



**ANNOUNCING THE 2025 RICHMOND INTERNATIONAL FILM  
FESTIVAL TOP GRAND JURY AND AUDIENCE CHOICE AWARD  
WINNERS**

**14<sup>th</sup> Annual Richmond International Film Festival** September 23 – 28, 2025 featured 170 Official Selection films; from more than 20 countries and live music performances throughout the week. RIFF's mission is to champion artists and provide platforms for creative voices to artists across the globe. The top winners of the year for films in competition are:

**ANNUAL AWARDS:**

**2025 LEGACY AWARD:** Glenn Close for THE SUMMER BOOK

**2025 VIRGINIA LEGACY AWARD:** Rita McClenny

**2025 FOUNDERS AWARD:** Mahershala Ali for TASTE THE REVOLUTION

**2025 PIONEER AWARD:** Jon Shenk and Bonni Cohen & Cast for IN WAVES AND WAR

**TOP GRAND JURY WINNERS OF THE YEAR**

**2025 GRAND JURY PRIZE BEST OVERALL FEATURE FILM OF THE YEAR:** OMAHA By Preston Lee & Cole Webley

**2025 GRAND JURY PRIZE BEST OVERALL SHORT FILM OF THE YEAR:** BELTED UP By Thibault Martin

**2025 GRAND JURY PRIZE BEST FEATURE SCREENPLAY:**  
PAY DIRT By Dan Angus Morrison

**2025 GRAND JURY PRIZE BEST SHORT SCREENPLAY:**  
SQUEAK By Evan Schullery

**2025 GRAND JURY PRIZE BEST TELEPLAY:** TEXOMA SHROOMS  
By Debi Yazbeck

### **2025 AUDIENCE CHOICE AWARDS**

**2025 Audience Choice Award for Best Narrative Feature:** BIRD IN HAND directed by Melody Roscher

**2025 Audience Choice Award for Best Documentary Feature:** SIERRA 914 directed by Ryan Dugger

**2025 Audience Choice Award for Best Short:** ECHOES OF A DREAM: MLK's Legacy in Richmond, Virginia directed by Tyrone Nelson Jr.

**2025 Audience Choice Award for Best Music Artist:** LOS HERMANOS ALACRANES

**2025 Reel South North Carolina PBS Award:** POLICE DIVE directed by Teresa Carante

**2025 RIFF TRIBUTE "BE THE LIGHT" AWARD:** Marc Bennett & Tim Roper for FOR THE LIVING

**2025 WOMEN'S VANGUARD AWARD:** Deborah Craig for SALLY

### **BEST OF FESTIVAL AWARDS (FILM)**

**Best of Festival for Narrative Feature:** BIRD IN HAND produced by Craig Shilowich, Alexander Schepsman, Danielle Massie, Sam Bisbee, Cody Ryder, Saba Zerehi and directed by Melody C. Roscher (U.S.)

**Best of Festival for International:** SODA produced by Moshe Edery & Shemi Shoenfeld and directed by Erez Tadmor (International)

**Best of Festival for Documentary Feature:** Jon Shenk & Bonni Cohen for IN WAVES AND WAR

**Best of Festival for Narrative Short:** Roy Arida for DEAF

**Best of Festival for Animated Short:** Augusto Zanolello for LOLA AND THE SOUND PIANO

**Best of Festival for Documentary Short:** Graham Holt for JAN BEAUBOEUF: The Creative Spirit

**Best of Festival for Experimental Short:** Shawn Welles Linzey for PICKLE VISION

**Best of Festival for Music Video:** Annika Lang for WATER LILIES

**Best of Festival for Episodic:** Zhora Kryzhovnikov for GANGS OF KAZAN

**Best of U.S. Episodic:** Tasneem Afridi for WOODEN SPOONS

**Best of Virginia Episodic:** Ted Day for FUN IN MY VALLEY

### **INDIVIDUAL MERIT AWARDS**

**Best Director:** (US Narrative) Omaha directed by Cole Webley

(International Narrative) My Motherland directed by Benoit Cohen

(Documentary) David Usui for Been Here Stay Here

**Best Actor in Lead Role** (For a Feature): Jon Magaro for OMAHA

**Best Actor in a Supporting Role:** James Le Gros for Bird in Hand

**Best Actress in a Supporting Role:** Christine Lahti for Bird in Hand

**Best Ensemble Cast: U.S. & International:** Alisha Wainwright, Christine Lahti, and James Le Gros for Bird in Hand (U.S.) and Rotem Sela, Lior Raz, Netta Shpigelman for SODA (International)

**Best Original Screenplay:** Martin A. Gottlieb for The Addiction of Hope (U.S.) and Timo Jacobs for Death of My Youth (International)

**Best Cinematography:**

Feature: Cameron Wheelless for Eastern Western

Documentary: Ryan Dugger for Sierra 914

**Best Score/Music:**

Feature: Jacques Brautbar for Catch a Killer

Short: Michelle Osis for Where the Deer Sleep

**Breakthru or Emerging Actor:** Wilds Clemmons for The Grand Strand

**Rising Star:**

Actor: Wyatt Solis for Omaha

Actress: Molly Belle Wright for Omaha

**Rising Star Director:** Melody C. Roscher for Bird in Hand

**Best Production Design:** Ninon de la Hosseraie for for My Motherland

**Best Casting:** Sunday Boling, CSA and Meg Morman, CSA for Omaha

**Best Editing:** Einat Glaser-Zarhin for Soda

**SHORT FILM: INDIVIDUAL MERIT AWARDS**

**Best Director:** U.S. Danicah Waldo for Sally, Get the Potatoes and International: Roy Arida for DEAF

**Best Screenplay:** Roy Arida for Deaf

**Best Cinematography:** Ricardo A. Nascimento & Timur Guseynov for Two Breaths

**Best Production Design:** Jessica McIntire & Ryan R. Rivera for Sally, Get the Potatoes

**Best Actor in a Lead Role:** Christopher James Baker for In Absence

**Best Actress in a Lead Role:** Anne Serra for Belted Up

**Best Ensemble Cast:** Christopher James Baker, Jack LaTorre, Ron Kelly, Murran Kain, May Jonelle Leota for In Absence

**Outstanding Meri Maverick Award**  
Will Turner, Ryan Dugger for Sierra 914

**Indie Spirit Award:**  
Brian Meere, Sawyer Spielberg for Martyr of Gowanus

**Outstanding Merit for Best Environmental Film:** Kateryna Kurganska for Two Breaths

**Outstanding Merit for Community & Civic Action:** Ilana Trachtman for Aint No Back to a Merry-Go-Round

**Best Virginia Film:**  
**Feature:** David Usui for Been Here Stay Here

**Best Local Film:**  
Jason Mullis for The Myth of Ghost Kingdom

**Outstanding Merit for Arts, Humanity & Innovation:** Tom Shoval for A Letter to David

**2025 RIFF OUTSTANDING MERIT** for ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
AWARD: Been Here Stay Here

**THE 2025 SCREENWRITING FEATURE GENRE WINNERS:**

Best Original Drama Screenplay: LOVE LOSS By Kelly Cochran-Yzquierdo

Best Original Sci-fi Screenplay: THE OPERATIVE By David Schroeder

Best Original Comedy Screenplay: REJECT ME By Jen Butler

Best Original Action Screenplay: THE LANGUAGE OF WOLVES By Nan Schmid

**MUSIC AWARDS**

**2025 RIFF TOP GRAND JURY PRIZE** for BAND OF THE YEAR:  
KADENCIA ORCHESTRA

**2025 ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR:** RODNEY THE SOUL SINGER  
STITH

**2025 RIFF ROCK ARTIST OF THE YEAR:** LOS HERMANOS  
ALACRANES

**2025 RIFF OUTSTANDING MERIT MUSIC VISIONARY AWARD:** THE  
LAST REAL CIRCUS

**2025 BREAKTHROUGH ARTIST OF THE YEAR:** TRINITY WATERS  
YOU

**DJ OF THE YEAR:** DJ L.O.E.

**STYLIST OF THE YEAR:** AALIYAH PONTON