

STURLA GUNNARSSON'S MONSOON CROWNED CANADA'S TOP TEN FILM FESTIVAL PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD WINNER

TORONTO — For the first time in **Canada's Top Ten Film Festival™** history, audiences were invited to vote for their favourite feature film. Festivalgoers crowned **Sturla Gunnarsson's *Monsoon*** the People's Choice Award winner. The award is announced as TIFF wraps up 10 days of celebrating the nation's cinema. From January 2 to 11, Toronto audiences were presented with screenings of the top 10 features, shorts and student short films of the year, introductions and Q&A sessions with filmmakers, along with free engagements and special events that included onstage conversations with actor Keanu Reeves, author Naomi Klein and filmmaker Avi Lewis. Now in its 14th year, the festival attracted the highest number of attendees to date.

Canada's Top Ten Film Festival People's Choice Award

The People's Choice Award goes to Sturla Gunnarsson's *Monsoon*. Part road movie, part spectacle, part drama, *Monsoon* is Gunnarsson's meditation on chaos, creation and faith, set in the land of believers. The subject is the monsoon, the incomparably vast weather system that permeates and unifies the varied culture of India, shaping the conditions of existence for its billion inhabitants.

"I'm thrilled. *Monsoon* is probably the most personal film I've made, and it turns out to be a crowd-pleaser too," said Gunnarsson. "This can only help our February 27 release."

Monsoon opens February 27 at TIFF Bell Lightbox.

Student Film Awards

New this year, the festival incorporated Student Shorts, formerly the Student Film Showcase, to spotlight the top student shorts from colleges and universities across the country. In a ceremony held on January 9 at TIFF Bell Lightbox, prizes were awarded to student films in the live action and animation categories. The winners were selected by the Canada's Top Ten Film Festival shorts panel of filmmakers and industry professionals, including: actor/show creator/host **Nobu Adilman**, programmer **Dave Barber**, development executive **Sonya Di Rienzo**, producer **Élaine Hébert** and screenwriter **Karen Walton**.

Best Film (Live Action)

The winner of the Best Live Action Student Film award is *Lifers*, directed by **Joel Salaysay** (Simon Fraser University), an entertaining and honest slice of culinary life that follows a young dishwasher as he observes his eclectic co-workers in a busy kitchen. The award comes with: a rental grant worth \$6,000 provided by William F. White International Inc.; a DCP output of the film courtesy of Technicolor; \$1,000 from the Directors Guild of Canada; a ticket to the Directors Guild of Canada Awards, and a Sales & Industry Pass to the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival.

Runner-up for Best Film (Live Action)

Yassmina Karajah's (University of British Columbia) *Light* was awarded Runner-up for Best Live Action Student Film. Devastated by the death of his newborn son, a Lebanese man living in an adoptive country is challenged by his mother's request that he perform Islamic pre-burial rituals in the hospital. This prize awards a rental grant worth \$3,500 provided by William F. White International Inc.

Best Film (Animation)

The prize for Best Animated Student Film goes to **Breanna Cheek's** (Emily Carr School of Art and Design) *Fallow*. The slow-moving life in a pastoral village is exquisitely rendered in these animated tableaux by Cheek, who finds beauty in the ordinary, from local homesteads to a diner, to an isolated laundromat. The award comes with: a DCP output of the film courtesy of Technicolor; \$1,000

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The Canada's Top Ten Film Festival travels across the country with stops in major cities, including **Vancouver's The Cinematheque** (on now until January 18), **Edmonton's Metro Cinema** (January 22 to February 2), **Calgary's Globe Cinema** in association with the Calgary International Film Festival (February 20 to 26), **Winnipeg Film Group's Cinematheque** (March 6 to 19), and **Montreal's PHI Centre** (dates TBA). Cameron Bailey, Artistic Director of the Toronto International Film Festival, will sit down with actor **Sandra Oh** at TIFF's very first In Conversation With... event in Vancouver on January 18.

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About TIFF

TIFF is a charitable cultural organization whose mission is to transform the way people see the world through film. An international leader in film culture, TIFF projects include the annual Toronto International Film Festival in September; TIFF Bell Lightbox, which features five cinemas, major exhibitions, and learning and entertainment facilities; and innovative national distribution program Film Circuit. The organization generates an annual economic impact of \$189 million CAD. TIFF Bell Lightbox is generously supported by contributors including Founding Sponsor Bell, the Province of Ontario, the Government of Canada, the City of Toronto, the Reitman family (Ivan Reitman, Agi Mandel and Susan Michaels), The Daniels Corporation and RBC. For more information, visit tiff.net.

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