International Film Fest announces DIFF Awards winners

The 2020 Durban International Festival (DIFF) came to a close with the announcement of the winners of the DIFF Awards. Hosted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Centre for Creative Arts (CCA), this year's festival presented a programme of close to 60 feature films, documentaries and short films alongside an exciting industry programme called isiPhethu.

After a drive-in screening of the closing film *Dust*, a thriller by Pieter du Plessis, the award-winners were announced on Saturday, 19 September during a prerecorded ceremony.



In the shorts category, the jury emphasised how impressed they were with the overall quality of all 23 shorts. Yet, it was unanimously decided that the winner of Best Short Film was “Exam” directed by Sonia K Hadad. “From the first frame, the film gets to the point,” mentioned one of the jury members. For both Best African Short and Best South African Short Film, all votes of the jury went to the animation “Ruby and Roach” by Erentia Bedeker. The jury commended the short film for the innocence of the film that takes away any preconceived ideas.

In the documentary category, the jury mentioned being very impressed with the selection. They commended the variety of the topics and felt that the majority of the documentaries were very strong. Without much debate, Best Documentary was awarded to the Kenyan documentary *Softie* by the Kenyan Sam Soko. “It is increasingly important that we not only share our stories but protect the artists that do so,” shared Soko. *Influence*, directed by Diana Neille and Richard Poplak, scooped the award for Best South African Documentary. The jury commended *Influence* for bringing a journalistic knife edge to film.

The jury had to debate longer about the awards handed out to the feature films of the festival. Opening film *This is Not a Burial, It's a Resurrection* by Lemohang Jerimiah Mosese was awarded for Artistic Bravery and Best Direction. The jury felt this film was a work of art. The late Mary Twala, referred to as the matriarch of the industry, was rewarded this year's Best Actress Award.

Film *Stam (The Tree)*, directed by Louw Venter won the Best South African Film Award. One of the jury members noted: "The tree is succeeding in taking an entire South African population and condensing it in one film in a very successful way."



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Best Cinematography Award went to *Take Me Somewhere Nice* by Ena Sendjarevic. *Farewell Amor* scooped two awards for Best Screenplay and Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwire was awarded for Best Actor, the first award that he has ever received as an actor. In his speech, he mentioned the profound impact that the late, great Joseph Shabalala had on his career.

The awards for Best Editing and Best Film were awarded to *Force of Habit*, a film from Finland, directed by seven directors and edited by nine editors. The directors are Kirsikka Saari, Elli Toivoniemi, Anna Paavilainen, Alli Haapasalo, Reetta Aalto, Jenni Toivoniemi and Miia Tervo.

The Amnesty International Human Rights Award was given to *Fadma: Even Ants Have Wings* by Jawad Rhalib. Navia RawHeath from Amnesty International Durban shared that the film was chosen because of its fascinating depiction of the passive resistance and gentle yet firm action towards changing deep-seated prejudices about stereotypical roles of the sexes.

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