



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

14th 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 Zanovello 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 Afidi 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 Wheeless 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 Clemons 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 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