NewFilmmakers Los Angeles Announces Winners Of 13th Annual Best of NFMLA Awards: Top Honor Goes To Ashley Eakin

By Matthew Carey

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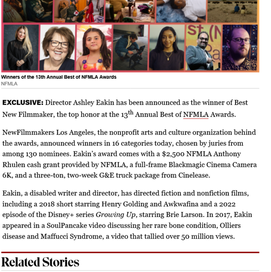

Winners of the 13th Annual Best of NFMLA Awards
NFMLA

EXCLUSIVE: Director Ashley Eakin has been announced as the winner of Best New Filmmaker, the top honor at the 13th Annual Best of NFMLA Awards.

NewFilmmakers Los Angeles, the nonprofit arts and culture organization behind the awards, announced winners in 16 categories today, chosen by juries from among 130 nominees. Eakin's award comes with a $2,500 NFMLA Anthony Rhulen cash grant provided by NFMLA, a full-frame Blackmagic Cinema Camera 6K, and a three-ton, two-week G&E truck package from Cinelease.

Eakin, a disabled writer and director, has directed fiction and nonfiction films, including a 2018 short starring Henry Golding and Awkwafina and a 2022 episode of the Disney+ series *Growing Up*, starring Brie Larson. In 2017, Eakin appeared in a SoulPancake video discussing her rare bone condition, Olliers disease and Maffucci Syndrome, a video that tallied over 50 million views.

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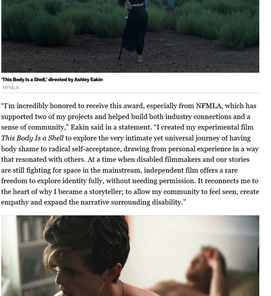

Filmmaker Ashley Eakin
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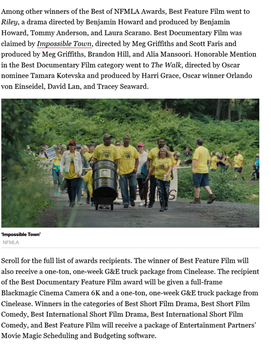
"Having over 14 years of experience in the TV and Film industry, Ashley is passionate about diversifying the narrative of how disabled people are portrayed in media," notes a release announcing the 13th Best of NFMLA Awards.



'This Body Is a Shell,' directed by Ashley Eakin
NFMLA

"I'm incredibly honored to receive this award, especially from NFMLA, which has supported two of my projects and helped build both industry connections and a sense of community," Eakin said in a statement. "I created my experimental film *This Body Is a Shell* to explore the very intimate yet universal journey of having body shame to radical self-acceptance, drawing from personal experience in a way that resonated with others. At a time when disabled filmmakers and our stories are still fighting for space in the mainstream, independent film offers a rare freedom to explore identity fully, without needing permission. It reconnects me to the heart of why I became a storyteller; to allow my community to feel seen, create empathy and expand the narrative surrounding disability."

'Riley'
NFMLA

Among other winners of the Best of NFMLA Awards, Best Feature Film went to *Riley*, a drama directed by Benjamin Howard and produced by Benjamin Howard, Tommy Anderson, and Laura Scarano. Best Documentary Film was claimed by *Impossible Town*, directed by Meg Griffiths and Scott Faris and produced by Meg Griffiths, Brandon Hill, and Alia Mansoori. Honorable Mention in the Best Documentary Film category went to *The Walk*, directed by Oscar nominee Tamara Kotevska and produced by Harri Grace, Oscar winner Orlando von Einsiedel, David Lan, and Tracey Seaward.

'Impossible Town'
NFMLA

Scroll for the full list of awards recipients. The winner of Best Feature Film will also receive a one-ton, one-week G&E truck package from Cinelease. The recipient of the Best Documentary Feature Film award will be given a full-frame Blackmagic Cinema Camera 6K and a one-ton, one-week G&E truck package from Cinelease. Winners in the categories of Best Short Film Drama, Best Short Film Comedy, Best International Short Film Drama, Best International Short Film Comedy, and Best Feature Film will receive a package of Entertainment Partners' Movie Magic Scheduling and Budgeting software.

Juries selecting the awards consisted of a group of 36 industry experts and creatives. Among them — Lezlie Chu, a key member of the creative development team at Skydance Animation.

"The 2025 Best of NFMLA Award selections were a masterclass in creative courage — globally attuned storytellers who are redefining what's possible across formats, genres, and borders," Chu commented. "This year's slate reflected the kind of bold, globally resonant storytelling I'm always searching for as a producer — fearless filmmakers who take narrative and emotional risks while crafting rich, character-driven stories. Each film felt like a window into an extraordinary world I didn't want to leave. It's rare to encounter so many fearless, distinctive storytellers in one place, sharing unapologetic, globally relevant stories that move you and stay with you. NFMLA continues to be a vital platform for championing emerging global filmmakers and the long-term growth of Hollywood's creative ecosystem, bridging the next wave of creative leadership with the future of the entertainment industry."

Julia Iglesias, director of production and development at Focus Features, also served on this year's Best of NFMLA Awards Jury. "Organizations like NFMLA play a vital role in elevating and showcasing exciting new voices, as seen in this impressive lineup," Iglesias observed. "It's both an honor and a pleasure to serve on the jury and engage with the diverse and inspiring work of these filmmakers."

This is the full list of the 2025 Best of NFMLA Awards Winners:

Best New Filmmaker

Ashley Eakin

Best Feature Film

Riley – Directed by Benjamin Howard and Produced by Benjamin Howard, Tommy Anderson & Laura Scarano

Best Documentary Feature Film

Impossible Town – Directed by Meg Griffiths, Scott Faris and Produced by Meg Griffiths, Brandon Hill & Alia Mansoori

Honorable Mention:

The Walk – Directed by Tamara Kotevska and Produced by Harri Grace, Orlando von Einseidel, David Lan & Tracey Seaward

Best Short Film, Documentary

Woyane – Directed by Jonathan Stern and Produced by Jonathan Stern & Adam Fried

Best Short Film, Comedy

Golden Child – Directed by Hannah Levin and Produced by Hannah Levin & Gracie Catanzarite

Best Short Film, Drama

When Big People Lie – Directed by Gianfranco Fernández-Ruiz and Produced by Gus Murray & Kouxiao Ang Zhang

Best International Short Film, Comedy

Nea – Directed by Alex Ulises & Nelson G. Navarrete and Produced by Jesus Peña

Best International Short Film, Drama

The Steak – Directed and Produced by Kiarash Dadgar

Best Short Film, Animated

The Old Young Crow – Directed and Produced by Liam LoPinto

Best New Media & Experimental

Harlem Fragments – Directed by Cameron Tyler Carr and Produced by Flor Tejada, Collin Meath, Ben Thompson & Salma Qarnain

Best Screenplay

A Great Divide – Written by Jeff Yang, Jean Shim & Martina Nagel

Best Performance, Comedy

Carmen Sylvestre, *Lumen*

Best Performance, Drama

Rubab Rasheed, *Eid Mubarak*

Best Cinematography

Jonathan Stern, *Woyane*

Best Film Editing

Fatima Wardy, *Hair Care*

Best Sound Design

Abdolreza Heydari, *The Steak*

Best Score

Dan Deacon, *A Body Called Life*

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