

SIFFA UK 15TH EDITION
SO INDEPENDENT
FILM FESTIVAL
AND AWARDS

C E L E B R A T I N G

10 YEARS
OF FILM AWARDS



FESTIVAL SCHEDULE



INSPIRED BY THE IDEAS OF DARIO SALAS SOMMER



Web: siffa.media

SPECIAL EVENTS

SIFFA EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

10A CRAVEN ST, LONDON WC2N 5PE (Raindance Film School)

3 NOVEMBER

17:30 **SIFFA Masterclass**

The Art of Documentary Filmmaking with Richard Belfield

An exclusive SIFFA 2025 Masterclass with award-winning BBC, National Geographic and Al Jazeera filmmaker Richard Belfield, exploring the craft of documentary storytelling. Drawing on decades of experience with leading broadcasters, Richard shares insights into storytelling, pitching, and directing — from concept to screen. The Masterclass launches SIFFA's interactive programme, including the 48-Hour Film Challenge and the Editing Challenge, inviting participants to create and compete as part of the festival experience.

CASTLE CINEMA

64 - 66 BROOKSBY'S WALK, LONDON E9 6DA

18 NOVEMBER

18:30 **Press Conference**

An exclusive prologue to SIFFA 2025, bringing together filmmakers, partners, and media for a preview of the festival's programme, themes, and special events. This year's edition, inspired by the philosophy of Dario Salas Sommer, celebrates independent cinema and creative dialogue. The event will feature a special screening dedicated to his philosophical legacy.

19:30 **Temptation by Civilization**

A documentary by Antropov Foundation examining the tension between humanity and modern society, questioning whether a moral foundation can sustain civilization or if it is a utopian dream. Featuring philosopher Dario Salas Sommer and other leading thinkers, it challenges viewers to reflect on purpose, identity, and responsibility.

20:00 **Drinks and Networking**

PICCADILLY VUE CINEMA

19 LOWER, REGENT ST., LONDON SW1Y 4LR

20 NOVEMBER

17:00 **Amazons**

(SIFFA's Special Selection)

From the ancient North Caucasus comes a story of women who fought like storms — warriors, sisters, spirits of the highlands. Their memory lives again on screen. Directed by Samara Saralpova.

GRAND OPENING

18:00 **Reception**

19:00 **OPENING FILM**

UBI SUNT

(SIFFA's Special Shorts Selection)

A meditative reflection on life and death, loss and memory. Comprising a single long take, the film mirrors the unbroken flow of a human life. Directed by Natalia Jezova.

Onegin

In 19th-century Russia, Eugene Onegin lives a life of privilege and detachment, turning away from friendship and love until he is left with only regret. Based on Pushkin's classic tale, the film is directed by Martha Fiennes and stars Ralph Fiennes and Liv Tyler. Directed by Martha Fiennes.

*Q&A with the director
Martha Fiennes*

21 NOVEMBER

17:00 **SIFFA's Poetic Soirée**

Messengers of Light

A poetic visual journey from the Nativity to the Transfiguration, portraying angels, saints, and prophets through luminous reflections and imagery. Directed by Lydia Grigorieva.

Lydia Grigorieva. I Choose to Live

A story of spiritual freedom and human resilience — a journey where life transforms into poetry, leaving an enduring trace in the hearts of those who listen to her piercing voice and witness her extraordinary path. Directed by Maria Bregman.

Q&A with the poet Lydia Grigorieva and director Maria Bregman

19:00 **Swallowtail and Dragonfly**

Based on the true story of one courageous woman's journey from glittering stardom in 1930s Shanghai through war and revolution, sustained by her gift for beauty and an epic love that would never die. Directed by Julia Jay Pierrepont III.

Q&A with the producer Dawen Zhang

21:30 **The Elysian Field**

Livingstone's journey aboard a vintage bus becomes a pilgrimage of love and remembrance, shared with fellow travelers chasing their dreams amid the fading rhythms of village life. Directed by Pradip Kurbah.

PICCADILLY VUE CINEMA

19 LOWER, REGENT ST., LONDON SW1Y 4LR

22 NOVEMBER

15:00 **New Year's Miracle**

(SIFFA's Family Programme)

On New Year's Eve, several families face comic mishaps that intertwine through an unconventional Santa Claus who, without a beard or gifts, still brings a touch of holiday magic. Directed by Oksana Stashenko.

16:40 **The Trap**

(SIFFA's Family Programme)

When gunshots shatter the calm of a school, questions arise — why did a student bring a gun, and are his classmates victims, villains, or something in between?

Directed by Sergey Baryshev.

17:30 **Rhythms of Dream**

(SIFFA's Family Programme)

Varya dreams of winning the nation's biggest dance competition with her partner Nik, a popular young blogger. But when her secret is revealed on the eve of the finals, the two must confront prejudice and pressure that reach far beyond the dance floor. Directed by Irina Borovskaya.

SIFFA'S SPECIAL SCREENING

19:30 **Networking**

20:00 **Fans Only**

Joel Van der Molen teams up with industry legend Tommy Gunn for an unfiltered journey into the adult film world, challenging stereotypes and uncovering the human stories behind a misunderstood industry.

Directed by Joel Van Der Molen.

Speech by the director
Joel Van Der Molen

21:40 **Evacuation**

During World War II, Natalia and her daughter Galya flee east with other evacuees in search of safety. Amid the chaos of a crowded station, they are separated, and Natalia begins a desperate search to find her child.

Directed by Farkhat Sharipov.

PICCADILLY VUE CINEMA

19 LOWER, REGENT ST., LONDON SW1Y 4LR

23 NOVEMBER

12:00 **Qingtong and Kuihua**

(SIFFA's Family Programme)

Based on Cao Wenxuan's novel *Bronze and Sunflower*, the story unfolds in a southern Chinese water town during the 1960s and 70s. When young Kuihua loses her father in a storm, she's taken in by Qingtong's kind but struggling family, and together they endure hardship with courage and love.

Directed by Chen Kunhou.

Speech by the authors

14:30 **Palma 2**

(SIFFA's Family Programme)

A former pilot moves his family to the countryside, where their quiet life changes when a bear cub named Mansur and their loyal dog Palma are taken by poachers. As the animals fight their way home through the wild, their new friends embark on a journey that reminds them what it means to be a true family. Directed by Vladimir Kondaurov.

16:50 **The Postman**

An autistic postman, loved by his town, replaces death notices with comforting "letters from the front," a tender deception that cannot escape the watchful eyes of wartime authorities. Directed by Andrey Razenkov.

18:50 **Escape**

Best friends Carla and Tamsin set out for a peaceful island getaway, but their trip turns deadly when they're kidnapped by a criminal gang. The captors soon learn they've underestimated their victims, as the women fight back in a gripping battle for survival and empowerment.

Directed by Howard J. Ford.

*Q&A with the lead actress
Sophie Rankin*

21:00 **A Siege Diary**

(SIFFA's Special Selection)

Olga is walking through the whole city to her father. She has just buried her husband and is sure she is soon going to die from hunger. Directed by Andrey Zaitsev.

PICCADILLY VUE CINEMA

19 LOWER, REGENT ST., LONDON SW1Y 4LR

24 NOVEMBER

17:00 **Besieged**

When a coup d'état erupts, three foreign master's students Elías, Christie, and Daniel flee into the mountains to escape the new regime. As they struggle to survive in the wild, their friendship and love are pushed to the breaking point. Directed by Lucero González Pasarán.

*Special guest – director
Lucero González Pasarán*

SIFFA'S SPECIAL EVENT

19:00 **Joel Van Der Molen talk**

This engaging session offers valuable perspectives on independent filmmaking, authentic storytelling, and the art of connecting with audiences by the award-winning filmmaker Joel van der Molen, director of *Fans Only* and *Gypsy Billionaire*. A must-attend event for filmmakers, creatives, and film lovers alike.

20:30 **SIFFA's Shorts Competition**

Day one of the vibrant showcase of emerging talent and bold storytelling. From mythic journeys to urban realities, these short films explore human connection, loss, and discovery in strikingly original ways.

Featuring:

The Shore of Promises

A lyrical fantasy about a child's search for solace. By Joy Shi.

Only Daughters

A tender coming-of-age story of two sisters finding their own paths. By Noemi Forti.

The Turtle

A moving tale of family, memory, and reconciliation. By Moris Amiryan.

Machine of Quiet Killing

A haunting psychological thriller of grief and obsession. By Raphael Allason.

Snatcher

An urban romance born from guilt and curiosity. By Jasdip Sagar.

The Boomerang

A sharp moral drama about deception and consequence. By Sergey Baryshev.

Absent

An introspective portrait of presence, loss, and time. By Tohid Barghi Valenjagh.

Q&A with the directors

PICCADILLY VUE CINEMA

19 LOWER, REGENT ST., LONDON SW1Y 4LR

25 NOVEMBER

17:00 **Flying with Fins**

Artist and experimenter Alzek Misheff embarks on a philosophical journey through art and life. Blending painting, performance, and music, the film explores creativity, memory, and the timeless search for meaning.

Directed by Maria Averina.

Q&A with the director Maria Averina

19:00 **Legends of Eternal Snow**

Amid the vast snowy expanses of Yakutia, an aging man and his companions escort a young bride promised to an old prince. As the harsh journey unfolds, the girl's longing for freedom stirs compassion in the young Nyukus, whose feelings soon turn to defiance. When fate leads them to an abandoned hut hiding secrets from the past, love, guilt, and destiny collide in the frozen silence.

Directed by Alexei Romanov.

20:30 **SIFFA's Shorts Competition**

Day two of SIFFA's shorts competition programme celebrating originality and emotional depth through stories that span cultures and genres. Linked by themes of self-discovery and transformation, these films explore how people face change and find meaning in unexpected places.

Featuring:

W: A Return to Oz

A haunting visual journey through memory, music, and space. By Daniel Howard-Baker.

Hear Me Out

A family drama uncovering buried truths. By Anna Lee.

The Interval

A sharp backstage clash between two rival actors. By Kirill Khaletsky.

Maru and My Friend's Wedding

A touching reflection on identity and friendship. By Hyunbin Lee.

The Breadwinner

A bittersweet tale of pride and fragile relationships. By Tatiana Fedyunina.

Tidal Roots

A meditative look at life and belonging by the sea. By Edward Peter Weller.

Q&A with the directors

PICCADILLY VUE CINEMA

19 LOWER, REGENT ST., LONDON SW1Y 4LR

26 NOVEMBER

17:00 **White Tiger**

(SIFFA's Special Selection)

As World War II nears its end and the battles grow ever more brutal, a mysterious and seemingly indestructible German tank the "White Tiger" begins to haunt the front lines. Directed Karen Shakhnazarov.

19:10 **Taymetov: The Forgotten Hero**

The film follows Abdusamat Taymetov, the first Uzbek pilot and war hero, who on the final day of World War II is tasked with a secret mission — to deliver Germany's act of surrender and the Victory Banner from Berlin to Moscow. Directed by Eldar Yuldashev.

Q&A with the authors

20:10 **The Last Frontier**

(SIFFA's Special Selection)

In October 1941, three and a half thousand young cadets from the Podolsk schools were sent to defend the Ilyinsky line near Moscow. For twelve days, they held back the German advance, outnumbered but unyielding, in a heroic stand that helped save the capital. Directed by Vadim Shmelev.

27 NOVEMBER

17:00 **NeGogen**

An autistic postman, loved by his town, replaces death notices with comforting "letters from the front," a tender deception that cannot escape the watchful eyes of wartime authorities. Directed Polina Oldenburg.

CLOSING FILM & AWARDS

18:30 **Reception**

19:30 **CLOSING FILM**

Battleship Potemkin

Based on true historical events, the film reflects the defining social forces of the 20th century — the pursuit of freedom, the fight against tyranny, and the defense of human dignity, calling for unity and equality among people. Its groundbreaking form continues to shape the art and language of cinema to this day. Directed by Sergei Eisenstein.

Awards Ceremony

The first part of the SIFFA Awards Ceremony presents the announcement of this year's winning films. This evening marks the culmination of the festival's screenings and leads into the Awards Celebration on 28 November, where the achievements will be celebrated together.

AWARDS CELEBRATION

BY INVITATION AND
LIMITED TICKETS ONLY

28 NOVEMBER

From vision to legacy — ten years of SIFFA, fifteen chapters of cinematic art.

18:30 Doors open

19:00 SIFFA Awards Night & Red Carpet in Mayfair

The second evening of the SIFFA Awards unfolds as a dazzling tribute to the festival's 10-year anniversary and 15th edition — celebrating a decade and a half of creativity, courage, and independent vision.

Following the award presentations on November 27, guests are invited to immerse themselves in an unforgettable night of elegance, music, and cinematic spirit at Dear Darling Mayfair.

Filmmakers, artists, and kindred souls will gather to honour the winners, share untold stories, and raise a glass to fifteen years of artistry and imagination.

With red carpet arrivals, live performances, and dancing that carries long into the night, this is the grand finale of SIFFA 2025 — a luminous celebration of film, friendship, and the freedom to create.

Dress code: Business Attire / Black Tie

For ticket and invitation enquiries: siffairida@gmail.com

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