PRESS RELEASE | RIFF AWARDS 2026

THE ROME INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL OPENS ITS 25TH EDITION ON NOVEMBER 27

Loris Di Pasquale's PUNK STATE launches the Festival, with a live performance by punk-rock band Punkcake

50 premieres spanning feature films, documentaries and shorts, with directors and cast members in attendance

Films from 30 countries explore a changing society

DALLA TERRA AL MARE by Lorenzo Baldi chronicles the first mission of the Global Sumud Flotilla in September 2025

Among the premieres: a documentary on Stewart Copeland, drummer of the legendary band The Police

Masterclass with Paul Haggis and film editor Jo Francis

CLIMATE FUTURE FILM FESTIVAL: four-time Academy Award nominee and climate activist Edward Norton serves as a juror, with American environmental writer Bill McKibben as honorary judge

Rome's independent film festival runs through December 4

The 25th edition of RIFF – Rome Independent Film Festival opens on Friday, November 27 and brings Italian and international independent cinema to the capital through December 4, 2026. The Festival is directed by Academy Award winner Paul Haggis and Fabrizio Ferrari, who is also its founder.

This year, films from 30 countries examine social change from a wide range of perspectives, capturing the anxieties of a world in transition. Among the many guests attending are Giuliana De Sio, Edoardo Pesce, Brenno Placido, Giorgio Colangeli, Luca Ward, Marina Suma, Francesco Acquaroli, Max Nardari, Maurizio Lombardi, Miriam Dalmazio, Alessio Lapice, Elda Alvigini, Fabio Lovino and Riccardo Ghilardi.

The feature film competition includes both Italian and international titles. Punk State opens the Festival at 7:45 p.m. at Palazzo San Lorenzo, with director, screenwriter and producer Loris Di Pasquale; actresses and producers Alessia Bellotto and Alma Noce; producer Mario Pannarale; and cast members Antonio Balbi, Riccardo Colasuonno, Elisabetta De Vito, Filippo Gattuso Diacoianni, Gianfilippo Grasso, Sebastien Halnaut, Daphne Scoccia and Simone Zambelli in attendance. The screening will be preceded by a performance by Punkcake, the band behind the song featured in the film's closing credits. In the film, seven people are selected to attend the most exclusive event of the moment: a mysterious show that could shake each of their lives.

After Loris Di Pasquale's Punk State, the feature film competition continues on Saturday, November 28 at 9:40 p.m. with Aurora, directed by Bulgarian filmmakers Georgi Stoev and Nikola Boshnakov, starring Brenno Placido and featuring a special appearance by Franco Nero. An Italian-Bulgarian co-production making its Italian premiere at the Festival, the film is set in Sofia on November 7, 1952. In the shadow of the celebrations, Maria, the daughter of an industrialist convicted by the People's Court, survives by working as a prostitute in a decaying bourgeois hotel. On

Sunday, November 29 at 9:30 p.m., Emiliano Ferrera's Il cacciatore di mosche follows a protagonist with Tourette syndrome whose life has been marked by exclusion, until an encounter with Alice changes something. On Wednesday, December 2 at 4:00 p.m., Toni Trupia's Il destino dell'ape tells the story of Emma, who is about to say "I do" at the altar when an inexplicable sense of unease overwhelms her.

Among the international entries, Grigory Kalinin's 80 BPM (Russia) will have its world premiere on Thursday, December 3 at 10:00 p.m. Several years ago, Zhenya underwent delicate heart surgery, and ever since, his dreams have been inhabited by a mysterious stranger. Francisco Valdez's A Marte (Dominican Republic) will also have its world premiere, on Tuesday, December 1 at 9:45 p.m. Against the backdrop of an impending mission to colonise Mars, the film tells the story of Andrés and Ernesto, former lovers who reunite to spend one last weekend together.

Three films will receive their Italian premieres. Erin Vassilopoulos's Destroy All Girls (USA) screens on Saturday, November 28 at 8:00 p.m., with the director and Daniel O'Neill in attendance. Alex Martínez flees a stifling home and joins a group of street skaters. At first, as she travels through New York armed only with her skates and a video camera, everything seems easy. On Monday, November 30 at 8:00 p.m., Bartosz Szyszko's Murkiness (Poland) follows Duet, a young acting student drawn into a hallucinatory spiral in which love, humiliation and death become indistinguishable from reality. Closing the competition line-up on Thursday, December 3 at 8:00 p.m. is Stella Marie Markert's Thanks for Nothing (Germany). The film tells the story of three siblings and their mother as they try to piece together fragments of memories of their father following his premature death.

The documentary section also brings together Italian and international productions. Among the Italian films is Giovanni Pellegrini's Anguane, le voci dell'acqua, screening on Thursday, December 3 at 6:30 p.m. The Anguane, beautiful creatures with seductive voices, are the mythical guardians of the waterways between the Dolomites and the Venetian Lagoon. While a performer searches for their echo in order to transform it into music, biologists, speleologists and activists document the vulnerability of these places, increasingly threatened by pollution and land consumption. On Sunday, November 29 at 4:50 p.m., Lorenzo Baldi's Dalla terra al mare recounts the first mission of the Global Sumud Flotilla in September 2025, a civil, non-violent mission that attempted to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza amid the siege and the genocide perpetrated by Israel. Also on Sunday, November 29 at 9:00 p.m., Arianna Proietti Mancini's Non succederà più portrays the Quarticciolo Ribelle collective, which creates spaces of solidarity and resistance in a neglected neighbourhood on the outskirts of Rome. When the state intervenes, the struggle takes centre stage and attracts the attention of the capital's media.

Max Nardari's Renea – Nel nome dei figli will have its world premiere on Sunday, November 29 at 3:00 p.m. From a childhood marked by the bombing raids of the Second World War to the Roman Rota, where at the age of 57 she became one of the first women to practise as a lawyer before the tribunal, the documentary traces the life of Renea Rocchino Nardari, an extraordinary pioneer who fought for the rights of women and families for more than 50 years.

On Sunday, November 29 at 8:15 p.m., Paolo Sodi's Sereva, A Papuan Tale follows Sereva, who dreams of building his first fishing canoe, although tradition reserves this sacred craft for older men. On Tuesday, December 1, Storia romantica della fotografia, by Elda Alvigini and Elisabetta Di Carlo, explores the relationship between analogue and digital photography. The interviews are conducted by a young economics student who develops a passion for photography through a series of "chance" encounters with the guests.

Among the international documentaries, Natalia Koniarz's Silver (Poland/Norway/Finland) screens on Sunday, November 29 at 5:30 p.m. Through the eyes of twelve-year-old Juvi, the film takes us into the lives of people living around Bolivia's oldest mine, where the cost in human lives weighs as heavily as the silver extracted, confronting us with the limits of human endurance and the bloodstains left by history. Three documentaries will have their Italian premieres. On Wednesday, December 2 at 8:30 p.m., Pablo Aragüés's Copeland (USA) follows Stewart Copeland on a concert tour of Italy as he looks back on an extraordinary career extending far beyond The Police. On Monday, November 30 at 6:00 p.m., Island of Dreams (Colombia/USA), directed by Alvaro Jimenez and Cliff Orloff, offers an intimate portrait of Cuba in crisis, following Cubans torn between love for their homeland and the prospect of fleeing a dysfunctional government and a collapsing economy. On Wednesday, December 2, Chouwa Liang's Replica (Australia/France/China) explores the lives of three women in contemporary China who turn to AI lovers to fill emotional voids shaped by family, marriage and independence.

There are 61 short films in competition, 40 of them premieres, from 20 countries: Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, South Korea, Egypt, France, Georgia, Germany, Japan, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Spain, the United States and Switzerland. The selection includes 23 Italian shorts, nine international shorts, eight film-school shorts, seven animated shorts and 12 works in the (R)EVOLUTIONS AI section.

Love & Pride – Il valore della diversità also returns. Since 2019, RIFF has dedicated this section to contemporary LGBTQIA+ cinema, presenting works that explore gender issues, freedom of choice and the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community through film. The collaboration with the Mario Mieli Homosexual Cultural Association is also renewed; the association will present an award to the work that most originally and compellingly portrays the experiences, stories, desires and hopes of the community.

Special events include a masterclass with cinematographer Gherardo Gossi on Saturday, November 28 at 3:00 p.m. at Nuovo Cinema Aquila, followed at 5:00 p.m. by a screening of Alessandro Rossetto's Chiusura as part of the Rediscovered Classics programme. On Sunday, November 29 at 8:00 p.m., the Cinema and AI forum, "From the [S]guardare masterclass to the Visioni Disobbedienti II: Hackering the Frame panel", will explore the relationship between cinema and artificial intelligence. On Monday, November 30 at 7:30 p.m. at Palazzo San Lorenzo, Academy Award winner Paul Haggis and editor and producer Jo Francis (ACE) will lead the event "Writing the Story, Rewriting It in the Edit".

On Thursday, December 3 at 4:00 p.m., the foyer of Nuovo Cinema Aquila will host the APIC Pitch Day, featuring the finalists of the Screenplays & Story Ideas competition. On Friday, December 4 at 4:00 p.m., the Climate Future Film Festival focus will present twelve short films from nine countries. This travelling micro-festival is dedicated to filmmakers tackling climate change. Four-time Academy Award nominee and climate activist Edward Norton serves as a judge for the awards, while renowned American environmental writer Bill McKibben takes part as an honorary judge.

The closing evening, beginning at 8:30 p.m., will feature "Rafaël – Live Cinema & Experimental Realities", the Roma Video Clip event and the Special Music Video Award for Corde Scoperte by Laura Mirò and Daniele Savelli, directed by Tommaso Calibotti, ahead of the awards ceremony.

The jury for the Festival's 25th edition comprises Barbara Busso (production manager); Cristian Casella (entrepreneur, producer and publisher); Giancarlo Chetta (specialist in audiovisual management and co-productions); Mario Colamarino (president of the "Mario Mieli" Homosexual Cultural Association); Benjamin Minot (director and filmmaker); Fabio Mazzeo (architect and interior designer); Rafaël (artist and experimental filmmaker); and Alessandro Rossetto (director, screenwriter and producer).

This year, alongside the audience jury, RIFF Awards 2026 will also welcome "The Women Exhibitors' Choice – The Jury by MEDIA Salles", an initiative promoted by MEDIA Salles and featuring a jury of European women cinema exhibitors and programmers. Created to promote gender equality and raise the profile of films by women in theatrical distribution, the jury comprises Stefania Corvi of CineTeatro Supercinema in Ceprano, Diane Gabrysiak of Ciné Lumière – Institut français du Royaume-Uni, and Silvia Salvetti of Cinema Teatro Lux in Busto Arsizio.

RIFF screenings and events will take place at Nuovo Cinema Aquila, Palazzo San Lorenzo and Teatro Biblioteca Quarticciolo, with a carefully curated selection of features, documentaries, shorts and experimental works, alongside masterclasses, discussions and projects devoted to artificial intelligence.

Organised by Associazione Culturale RIFF, the Festival is held with the support and patronage of the Directorate-General for Cinema of the Italian Ministry of Culture and the Lazio Region – Regional Directorate for Presidential Affairs, Tourism, Cinema, Audiovisual and Sport.

PRESS INFORMATION

Press materials: https://riff.it/media-room/sala-stampa/

Festival programme: https://riff.it/il-festival/programma/

Festival catalogue: https://riff.it/mediaroom/Catalogo_RIFF2026.pdf

Film trailers on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@RIFFit

Press office – Storyfinders: Lionella Bianca Fiorillo | +39 340 7364203 | press.agency@storyfinders.it

RIFF Cultural Association: +39 06 45425050 | press@riff.it | riff.it