

2021 Durban International Film Fest announces award-winners

The winners of the 2021 Durban International Film Festival were announced at the closing of the festival on Saturday, 31 July, ahead of the screening of its closing documentary film, *Threshold* by Brazilian director Coraci Ruiz.

The announcement comes as the festival rounds off a very successful year, with a significant increase in online attendance. Centre for Creative Arts (CCA) director Ismail Mahomed says of this year's event: "I was delighted with the success of DIFF 2021, and it was very gratifying to view a large number of streams and also to see the huge enthusiasm from our South African audiences for the festival."



Durban International Festival announces theme, *Framing the Future, Cinema Unleashed*

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In the spirit of being a champion for democracy, human rights, social justice, creative education and access to the arts for all, The Centre for Creative Arts introduced three new awards categories.

“ We want to award recognition to filmmakers, organisations and institutions who share in our commitment to engage the cinematic arts to grow, mature and defend our democracy,” says Mahomed. ”

The inaugural DIFF Promoting Access to Cinema Award was won by the mobile cinema project Sunshine Cinema for their outstanding work that brings sustainable and free screenings in predominantly communities. The inaugural DIFF Film in Education award was won by non-profit media company *Steps* for producing over 100 documentaries for a diverse range of public education projects. The third inaugural award, the DIFF Human Rights Award, went to filmmaker *Enver Samuels* for creating documentaries that played a vital role in documenting the lives of South African human rights legends and unearthing the need for a thorough investigation into the deaths of assassinated political leaders such as Dulcie September and Ahmed Timol.

“ This award recognizes an organization that does outstanding work to bring about sustainable & free screenings in predominantly under-privileged communities. ”

The award goes to Sunshine Cinema. [#DIFF2021](#) [#DIFFAWARDS](#) pic.twitter.com/b4fU5Cum7z— Durban International Film Festival (@DIFFest) [July 31, 2021](#) ”

At the awards ceremony, the festival's highest accolade of Best Feature Film went to Chinese director Shin Xin's masterful *A Little Bird Reminds Me*, from a selection of competition films that the international jury described as 'diverse in topics and styles'. The Best Feature Film award carries a cash prize of R50,000. Xin was also honoured with the award for Best Director, with the jury saying: "This director reminds us that sometimes less is more." The jury commended Xin's film for "having a light touch, beautiful cinematography, and a story that refreshingly unfolds."

[A Little Bird Reminds Me_Clip2_ENsub](#) from [PARALLAX Films](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The Best South African Feature Film award, which carries a prize of R25,000, was a challenging choice to make, as the circumstances could not be ignored. The jury emphasises that the films in competition were all by first filmmakers. Due to the pandemic, 2020 was a very difficult year for film in South Africa, which the jury did consider in making their choice.

The award went to Cape Town production *Sons of the Sea*, directed by John Gutierrez. The jury stated that they chose the film because it “poignantly displays the power of relationships for good and evil.”

[SONS OF THE SEA Trailer](#) from [Amiga Pictures](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Best Documentary was awarded to the Congolese director Dieudo Hamadi's *Downstream to Kinshasa*. According to the jury, "we were taken by using the tool of theatre in this documentary. It was beautifully expressed and conducted. We found the storytelling stylish, even though the subject matter was complicated."

The accolade for Best South African Documentary had joint winners of *I Am Here*, directed by Jory Sank and *Murder in Paris*, directed by Enver Samuels. According to the jury, "both of these stories are unique stories about freedom and survival."

This year's festival had a powerful selection of 53 short films, and the shorts jury had the difficult task of choosing the winners.

The Best South African Short Film was awarded to the King Shaka-themed animation "Shaka Inkosi Yamakhosi" directed by Manzini Zungu for its fresh, unique and decolonial take on history.

The best African Short Film went to the South African *What Did You Dream?* by Karabo Lediga. "We wanted to distinguish the film for its breath-taking mise-en-scene, magical realism and surprising ending, but also for the director's great feel for working with children actors," said the jury.

The Best Short Film unanimously went to *Ala Kachuu-Take and Run* by director Maria Brendle from Kyrgyzstan "all of us will remember this film for a very long time," said the jury.

Aside from the winners, the jury added special mentions for Lakushon' Ilanga, by which they were deeply touched; TukTuk was commended for the extraordinary acting; The World's Best Orchestra, for its universal topic presented with an excellent sense of humour. Also, special mentions went to the animation TIO, which surprised the jury and Dustin for changing the way people look at the world.

The complete list of awards is as follows:

Best Actor: Seounggyun An – *My Son*

Best Actress: Tsholo Maseko – *Pusha Pressa Phanda*

Best Screenplay: *My Son*

Best Director: Shi Xin - *A Little Bird Reminds Me*

Best South African Feature Film: *Sons of the Sea*

Best Feature Film: *A Little Bird Reminds Me*

Artistic Bravery: *Pusha Pressa Panda*

Best South African Documentary: *I Am Here*

Best South African Documentary: *Murder in Paris*

Best Documentary: *Downstream to Kinshasa*

Best South African Short Film: "Shaka Inkosi Yamakhosi"

Best African Short Film: "What Did You Dream?"

Best Short Film: "Ala Kachuu - Take and Run"

Amnesty Durban Human Rights Award: *I, Mary*

DIFF Human Rights Award: Enver Samuels

DIFF Film In Education Award: *Steps*

DIFF Access to Cinema Award: Sunshine Cinema

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