

Cambridge Film Festival brings Cannes winners, award-season contenders and bold new voices to Cambridge this October



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22 October – 1 November 2026 | Cambridge Arts Picturehouse

Cambridge Film Festival returns for its 45th edition this October, bringing 11 days of international cinema, major premieres, award-winning films and new discoveries to Cambridge.

Running from **22 October to 1 November 2026**, the Festival, the third longest-running film festival in the UK, will present a programme that ranges from major Cannes prizewinners and anticipated new releases to UK and European premieres, family favourites, documentaries, short films and work from some of the most distinctive voices in contemporary cinema.

With just two weeks to go, the Festival has announced further highlights across its Galas and thematic strands, from Cristian Mungiu's Palme d'Or winner *Fjord* and Jesse Eisenberg's *The Debut* to the UK premieres of *Truly Naked*, *Nina Roza*, *Harsh Land*, *Distant Sky* and *Sad Girlz*.

GALA SCREENINGS – THE BIG NAMES, THE BIG FILMS

The Festival's Gala programme brings together some of the most anticipated films of the year, bookended by two major screenings that open and close CFF45.

The **Opening Night** film is *I See Buildings Fall Like Lightning*, Clio Barnard's latest feature and the centrepiece of this year's tribute to one of British cinema's most distinctive filmmakers. Set among five childhood friends from a Birmingham estate as they approach

30, the film stars Anthony Boyle, Joe Cole, Jay Lycurgo, Daryl McCormack and Lola Petticrew. Barnard will also receive the Festival's **Outstanding Contribution Award**, with screenings of *The Selfish Giant* and *Ali & Ava* completing the tribute.

The **Closing Night** film is **Wild Horse Nine**, Martin McDonagh's darkly comic new film set shortly before the 1973 Chilean coup. Starring John Malkovich, Sam Rockwell, Steve Buscemi, Tom Waits and Parker Posey, it follows a group of CIA agents sent to Easter Island as political upheaval gathers pace.

Among the other Gala highlights is **Fjord**, Cristian Mungiu's Palme d'Or-winning drama from Cannes 2026, starring Sebastian Stan and Renate Reinsve. Set in a remote Norwegian fjord community, the film follows the growing suspicion and tension that emerge when bruises found on a child raise questions about parenting and family life.

The Debut, Jesse Eisenberg's latest feature, stars Julianne Moore, Paul Giamatti, Halle Bailey and Bernadette Peters alongside Eisenberg. The film follows a shy young woman whose casting in a local musical draws her into an increasingly consuming theatrical world.

The Gala programme also includes **Fatherland**, accompanied by a panel of academics exploring German heritage and the enduring cultural legacy of Thomas Mann, alongside Andrew Haigh's **A Long Winter**, Lukas Dhont's **Coward** and Boots Riley's **I Love Boosters**.

Together, the Gala programme brings some of the Festival's biggest films and filmmakers to Cambridge, while reflecting the range of cinema at the heart of CFF45, from major international premieres and Cannes prizewinners to films that open up wider conversations around history, identity and contemporary life.

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS – CINEMA WITHOUT BORDERS

The International Festival Highlights strand offers a broad sweep of contemporary cinema from around the world. **American Doctor**, Poh Si Teng's documentary following three American doctors travelling to Gaza to provide medical care, brings an urgent first-hand perspective to the programme. **Viva** joins it alongside films including **Nina Roza**, **Give Me the Ball!** and **Filipiniana**, offering audiences a chance to discover filmmakers working across very different cinematic traditions.

Nina Roza is particularly notable as a **UK premiere** and as Canada's submission for the 2027 Academy Award for Best International Feature Film. Geneviève Dulude-De Celles' film follows a Montreal art dealer who travels to rural Bulgaria after hearing about a six-year-old girl believed to possess extraordinary artistic talent.

NEW UK & EUROPEAN PREMIERES – DISCOVER THE NEXT WAVE

Alongside its Cannes prizewinners and established international names, CFF45 puts discovery at the centre of its programme, with a strong selection of UK and European premieres. **Truly Naked** receives its **UK premiere** in the Belongings strand, while **Harsh Land**, **Distant Sky** and **Sad Girlz** offer audiences the opportunity to encounter distinctive new films before wider UK release. **Harsh Land**, **Distant Sky** follows a Kurdish veteran haunted by the war he has survived, while **Sad Girlz** centres on two teenage swimmers whose intense friendship and rivalry is thrown into turmoil after one of them is assaulted.

The Festival's **Short Fusion** programme adds a further international dimension, bringing together UK and European premieres from emerging filmmakers. Among them are ***The One Who Plays***, from India, and ***Mooncake***, an Australian film about a young woman coming out to her family during the Moon Festival.

These premieres sit at the heart of what the Festival does; alongside films audiences already know and are eager to see, Cambridge offers a first encounter with filmmakers and stories that may become the discoveries everyone is talking about afterwards.

REFRAME – NEW PERSPECTIVES, NEW STORIES

The Reframe strand continues the Festival's focus on films that challenge conventional perspectives and broaden the cinematic conversation. Highlights include ***La Bola Negra***, Javier Calvo and Javier Ambrossi's ambitious drama connecting three men across different periods through sexuality, desire, pain and inheritance, has emerged as one of the Festival's most talked-about titles. The film won **Best Director at Cannes**, the **People's Choice Award at Toronto International Film Festival** and the **Audience Award at San Sebastián Film Festival**, and is **Spain's submission for Best International Feature Film at the Academy Awards**. Other titles include ***Elephants in the Fog***, Abinash Bikram Shah's Jury Prize winner at Cannes' *Un Certain Regard*; and ***I Rarely Wake Up Dreaming*** and ***Hunky Jesus***, two further distinctive additions to the programme.

ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY

The Festival's Environment & Community strand brings together films concerned with the places we inhabit, the natural world and the communities shaped by them. Headline title ***Nuisance Bear*** has won multiple awards, including the 2026 Sundance Grand Jury Prize for U.S. Documentary. The film follows polar bears arriving in a Canadian town as climate change alters the relationship between the animals and the people who live alongside them. The screening will be accompanied by a special Alchemie event, extending the film's themes beyond the cinema and into a wider conversation about our changing environment.

Also featured are ***The Peace Particle***, ***Papaya*** and ***Daughters of the Forest***, offering very different perspectives on environmental change, community and our relationship with the world around us.

BELONGINGS – IDENTITY, HOME AND MEMORY

Belongings explores questions of identity, family, home and the things, physical or otherwise, that we carry with us. Alongside the UK premiere of ***Truly Naked***, the strand includes ***The Beauty of the Donkey***, ***Sad Girlz***, ***Rocket Girl***, ***My Father and Qaddafi***, and ***Harsh Land, Distant Sky***. Together, the films move between intimate personal stories and larger questions of cultural memory, belonging and displacement.

RIP IT UP: OUT LOUD

As part of the BFI's nationwide **Rip It Up** season, CFF presents **Rip It Up: Out Loud**, exploring youth rebellion, culture and self-expression across 75 years of cinema. The programme includes ***Bend It Like Beckham***, ***Rocks*** and ***24 Hour Party People***, three films

that capture different generations finding their own voices, communities and ways of pushing back against expectations.

FAMILY FILM FESTIVAL

The Family Film Festival returns with relaxed, accessible screenings designed to welcome younger audiences and their families. This year's programme includes **Wicked**, **Little Women**, the 35th-anniversary presentation of **Beauty and the Beast**, **The Secret Garden**, **Ron's Gone Wrong**, **Freakier Friday** and **Addams Family Values**. All Family Film Festival screenings are completely free and include reduced volume, relaxed presentation and family-friendly activities and crafts, creating a welcoming cinema experience for audiences of all ages.

45 YEARS OF CAMBRIDGE FILM FESTIVAL

To mark its 45th anniversary, the Festival will present a special screening of **Portrait of a Lady on Fire**. CFF45 also brings audiences, filmmakers and industry professionals together through its **Film Quiz**, **Industry Day**, and **Cambridge Connections**, which shines a light on the people, places and stories linking Cambridge to the world of film. Audiences can also have their say through the **Audience and Jury Awards**. And for aspiring writers, **Breaking In: Screenwriting** offers practical advice on how to establish yourself as a professional screenwriter, with established industry experts sharing behind-the-scenes insight on accessing the film and television industry and getting a foot in the door. Together, these events underline the Festival's role not simply as a place to watch films, but as a space to meet, learn, debate and discover.

Savina Petkova, Programming Lead, said: "We're two weeks away from opening the doors on our 45th Festival, and what excites me most is the sheer breadth of the programme. We have the Palme d'Or winner, Cannes prizewinners, films that are already gathering serious awards attention and brilliant new voices that audiences may be discovering for the first time.

"But Cambridge Film Festival has never been about chasing prestige for its own sake. It's about putting great films in front of curious audiences and creating the chance to discover something unexpected. You can come for *Fjord* or *Fatherland*, stay for a documentary about doctors working in Gaza, catch *Bend It Like Beckham* with the family, and end the night with a film you've never heard of before. That's the joy of a festival.

"For our 45th year, we wanted the programme to feel ambitious, surprising and very much alive. There's a lot here to argue about, laugh about, be moved by and hopefully remember. We can't wait to welcome everyone to Cambridge."

The anniversary programme reflects the breadth of CFF's history while looking firmly towards the future: established filmmakers alongside first features, celebrated international cinema alongside local connections, and films designed to be shared, debated and discovered in a cinema.

The full Festival programme and booking information are available at [The 45th Cambridge Film Festival | Cambridge Film Festival](#). **Press images are available [here](#).**

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About Cambridge Film Festival: Founded in 1977, the Cambridge Film Festival is one of the UK's longest-running film festivals, presenting international cinema, independent filmmaking, documentaries, restored classics and emerging talent. The festival is a BAFTA and BIFA-qualifying event and is presented by Cambridge Film Trust, a registered charity that champions film culture, education and community engagement throughout the year. The Cambridge Film Festival is made possible by the BFI Film Audience Network, which awards National Lottery funding to support access to film across the UK.

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