

Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia 2026 Unveils Star-Studded Jury to Select Next Year's Oscar® Contenders

Visionary Director Yuya Ishii, Acclaimed Actors Miki Mizuno and Kazuki Kitamura, and International Industry Leaders Convene to Judge Asia's Premier Short Film Festival.

TOKYO (May 7, 2026) — Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia (SSFF & ASIA) 2026, an Academy Award®-accredited festival and one of Asia's premier short film platforms, has appointed its official jury to select the next wave of Oscar®-eligible talent.

This year's prestigious panel is anchored by Yuya Ishii, the award-winning director of *The Moon and The Great Passage*, whose work has garnered international acclaim at the Berlin International Film Festival. Joining him are several high-profile figures from the global film industry, including renowned actor Kazuki Kitamura, celebrated for his versatile performances across international productions; acclaimed actress Miki Mizuno; and Yusuke Hirota, the visionary director behind the hit animated feature *Poupelle of Chimney Town*. The jury also features international festival experts and cultural leaders, including Christine Ji (Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival), Ryan Ashore (Red Sea Film Lab), and Chieko Murata (Myriagon Studio), alongside musician and author Ayaka Wada and digital pioneer Tomoyuki Sugiyama. Together, they will evaluate 113 nominated films selected from over 4,200 submissions worldwide to determine the winners of this year's top honors.

<https://www.shortshorts.org/2026/competitions-awards/#jury>

■ Live Action Competition (International Category) & Non-Fiction Competition

- Live Action (International): 29 nominees selected from 2,295 submissions across 99 countries and territories (excluding Asia).
- Non-Fiction: 16 nominees selected from 354 submissions across 61 countries and territories.

Jury: Yuya Ishii, Christine Ji, Miki Mizuno

■ Live Action Competition (Asia International & Japan Categories)

- Asia International: 23 nominees selected from 781 submissions across 46 countries and territories in Asia (excluding Japan).
- Japan: 22 nominees selected from 255 submissions.

Jury: Ryan Ashore, Kazuki Kitamura, Chieko Murata

■ Animation Competition

23 nominees selected from 503 submissions across 56 countries and territories.

Jury: Ayaka Wada, Yusuke Hirota, Tomoyuki Sugiyama



Tickets for the Award Ceremony go on sale today!

The winners for each category will be unveiled at the official Award Ceremony on Wednesday, June 10, 2026. The ceremony will announce the Best Short Award winners for the Live Action (International, Asia International, and Japan categories), Animation, and Non-Fiction competitions. The night will culminate in the presentation of the George Lucas Award (Grand Prix), the festival's highest honor.

<Awards & Competition>



Grand-Prix is selected from winners of the Academy Awards Accredited 5 Competitions: Live Action Competition (International, Asia International, Japan), Non-Fiction Competition and Animation Competition. Each winner will be eligible to the Oscar of the short film category next year.

<Other Competitions>



※In addition to the competitions, the following awards will be given to the best shorts out of all the submissions.

- **Tom Yoda Next Frame Award**... [Newly Established] This award targets young Japanese creators among the 2026 nominees who are students or have yet to launch their professional careers. It aims to support their film education driven by a global "ambition" and empower their journey toward the next stage of their careers..
- **DCP Award**... [Newly Established] Selected through mutual voting among creators, utilizing a proof-of-concept system for a value-circulation community (DAO) targeting past film festival submissions.
- **TAKANAWA GATEWAY CITY AWARD** ... Awarded to individuals, works, and projects that pioneer the future of visual storytelling and creatively connect Japan with the world.
- **Cyber Agent Vertical Award**... An award presented to works or projects that have demonstrated "high impact and expressive power" in vertical short film content.
- **Save the Earth ! Minister's Award, Ministry of Environment**... Worldwide environmental issues
- **J-WAVE Sound of Cinema Award**... Awarded to the film where 'sound' plays a unique and effective role and elected by a jury of J-Wave listeners
- **Shibuya Diversity Award**... Gender, ethnicity, human rights, diversity themes
- **HOPPY HAPPY AWARD**... 「Be HAPPY with HOPPY」 Shorts that convey this theme
- **Audience Award**... Audience members will vote to give the award to one winner from the each of the main competition categories listed.
- **Best Actor Award**... Winners will be selected from each of the three official competitions (International, Asia International & Japan Competition).
- **Global Spotlight Award**... Given to the creator or artist of a short film that inspires a broad audience and receives widespread, global attention.
- **Most Viewed Award**... Award for the most viewed film online at the Festival from the competition films screened online from June 1.
- **BRANDED SHORTS**, which invites submissions of branded movies from corporations and organizations, will expand into an expo-style project called 'VISUAL VOICE EXPO by BRANDED SHORTS' in September 2026, building on its 10-year legacy

SSFF & ASIA 2026 Tickets for the Award Ceremony is now on sale

[SSFF & ASIA 2026 Award Ceremony]

The Award Ceremony, the grand finale of the festival, serves as the culmination of 2026. This prestigious event will unveil the winners of the three Live Action categories, the Non-Fiction competition, and the Animation competition. Notably, the winners of these five categories will earn eligibility for nomination at the following year's Academy Awards®—the highest number of qualifying spots offered by any single film festival in the world. In addition to the awards, the ceremony will feature exclusive announcements regarding new short film productions and upcoming festival projects. All eyes will be on the final reveal: which film will be crowned with the George Lucas Award, the festival's Grand-Prix. For those unable to attend in person, the Award Ceremony will be live-streamed globally. Don't miss this historic cinematic moment! *Event details are subject to change.

Date & Time: Wednesday, June 10th, 16:30-19:30

Venu : LINE CUBE SHIBUYA

Guests : Jury Members, LiLiCo, Tetsuya Bessho

Tickets : 5,000 JPY

URL : <https://l-tike.com/cinema/mevent/?mid=782757>



SSFF & ASIA's YouTube Channel will have a live stream of the ceremony.

SSFF & ASIA 2026 Live-action Competition International Category and Non-Fiction Competition Jury

Yuya Ishii (Film Director)

Born in 1983 in Saitama, Japan.

His graduation film at Osaka University of Arts, Naked Japan (2005), won the Grand Prix at the 29th Pia Film Festival. He made his commercial feature debut with Sawako Decides (2009), produced under the 19th PFF Scholarship.

At the 37th Japan Academy Prize, The Great Passage (2013) won both Best Picture and Best Director. The Tokyo Night Sky Is Always the Densest Shade of Blue (2017) was ranked No.1 in the 91st Kinema Junpo Best Ten and was selected for the Berlin International Film Festival.

His recent works include Masked Hearts, The Moon and One Last Love Letter.

Kristen Ji (Short Film Selection Committee member of Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival)

Studied English Language and Literature at Chung-Ang University, and received her MA degree with the thesis 「Cinema of Ang Lee as a Popular Auteur」 at the Graduate School of Arts of Chung-Ang University. She had served as a programmer in Chungmuro International Film Festival (2007-2008) and Seoul International Family Film Festival (2010-2011). She was a jury member of the GrandOFF World Independent Film Award(2014-2016) in Poland. She has worked at the Asiana International Short Film Festival as a programmer from 2013 to 2021. Since 2023, she is working at Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival as a short film selection committee.

Miki Mizuno (Actor)

After making her acting debut in her teens, she has built a wide-ranging career across film, television dramas, and stage productions.

She won Best Actress at the 28th Television Drama Academy Awards, as well as the Grand Prize for Best Action Actress at the 2nd Japan Action Awards.

She leads the theater unit "Propeller Dogs," and in addition to acting, is also active in writing, directing, and producing. In 2025, she founded a new theatrical production company, All Out Challenge Inc., and has been working to connect Japan and international audiences through entertainment.

Her recent major appearances include the TV drama Is It a Crime to Kill the Person Who Took My Daughter's Life? (2025) and the stage production The Sound of the Foundation: SEKIGAHARA (2025). She is currently appearing in the NHK morning drama series Kaze, Kaoru.

SSFF & ASIA 2026 Live-action Competition Asia International Category and Japan Category Jury

Ryan Ashore (Director of Red Sea Labs)

Ryan Ashore is a filmmaker, producer, and creative artist whose passion for cinema began at an early age. After film school and experience on numerous film sets, he began his career with short films before expanding into drama, fashion, and independent film production across several countries.

Through his role as the Director of the Red Sea Labs, Ryan has focused on supporting emerging and established talents from the Arab region, Africa, and Asia, helping develop the next generation of storytellers. He also launched the Music and Sound program, mentoring young composers and connecting them with internationally recognized professionals while expanding opportunities for creatives across film, series, animation, and music.

Kazuki Kitamura (Actor)

Born in 1969. In 1999, he gained widespread attention for his performances in "Minazuki"(dir: Rokuro Mochizuki), which earned him the Best Supporting Actor award at the Yokohama Film Festival, and ""Ley Lines""(dir: Takashi Miike), for which he received the Best Newcomer Award. Since then, he has appeared in numerous film productions. His notable film credits include ""Japan's Tragedy""(dir: Masahiro Kobayashi, 2013), ""Thermae Romae""(dir: Hideki Takeuchi, 2012, 2014), ""Silent Parade""(dir: Hiroshi Nishitani,2022), and ""SAMURAI VENGEANCE""(dir: Takashi Miamoto,2026). On stage, he delivered a standout performance as the King in the musical ""The King and I" .His television work includes the drama series 'Tenchijin', the 'Samurai Cat' series, Netflix's "TOKYO SWINDLERS", and ""Kaze, Kaoru"", among others.

Chieko Murata (Executive Officer, Production Division MYRIAGON STUDIO)

After graduating from Doshisha University with a degree in journalism, she studied film production at California State University. She had worked with the Sundance Institute, supporting the development of emerging filmmakers, before returning to Japan. At NHK Enterprises, she was involved in the production of films such as Osama, winner of Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film, and You and "Me and You and Everyone We Know", winner of Camera d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. She first participated in a Japanese film production with Boy Meets Pusan (2007, directed by Masaharu Take). After working at CJ Entertainment, Japan and Fox International Productions, she joined Sony Pictures, where she produced titles including "50 First Kisses" (2018, directed by Yūichi Fukuda) and "Kingdom" (2019, directed by Shinsuke Sato). She received the Special Prize at the Fujimoto Awards for Kingdom (2019, directed by Shinsuke Sato).

Since 2024, she serves as Executive Officer of the Production division at MYRIAGON STUDIO. She developed and produced the film KOKUHO (2025, directed by Sang-il Lee).



Ayaka Wada (Musician and Writer)

Born on August 1, 1994, in Gunma, Japan. She is an artist of poetry and words. In 2019, she graduated from “Hello! Project” and “ANGERME,” where she served as the sixth-generation leader. Drawing on her experience as an idol group member, she speaks and writes about idols from feminist and gender perspectives, including issues surrounding labor in the idol industry.

In her music activities, she writes lyrics, sings, and performs readings as part of the alternative pop band Ayaka Wada and Omnibus and the dub-ambient abstract band LOLOET. She completed a master’s degree (first half of the doctoral program) in art history at Jissen Women’s University Graduate School, and is also active in writing, lecturing, and media appearances related to museums and exhibitions.

Her publications include *I Want to Say I’m Glad I Became an Idol* (Ohta Publishing), among others.



Yusuke Hirota (Film Director)

He graduated from the Faculty of Science and Technology at Keio University. After completing the CG/VFX program at Digital Hollywood, he joined STUDIO4°C in 2001. He made his debut as a CGI director on the TV anime *Piropo* (2001), directed by Katsuhito Ishii, and has since worked as a CGI director on numerous films, TV anime, commercials, and game movies, including *The Animatrix – Beyond* (2003), *Genius Party – Baby Blue* (2007), and *Genius Party Beyond – Moondrive* (2008).

He also handled opening direction for *Berserk: The Golden Age Arc* trilogy (2012–2013), and served as both director and CGI director on *Harmony* (2015). His first feature-length directorial work was *Poupelle of Chimney Town* (2020).

He later supervised CGI on *ChaO* (2025), and his second feature film as director, *Poupelle of Chimney Town: The Promised Clock Tower*, is set for release on March 27, 2026. The film has been nominated for the Generation Kplus section at the 76th Berlin International Film Festival.



Tomoyuki Sugiyama (Founder of Digital Hollywood)

After completing a master’s degree at the Graduate School of Science and Technology at Nihon University, he worked as a research assistant at the same university, engaging in architectural acoustic design through computer simulation. In 1987, he moved to the United States, where he served as a visiting researcher at the MIT Media Lab, a senior researcher at the International Media Research Foundation, and later as a full-time lecturer at Nihon University Junior College.

In 1994, he founded Digital Hollywood. He went on to establish the Digital Hollywood Graduate School in 2004 and Digital Hollywood University in 2005, serving as president until March 2026.

His major publications include *Cool Japan: Why the World Wants Japanese Products* (Shodensha) and *Digital Stream: Redesigning the Future* (new edition/e-book, Digital Hollywood Publishers), among others.

[Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia 2026 Overview]

■ Festival Period :

Wednesday, May 25th : Opening Ceremony
 Tuesday, May 26th to Tuesday, June 9th : Screening at Tokyo
 Wednesday, June 10th : Award Ceremony
 ※Online Venue: Wednesday, May 25th to Tuesday, June 30th

■ Screening Venues : MoN Takanawa: The Museum of Narratives
 (Box1000, Tatami, Park Terrace)
 Akasaka Intercity Conference, Euro Live,
 WITH HARAJUKU HALL, LIFORK HARAJUKU

※Dates and programs vary by venue

■ Official Website:

<https://www.shortshorts.org/2026/en/index.html>

※Full Lineup Announcement: Scheduled for April 23, 2026.

■ Ticket Sales:

[Advance Tickets]

General: 1,500 yen, University Students/ U29/ Seniors / Persons with Disabilities: 1,200 yen
 Elementary School · Junior High School · High School Students: 1,000 yen
 Preschool Children (under elementary school age): Free

[Same-Day Tickets]

General: 1,800yen, University Students /U29 / Seniors / Persons with Disabilities: 1,500 yen
 Elementary School · Junior High School · High School Students: 1,200 yen
 Preschool Children (under elementary school age): Free

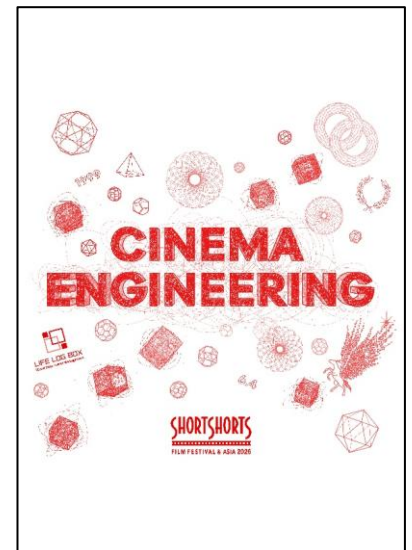
[Passports]

General: 7,000 yen, Students / Seniors / Persons with Disabilities: 5,500 yen

[Online Venue] 2,500 yen (Within Japan) / 15 USD (Outside Japan)

*passport for the Online Venue will be on sale from May 25th.

■ General Inquiry : info@shortshorts.org



[Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia]



In 1999, Tetsuya Bessho, an actor and member of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), founded the American Short Shorts Film Festival. His mission was to introduce "short films"—a genre he first encountered in the United States—to audiences in Japan as a new form of visual entertainment. The festival was renamed Short Shorts Film Festival (SSFF) in 2001 and received official accreditation from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences® in 2004. In the same year, Short Shorts Film Festival Asia (SSFF ASIA) was established in co-organization with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. Its goal was to promote new visual culture from Asia and nurture emerging young filmmakers. Today, these two festivals are collectively held under the name "SSFF & ASIA". To commemorate the festival's 20th anniversary in 2018, the Grand Prix was renamed the "George Lucas Award" in honor of director George Lucas. In January 2019, the festival marked this milestone with the "Short Shorts Film Festival in Hollywood". Furthermore, the festival's influence has expanded significantly: winners of the four categories in the Live Action Competition (International, Asia International, Japan) and the Non-Fiction Competition since 2019, as well as the Animation Competition since 2022, earn eligibility for nomination at the following year's Academy Awards®. SSFF & ASIA remains dedicated to supporting young creators through the power of short film.

[Official Website] <https://www.shortshorts.org>

[PRESS INQUIRY]

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[Stills are available here:]

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17xd1SzCmrDXSseUUZENASLZ0IZR20FO2?usp=sharing>