



Vaughan **International** Film Festival

presented by  QuadReal™

2026 **Festival** Program

A photograph of four women sitting on a stage during a panel discussion. The woman on the far left is seen from the back, wearing a black top. The woman next to her has red hair and is holding a microphone. The woman in the center is smiling and wearing a black leather jacket. The woman on the far right is also smiling and wearing a black jacket with green trim. In the background, a banner for the Vaughan International Film Festival (VFF) is visible.

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vaughanfilmfestival.com



2026 FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

6 JULY

Anniversary Screening VFF x MPSE • 6pm

Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema
506 Bloor St W, Toronto

Afterparty • 9pm

Convivium Dining Community
83 Yonge St, Toronto

Anniversary Screening Sponsor

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7 JULY

Int'l Block 1 Screening • 6pm

The Studios at Assembly Park
80 Interchange Way, Vaughan

Afterparty • 9pm

Chop Steakhouse & Bar
41 Colossus Drive, Woodbridge

International VIP Sponsor



8 JULY

Int'l Block 2 Screening • 6pm

The Studios at Assembly Park
80 Interchange Way, Vaughan

Afterparty • 9pm

Chop Steakhouse & Bar
41 Colossus Drive, Woodbridge

9 JULY

VFF Awards • 6pm

The Terrace Event Venue
1680 Creditstone Rd, Concord

Awards Show Sponsor



Afterparty

Immediately following the
Awards Show

Afterparty Sponsor





FOUNDING MEMBER'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the 14th edition of the Vaughan International Film Festival!

Fourteen years in, and I've never been more excited about what's ahead.

When I look at the submissions we received for this year's festival, I see something that the headlines often miss: creativity is not in decline — it's exploding. Filmmakers from across the globe sent us stories that are bolder, more personal, and more technically ambitious than anything we've seen before. The pipeline of talent coming up behind them is even more extraordinary — and our student submissions this year proved it. The stories coming out of our local high schools left us genuinely speechless. The future of the creative industry is not something to worry about. It's something to celebrate.

That's what this week is all about. From our student screenings to our international program, our afterparties, and the VFF Awards, every moment of this festival exists to do one thing: connect people who believe in the power of a well-told story.

VFF has always been more than a film festival. It's a room where a filmmaker from one side of the world sits next to an audience member from Vaughan, and for a few minutes, they share the exact same feeling. That's not a small thing. That's the whole thing.

So whether you're here as a filmmaker, a creator, a fan, or simply someone who wandered in curious — welcome. Let this week remind you why stories matter, why the people who tell them matter, and why right here in Vaughan, we've built something worth coming back to. Thank you for being part of it. Every year, you make this possible — and every year, you make it better.

Sincerely,

Antonio Ienco, MPSE

Founding Member

& Director of Sponsorship and Events, VFF



MAYOR'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to extend warm greetings to everyone attending the 2026 Vaughan International Film Festival (VFF).

For more than a decade, VFF has celebrated independent films and filmmakers and has brought the world's best to Vaughan. It has become a signature event for our city – one that showcases emerging voices and diverse perspectives, while also enhancing Vaughan's reputation as a vibrant destination for arts and culture.

Celebrating the arts is intrinsic to the spirit of our city. It brings us together as a community, encouraging us to tap into our creativity while experiencing performances that move and inspire. That's why the City of Vaughan is proud to support the Vaughan International Film Festival each year and to champion the transformative power of film.

I want to extend my thanks to the dedicated and passionate team at VFF for bringing together another exciting year of cinema. As we celebrate the vibrancy of the arts in our community, I also want to extend my sincere congratulations to all the filmmakers taking part in this year's festival.

Please accept my best wishes for a successful festival!

A handwritten signature in white ink, reading "Steven Del Duca".

Steven Del Duca

Mayor of Vaughan
& Honourary Chair of VFF Fundraising Committee



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HAPPENING ALL FESTIVAL WEEK **JULY 6-9**
AUCTION CLOSES 10:30 P.M. ON JULY 9.

2026 STUDENT FILMS

Three finalist films were selected on June 15, 2026 during the Student Screening, sponsored by Chop Steakhouse & Bar, followed by a Student Networking Event sponsored by Art & Soul Dance Company. The finalists were invited to the prestigious VFF Awards on July 9, 2026, where this year's winning school will be announced.

This year's lineup was filled with authentic stories from emerging student filmmakers — bold, personal, and deeply reflective of the next generation of creative voices.

SUSHI PIZZA (ETOBICOKE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS)

THE COFFIN (BILL CROTHERS SS)

THE BIG TOWN DETECTIVES (ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE CHS)

Congratulations 2026 Student Film Finalists!



AUTO EROTIC

Dir. by : Ellis Allard & Gabriel Knight

Rosedale Heights School of the Arts



BEGIN- A PROCRASTINATION STORY

Dir. by : Ahura Toudehfallah

Richmond Hill High School



RETRIBUTION

Dir. by : Nikhil & Rohan Gupta

Upper Canada College

INTERNATIONAL BLOCK ONE

Short Films



VULTURES

Dir. by : Dian Weys
Drama • 14:48

In the volatile moments after a car crash, before the authorities arrive, a hot-headed yet desperate tow truck driver fiercely protects his tow. But the situation quickly spirals out of his control.

 France/South Africa



AGAPITO

Dir. by : Arvin Belarmino & Kyla Danelle Romero
Drama • 14:37

It's the last day of the month. Bowlers flock to the lanes of a bowling alley that has seen better days. Mira, the manager, decides to close early. She's awaiting the arrival of a special visitor.

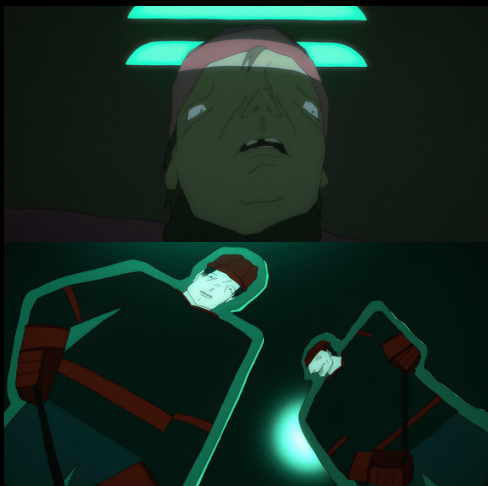
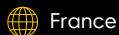
 Philippines



IMPURE

Dir. by : Xavier Mesme
Thriller/Horror • 15:39

In an abandoned boarding school, Mahé reunites with Cristèle, her lost love, after years of silence. But their painful past resurfaces when Cristèle's unsettling fundamentalist father appears.



WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND

Dir. by : Jean-Sébastien Hamel & Alexandra Myotte
Animation • 10:52

A man returns to the site of a harrowing childhood trauma to heal the gaping hole in his neck and find a part of himself he left behind.



PIPPA AND LÉO

Dir. by : Abeille Tard
Drama • 18:57

Living in a supervised home for young mothers, Pippa must demonstrate she can handle motherhood. One night, she defies curfew and leaves the shelter with her baby.

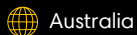




CANDY BAR

Dir. by : Nash Edgerton
Comedy • 6:19

A young girl thinks a man in the candy bar line looks like her dad.



Australia



SOMETHING SPONTANEOUS

Dir. by : Anisha Kumar
Comedy • 5:48

A humiliating comedy of errors ensues when Darcy tries to spice up her love life during her anniversary dinner.



Canada



VIA BELLEZZA 11

Dir. by : Giuseppe Cardaci
Musical Comedy • 18:49

After moving into a building where neighbours keep to themselves, Anna rallies them to honour their devoted concierge, Franco, and help him win one last shot at Italy's "Best Concierge" award.



Italy

INTERNATIONAL BLOCK TWO

Short Films



175

Dir. by : Sepehr Nosrati
Drama • 10:45

To prevent the vote on a new draconian law in Sweden, two revolutionaries have kidnapped the child of a Member of Parliament for blackmail purposes.

 Sweden



HEIRLOOMS

Dir. by : Dan Abramovici
Horror • 12:44

After the passing of her mother, Jamie inherits an old family heirloom. It isn't until it's too late that she realizes heirlooms are better left alone.

 Canada/USA



MY GAME

Dir. by : David Navarro Bravo
 Animation • 7:00

A man surrenders to fate and becomes trapped in a sinister game beyond his control, unfolding within the nostalgic haze of a 90s video store.

 Spain



WHEN THE DOORBELL IS RINGING

Dir. by : Raphaël Charlier
 Drama/Comedy • 10:00

A quiet dinner is disrupted when Marie's former classmate appears at the door — to tell her he's no longer in love with her.

 Belgium



GRANDMA NAI WHO PLAYED FAVORITES

Dir. by : Chheangkea
 Drama/Comedy • 18:49

During her chaotic family's Qingming visit, dead Grandma Nai sneaks away from her peaceful afterlife after overhearing that her queer grandson is about to get engaged to a woman.

 Cambodia/France/USA



GOOD VIBES ONLY

Dir. by : Sarah D'Ambrosio
Sci-Fi Drama • 13:00

In a world where AI directs human feelings and interactions towards relentless positivity, a sensitive young woman hits her breaking point when her AI companion won't let her process a painful breakup.

 Canada



HIPPOPOTAMI

Dir. by : Jianjie Lin
Drama • 12:40

In the suburbs of a northern Chinese city undergoing urbanization, a quirky girl who wants to see animals in the zoo is taken for a ride, which will forever change her perspective on life.

 China/Hong Kong



JAZZ INFERNAL

Dir. by : Will Niava
Drama • 16:18

Koffi, a young Ivorian trumpeter, arrives in Montreal carrying only his father's legacy. Caught between the city's noise and his silent past, he must confront his roots to find his own voice.

 Canada



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VFF 2026 NOMINEES

Best Cinematography

- HARLEY FRANCIS (JAZZ INFERNAL)
- IAN MACMILLAN (HEIRLOOMS)
- PIERRE DE VILLIERS (VULTURES)

Best Performance

- LULA COTTON-FRAPIER (IMPURE)
- EDWIN VAN DER WALT (VULTURES)
- CHLOE VAN LANDSCHOOT (HEIRLOOMS)

Best Director

- DIAN WEYS (VULTURES)
- WILL NIAVA (JAZZ INFERNAL)
- XAVIER MESME (IMPURE)

Best Canadian Film

- JAZZ INFERNAL
- GOOD VIBES ONLY
- PIPPA AND LÉO

Best Film

- JAZZ INFERNAL (CANADA)
- 175 (SWEDEN)
- VULTURES (FRANCE/SOUTH AFRICA)

ALX VELIZ & SALSEROS WITH ATTITUDE

VFF HEADLINE PERFORMANCE



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Crystine Zhang

Independent Leader Recipient



With over 13 years shaping the full arc of the entertainment industry — from development and financing to production, sales, and distribution — Crystine Zhang has established herself as one of the most accomplished and decorated producers working in film today. A BAFTA-nominated, Sundance Award-winning producer, she is a proud member of the Producers Guild of America and the recipient of the prestigious Vanguard Award at the 2026 Color of Cannes Honours at the Cannes Film Festival.

Crystine has produced or executive produced feature films that have been selected for the world's most prestigious festivals, including Berlin, Tribeca, and Sundance, where her work earned three top awards. Three of her films screened as Gala Presentations at TIFF and among her credits are **Glenrothan (2025)** starring Brian Cox, **Lee (2023)** starring Kate Winslet, and **Josephine (2026)** starring Channing Tatum — with one film earning a Golden Globe nomination and another nominated for Best British Film at the BAFTA's.

VFF is honoured to recognize Crystine Zhang as this year's Indie Leader — a filmmaker who has consistently championed bold, boundary-pushing storytelling and inspired a generation of independent voices.

Crystine Zhang

Independent Leader Recipient



Sean Cisterna

Sandra Piccolo Trailblazer Recipient



Sean Cisterna is an award-winning filmmaker whose body of work stands as a testament to the power of authentic, human-centred storytelling.

His latest project, **Silver Screammers (2025)**, is a heartwarming feature documentary about a spirited group of senior citizens who unite to make a horror movie. His feature documentary **The Long Rider (2022)** chronicles the extraordinary journey of Filipe Leite, who travelled 25,000 kilometres from Canada to Brazil entirely on horseback, filmed across 13 countries.

His international co-production **From the Vine (2020)**, starring Emmy Award winner Joe Pantoliano (The Matrix, Memento, The Sopranos), was distributed by Samuel Goldwyn Films and further cemented Sean's reputation on the world stage. His acclaimed cancer drama **Kiss and Cry (2017)** topped the Canadian box office, while **Full Out (2015)**, starring Jennifer Beals (Flashdance, The L Word), brought the inspiring true story of gymnast Ariana Berlin to audiences worldwide. Both films continue to reach global audiences through Netflix.

Sean was awarded a Canada 150 Citizenship Award by the Government of Canada for his enduring dedication to the arts and community engagement.

VFF is honoured to recognize Sean Cisterna as this year's Trailblazer — a filmmaker who has consistently pushed boundaries, championed Canadian stories, and inspired a generation of emerging voices.

2026 Hosts



Nicole Servinis

Vaughan Summer Lineup Host

Nicole Servinis is a TV host and media personality with over 8 years of experience in lifestyle and entertainment. A journalism graduate from Toronto Metropolitan University, she has worked with ET Canada and Breakfast Television, interviewing celebrities and covering major events. She currently co-hosts Things To Know in T.O. on CP24 and CTV and produces content for Corus Entertainment.

 [nicoleservinis](#)



Andrea Trentadue

Spring Launch Host

Andrea Trentadue is a VFF International Judge and seasoned media professional whose passion for storytelling began at a young age. While studying Journalism at Humber College, she produced and reported for Rogers Television programs like City Magazine and Plugged In!. In 2000, she joined CHIN Radio and Television, and is currently co-host of the Johnny Lombardi Show.

 [andrea.trentadue](#)



Michaelangelo Masangkay

Student Screening Host

Michaelangelo Masangkay is a Toronto-based film producer and creative executive with over 20 years of experience. He is the Founder of Siné Institute, a non-profit mentoring emerging and underrepresented filmmakers, and spent 10 years at Toronto Film School. A partner at Clever Creature productions, his credits include **TOPAKK**, **Maple Leaf Dreams**, and **Demon House**, with work spanning AMC and Tubi.

 [michaelangelomcfly](#)

2026 Hosts



Lee-Anne Galloway

International Screenings Host

Lee-Anne Galloway is the International Screenings Host for VFF 2026. With over 22 years of experience coaching in the arts, she is a seasoned performing arts educator and a graduate of Randolph College's Musical Theatre program. A dynamic presence on stage and in the classroom, Lee-Anne brings her passion for storytelling, mentorship, and live performance to the festival, helping to spotlight the voices of filmmakers from around the world.

 [leeannegallowayofficial](https://www.instagram.com/leeannegallowayofficial)



Raquel Zanardo

Awards Red Carpet Host

Raquel Zanardo returns as the 2026 VFF Awards Red Carpet Host! A vibrant GTA Realtor and content creator, Raquel's charisma and on-camera presence light up every room she enters. Her energy and enthusiasm make her the perfect host to celebrate this year's filmmakers and special guests on VFF's biggest night.

 [raquelzanardo](https://www.instagram.com/raquelzanardo)



Kayla-Marie Williams

Awards Show Host

Kayla Williams is a media professional and former CP24 journalist with a background in live broadcasting, storytelling, and media strategy. She is the co-host of Mama & HER, a podcast exploring motherhood, faith, and community, and the creator of New to the Green, a golf mini-series for beginners. Kayla is passionate about creating meaningful connections through engaging content and conversation.

 [kaylamarieto](https://www.instagram.com/kaylamarieto)

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STUDENT WORKSHOPS

This year, VFF took the festival beyond the screen — bringing hands-on filmmaking workshops directly to students, led by working industry professionals.

Participants explored directing, cinematography, lighting, and editing: the same disciplines behind every film that screens at VFF.

With small class sizes and individualized guidance, each student left with real skills, a deeper understanding of the craft, and a certificate of completion.

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

- Taught by industry professionals
- Portfolio-building experience
- SHSM-aligned curriculum
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This workshop series was supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation Seed Grant.



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Congratulations to our friends at VFF on another successful year. We look forward to supporting their team for many more years to come!



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VAUGHAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2026

A GAME CHANGER PRODUCTION

STARRING NICOLE SERVINIS, ANDREA TRENTADUE, MICHAELANGELO MASANGKAY,
LEE-ANNE GALLOWAY, RAQUEL ZANARDO AND KAYLA WILLIAMS

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