

AESTHETICA SHORT FILM FESTIVAL 2019: WINNERS ANNOUNCED FOR NINTH EDITION



Filled with excitement and anticipation, the Awards Ceremony of the ninth **Aesthetica Short Film Festival (ASFF)** took place after its five-day run across the city of York. Held at Yorkshire Museum, filmmakers, delegates and festival-goers were invited to celebrate the announcement of this year's festival winners. With over 400 films in competition from the Official Selection, the awards recognise outstanding talent in filmmaking, with winners becoming eligible for consideration at the BAFTAs.

All category winners are nominated for the **Best of Fest Award**, with only one film winning the grand festival prize. Taking home 2019's **Best of Fest** was *Kofi and Lartey*. Directed by Sasha Rainbow, the film tells the true story of a man who escaped Agbogbloshie, dubbed one of the most toxic places on earth. We follow him as he empowers two young boys to do the same. *Kofi and Lartey* was also selected by ASFF's Director Cherie Federico to screen as part of the Opening Night Ceremony, which launched the festival's ninth edition.

Spanning both personal and universal storylines, Narrative and Documentary Features returned for a second year. Director Iain Cunningham was awarded **Best Feature** for his documentary *Irene's Ghost*. Cunningham's first feature documentary, it depicts the search for information about the mother he never knew. The film is also BIFA-nominated.

Delving into hard-hitting topics, the Drama reel provides the largest part of ASFF's film programme. This year's **Best Drama** was awarded to Thomas Vernay for *Miss Chazelles* – the story of two young rivals. Whilst looking to the darker side of humanity, ASFF's Thriller strand is fear-fuelled and hair raising. **Best Thriller** went *Madame*, directed by Garth Jennings, widely known for family favourites including *Sing (2016)* and *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (2005)*.

As two of ASFF's best loved genres, *Norteños* directed by Grandmas, took home the award for **Best Comedy**, whilst Leszek Mozga was presented with the **Best Animation** award for *Roadkill*. Another favourite genre with festival-goers, Documentary explores culturally rich and eye-opening projects from around the world. This year's **Best Documentary** was presented Charby Ibrahim for *Bright Lights – The Perils of the Pokies*. The animated documentary reflects on the devastating consequences of gambling.

Tapping into brand ethos, LEONE's *L'Incredibile* in partnership with Nike was awarded **Best Advertising**, whilst **Best Fashion** went to *Lola's Manifesto*, directed by Gsus Lopez and Cristian Velasco. Usurping the idea of convention, **Best Artists' Film** was presented to Rhea Storr for *A Protest, A Celebration, A Mixed Message*. **Best Experimental** was awarded to Samona Olanipekun for *Kindred*. Providing a spirited interpretation of life in the 21st Century, *The Golden Age* directed by Eric Minh Cuong Castaing was presented with the award for **Best Dance**, whilst **Best Music Video** went to Emmanuel Adjei for *Shahmaran – Sevdaliza*.

Introducing new digital playgrounds, ASFF also welcomed VR and Immersive films back into the competition for a second year. **Best VR & Immersive** was awarded to *Virtual Viking – The Ambush*, directed by Erik Gustavson. Filmed using 106 cameras, it captures Norway's west coast, marking one of the first techniques in scripted VR drama.

New for 2019, the **Hijack Visionary Filmmaker Award** recognises directors with exceptional vision and a unique cinematic voice. Alongside the award, a generous post-production package including grade, audio mix, online and deliverable for their next short film is presented. The award was taken home by Ellie Rogers for *They Found Her in a Field*.

Celebrating the achievements of filmmakers based in the North of England, the **Polaris Award** is sponsored by Film Hub North and BFI NETWORK. This year's award was presented to Charlene Jones for *Henceforth* – an honest and raw project highlighting the grief of three siblings after the very recent loss of their parents.

Across the five-day run, festival-goers are invited to vote for their favourite film from the Official Selection. Chosen by audiences, this year's **People's Choice Award** was presented to Garry Crystal for the film *Down*, screening as part of the Drama category. The film is a claustrophobic short about two strangers trapped in a lift, starring Amanda Donohoe, James Eeles and Paul Barber.

Chosen by students in attendance at the Youth Engagement Programme, this year's **Youth Award** was given to *Lasagne*, directed by Hannah Hill. Featuring a series of curated films from the Official Selection, the programme aims to ignite a lifelong relationship with cinema, encouraging young festival goers to choose their favourite film.

The ninth edition saw entries from over 53 countries and welcomed thousands of visitors, including a diverse mix of industry professionals, students, tourists and attendees to the festival, some travelling from as far afield as Canada, Norway, Germany and Australia, Japan, New Zealand.

Entries for the ninth-edition open 1 December, with the festival returning next year, 4 - 8 November 2020. For more information visit: www.asff.co.uk

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Press images are available to download here: <http://aestheti.cc/nmp35>

- **About ASFF:** The Aesthetica Short Film Festival ran 6-10 November, York, UK. ASFF is a hotbed for talent discovery and a key annual event for both emerging and established filmmakers to meet alongside industry professionals. It is one of the UK's most exciting site-specific events, showcasing over 400 films and 100 events, across five days. www.asff.co.uk
- **Tickets, Events & Passes:** Unlimited Screening Passes, Two Day Screen Passes and Single Day Passes were available to purchase. Prices started from £16. Concessions were available for students, seniors and families. Single tickets could be upgraded at a discounted rate. Family Passes were also available to groups of four individuals made up of two adults and two children (ages 14 and under): www.asff.co.uk/tickets
- **Press Credentials:** ASFF offered journalists an unparalleled opportunity to immerse in a cinematic playground for five days. The programme included short and feature film screenings, masterclasses, panel discussions, access to the Industry Marketplace, networking sessions and social events. To register for accreditation visit: www.asff.co.uk/press
- **The Aesthetica Short Film Festival is produced by *Aesthetica Magazine*.** It is one of the leading publications for Visual Art, Design and Photography in the UK. The bi-monthly publication highlights the most important artists at work today, both established and emerging, through detailed features and stunning imagery. www.aestheticamagazine.com
- **Partners and Sponsors of ASFF 2019 included:** York St John University, London College of Communication, Visit York, Make It York, Grand Central, MUBI, Hijack, City of York Council, Brew York, York Gin Company, 1131, Yorkshire Museum, Everyman Cinema, City Screen Picturehouse, Éclair Post Production Services, Holiday Inn, Safestay, Hilton Hotels, Middletons York, Moxy York and more. www.asff.co.uk/partners/
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