



A 4-DAY CELEBRATION OF ALL THINGS HORROR

THE OVERLOOK FILM FESTIVAL

COME PLAY | APRIL 3 - 6, 2025

NEW ORLEANS

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**AUDIENCE AND JURY AWARDS ANNOUNCED FOR
LARGEST-EVER OVERLOOK FILM FESTIVAL**

The Ugly Stepsister, Touch Me, Best Wishes to All, The Traveler & the Troll and Los Muchachos Among the Awarded Films

Festival Highlights Include Ernest Dickerson Receiving Master of Horror Award, Opening Night Screening of *Drop*, Flying Lotus as Inaugural Guest Curator and Shudder Second Line and 10th Anniversary Party

April 10, 2025 | New Orleans, LA – The [Overlook Film Festival](#) announced today the winners of the audience and juried prizes, as well as some of the festival highlights, from the largest edition yet of the annual celebration of all things horror.

The feature film **Audience Award**, voted on by festival attendees, went to Emilie Blichfeldt's *The Ugly Stepsister*, a warped, sinister spin on the Cinderella story. The honorable mention for the award went to director Alexander Ullom's *It Ends*. For the short films, the **Audience Award** was given to Adam Murray's *The Traveler & the Troll*, which told the story of a traveler who encounters a monster in a haunted forest. Receiving the honorable mention in the shorts category was *Last to Leave* by Mary Elizabeth Ellis.

"It was an honor to be at the Overlook Film Festival," said Emilie Blichfeldt. "This fest has such great audiences and I loved eavesdropping on their reactions. Thank you to those audiences for appreciating my film."

"It's an incredible honor to win the audience award," said Adam Murray. "This film was made as a celebration of both horror-fantasy and practical FX filmmaking. It's the work of a dozen artists coming together to handcraft a tangible world and to express love for the magic that movies have. We're so thankful that the audiences at Overlook felt the same way!"

For the **Grand Jury Prize for Best Feature Film** the jury awarded ***Touch Me*** from director Addison Heimann, stating "smart, hilarious, unpredictable, gory and emotionally authentic, *Touch Me* is a film that perfectly represents The Overlook Film Festival - and genre itself. Also, who knew Lou Taylor Pucci had that dawg in him?" Honorable mention went to ***Redux Redux*** from directors Kevin and Matthew McManus.

"I was over the moon to be invited back to the Overlook Film Festival this year and to receive this award is just the bees knees," said Addison Heimann. "Thanks to Landon, Mike and the whole team for having me and thanks to the jury for recognizing this weird little tentacle movie. Make movies with friends! It's just the best."

The jury awarded the **Scariest Feature Award** to Yûta Shimotsu's ***Best Wishes to All***, declaring that "with its unrelenting dread in broad daylight, a tableau in which the familiar becomes terrifying, and a social theme that would make George Romero, Bong Joon Ho and Jordan Peele proud, *Best Wishes To All* gets under your skin and stays there." Honorable mention went to ***Good Boy*** from director Ben Leonberg.

"I am honored to have been selected for the "scariest feature" amongst all the wonderful entries," said Yûta Shimotsu. "The word "fear" can be defined in many ways as there are many different kinds of fear. With this award, I will continue to work hard so that you can feel a new sense of fear that you have never felt before. Thank you very much!"

The features jury was composed of film journalist **Haleigh Foutch**, editor-in chief of Fangoria **Phil Nobile Jr.** and filmmaker **Alice Waddington**.

In the shorts juried prizes, **Grand Jury Prize for Best Short Film** was awarded to ***Los Muchachos*** by Alejandro Arties, with an **Honorable Mention for Creature Design** given to ***The Traveler & the Troll*** from Adam Murray. The award for **Scariest Short** went to ***Cruelty*** from director Sam Das, with an **Honorable Mention for Production Design** given to ***Easybake*** from director Sasha Duncan.

"From the moment we started work on *Cruelty*, our team's goal was to terrify audiences, so being named The Scariest Short at The Overlook Film Festival is a deeply humbling honor," said Sam Das. "I'm beyond grateful to The Overlook's visionary team and my fellow filmmakers for making this year's festival lineup truly unforgettable."

"Thank you to the jury," said Alejandro Arties. "It's an honor to share our short film with you. I guess life's what you make it, so let's make it rock!"

In awarding these films, the short film jury stated: "In a competitive slate of films, our winners impressed the judges with their accomplished and inspired work. Grand Jury winner *Los Muchachos* tells a heartbreaking and horrific story through writing and performance, while Scariest Short *Cruelty* combines righteous fury with propulsive storytelling. Meanwhile, our Honorable Mentions *Easybake* and *The Traveler and the Troll* both support their creators' visions with exceptional filmmaking craft. We thank this year's filmmakers for their passion and dedication."

The 2025 Overlook Film Festival **Short Film Jury** was composed of filmmaker **Brooke H. Cellars**, film journalist **Deirdre Crimmins** and filmmaker **Addison Heimann**.

The 2025 festival welcomed 90 filmmaker guests to America's most haunted city, New Orleans, LA, from April 3-6, for the ninth annual horror celebration. The record-breaking edition included 41 sold out screenings and events and approximately 7500 audience members in attendance — the festival's highest number of attendees to date.

Among the highlights of this year's festival was the Opening Night screening of ***Drop***, the new movie from the acclaimed filmmaker **Christopher Landon**, which played at the historic Prytania Uptown theater on April 3.

"Screening *Drop* at the Overlook Film Festival was a dream come true," said Christopher Landon. "There's no greater joy than being among other horror fans and feeling the excitement and love for a genre that has defined my career. The whole festival felt like coming home and I'm so grateful to everyone who welcomed me with open arms."

Legendary filmmaker and cinematographer **Ernest Dickerson** was on hand to present a special 30th anniversary screening of his film ***Tales from the Crypt: Demon Knight***, while also receiving the festival's prestigious **Master of Horror Award**. Previous recipients of the award include Roger Corman, Mick Garris, Stuart Gordon, Mike Flanagan and Joe Dante.

"I love the Overlook Film Festival!" said Ernest Dickerson. "Its celebration of all things horror and cinefantastique just fills the air with a warm fearful excitement. An at once huge but intimate film festival for lovers of horror and a great place to catch up on the old and discover new genre classics."

Iconic horror writer **Joe Hill** joined the festival for the world premiere of ***Abraham's Boys***, based on his short story. He also hosted a packed panel and book signing event.

"The Overlook Film Festival is like Woodstock for horror fans: a merry long weekend of can't-miss scary films, lively panels and conversations and terrific people," said Joe Hill. "I can't remember the last time I came away from an event so excited about horror's possibilities or so happy to be among the fright faithful. It's the kind of experience that reminds you all over again of that great truism... you can't spell 'slaughter' without 'laughter'!"

Also in attendance was the festival's inaugural Guest Curator, the acclaimed filmmaker and Grammy-winning musician **Flying Lotus**, who screened his film ***Ash*** as well as programmed and introduced a selection of his personal favorite films, including ***Death Becomes Her***, ***The Descent*** and ***Lost Highway***.

"Overlook Film Festival was next level," said Flying Lotus. "Great films and great community. Definitely one of my favorite film festivals."

Joining for the festivities were the incredible **Boulet Brothers**, performers and hosts of Shudder's ***Dragula***. They performed at the Opening Night Shudder 10th Anniversary Party, as well as hosted a panel.

"After a terrifying weekend at the Overlook Film Fest, we're still basking in the haunting glow of indie horror," said the Boulet Brothers. "It was a true celebration of creativity, where filmmakers and fans alike gathered to share their passion for the macabre. From spine-tingling screenings to our lively panel discussions, it was a joy to connect with fellow enthusiasts. Here's to the daring storytellers who keep the spirit of horror alive and thriving—until we meet again in the shadows!"

Other highlights also included the Closing Night screening of Eli Craig's ***Clown in a Cornfield***; the Shudder second line leading to an incredible 10th anniversary party, a 40th anniversary screening of ***Re-Animator*** featuring a 4k restoration of the film and special guest **Barbara Crampton**; and a unique, 65th anniversary screening of William Castle's ***13 Ghosts***, presented in its originally intended Illusion-O form, and accompanied by **Phantom Follies**, an ode to depression-era traveling live midnight horror shows performed by the magician **Zabrecky** and presented by the **Academy of Magical Arts**.

The festival is programmed by Co-Founders Landon Zakheim & Michael Lerman; Programming Manager Daniel Crooke; Short Film Programmer Katie Rife; and Festival Director Sheryl Santacruz.

More information about this year's award-winning films and the 2025 Overlook Film Festival Jury is available below.

Audience Awards

Winner — Feature Film

The Ugly Stepsister

Director: Emilie Blichfeldt

Cast: Lea Myren, Thea Sofie Loch Næss, Ane Dahl Torp, Flo Fagerli, Isac Calmroth, Malte Gårdinger

Norway, 2024

In this warped, sinister spin on a Cinderella story, the lens shifts to plain-faced Elvira, who is willing to do whatever it takes to compete with her enchantingly beautiful stepsister Agnes, and win the prince's heart. No procedure is too gruesome, too bloody, or too painful to achieve her happily ever after, in this visceral body horror from Norway.

Honorable Mention — Feature Film

It Ends

Director: Alexander Ullom

Cast: Phinehas Yoon, Akira Jackson, Noah Toth, Mitchell Cole

United States, 2024

Four recent college grads, out for an innocent late night drive, find themselves trapped in a seemingly never-ending hellscape where they are being haunted by mysterious forces.

Questions of friendship and existentialism are explored in director Alexander Ullom's genre-bending first feature, equal parts terrifying and thought-provoking.

Winner — Short Film

The Traveler & The Troll, Dir. Adam Murray, United States, WORLD PREMIERE

A traveler stops to rest in a clearing of a haunted forest. Soon, they learn they have stumbled upon the lair of a terrifying troll who demands gifts for passage.

Honorable Mention — Short Film

Last to Leave, Dir. Mary Elizabeth Ellis, United States, 2023

Last to Leave addresses the pandemic of loneliness, our primal need as humans for connection, and a reckoning with the way we treat our home planet.

Juried Awards

Grand Jury Prize for Best Feature Film

Touch Me

Directors: Addison Heimann

Cast: Olivia Taylor Dudley, Lou Taylor Pucci, Jordan Gavaris, Marlene Forte, Paget Brewster
United States, 2024

In Addison Heimann's (*Hypochondriac*, Overlook '22) wild and absurd new feature, intergalactic polyamory and one very codependent friendship collide when stoner roommates Craig and Joey have to suddenly move out of their apartment and decide to shack up with Joey's toxic ex who happens to be a horny, narcissistic alien from outer space. Tale as old as time.

Honorable Mention for Best Feature Film

Redux Redux

Director: Kevin McManus, Matthew McManus

Cast: Michaela McManus, Stella Marcus, Jeremy Holm, Jim Cummings, Grace Van Dien, Taylor Misiak, Dendrie Taylor
United States, 2025

Revenge is hard. Doing it again and again is harder. Emmy nominated brothers Kevin and Matthew McManus (*American Vandal*, *Cobra Kai*) present a gritty sci-fi thriller that follows a mother on a warpath through parallel universes in a desperate attempt to quench her desire for vengeance.

Scariest Feature Film Award

Best Wishes to All

Director: Yûta Shimotsu

Cast: Kotone Furukawa
Japan, 2024

A young nursing student gets an unexpectedly twisted dose of reality when she visits her grandparents in the countryside, only to uncover the secrets to their exceedingly happy life. Director Yûta Shimotsu's unsettling debut draws from classics like *Audition* and *The Wicker Man* to create a wholly unique vision.

Honorable Mention for Scariest Feature Film

Good Boy

Director: Ben Leonberg

Cast: Indy, Shane Jensen, Larry Fessenden, Arielle Friedman, Stuart Rudin, Anya Krawcheck, Hunter Goetz, Max
United States, 2024

Indy is a good boy; a faithful dog, he is always by his human Todd's side. When Todd seeks quiet in an empty family home in the countryside, Indy finds there is a strange, malevolent presence lurking in the shadows — an evil that only he can sense. Shot entirely from Indy's perspective, Ben Leonberg's first feature balances bark with bite

Grand Jury Prize for Best Short Film

Los Muchachos, Dir. Alejandro Artiles, Spain, 2025, WORLD PREMIERE

Through a mobile phone and isolated in the La Palma observatory, Fran must face the last thing any parent wants to hear.

Honorable Mention for Creature Design

The Traveler & The Troll, Dir. Adam Murray, United States, WORLD PREMIERE

A traveler stops to rest in a clearing of a haunted forest. Soon, they learn they have stumbled upon the lair of a terrifying troll who demands gifts for passage.

Scariest Short Film Award

Cruelty, Dir. Sam Das, United States, 2024

A young trans woman is chased into a junkyard while being followed home late at night. There, she must outwit her predator and summon the strength of a goddess.

Honorable Mention for Production Design

Easybake, Dir. Sasha Duncan, Canada, 2024

After consuming a clay sculpture, an insecure teen wakes with the ability to sculpt her own body, leading to an obsessive pursuit of "perfection."

Feature Film Jury

Haleigh Foutch

Haleigh Foutch is a writer, editor and critic. Currently Director of Audience at TheWrap, she has also appeared in Rotten Tomatoes, Collider, Complex and the Shudder docuseries "Behind the Monsters." She is a member of the Television Critics Association and GALECA.

Phil Nobile Jr.

Phil Nobile Jr. is the Editor-in-Chief of *Fangoria* magazine, an Emmy-winning documentary producer, and the executive producer of the acclaimed documentary feature *Horror Noire: A History of Black Horror*. His writing on the *Dark Shadows* TV series, the James Bond franchise, and the films of David Cronenberg have been published in books and other publications around the world. He's been a loyal Overlook attendee since 2018.

Alice Waddington

Alice Waddington (born Irene Lago) is a Spanish filmmaker known for her genre-defying work blending speculative fiction, surreal humor, and social metaphor. Raised in Bilbao, she studied advertising at the University of the Basque Country before moving into fashion photography and creative direction. She transitioned into narrative filmmaking with the high-fantasy short *Disco Inferno* (2015), which screened at 74 festivals including Sitges and Fantastic Fest, where she won Best Director. Her debut feature, *Paradise Hills* (2019), premiered at Sundance and was distributed globally by Netflix, screening at 25 additional festivals. Waddington lives in Los Angeles and is a vocal advocate for female solidarity in the arts, championing the visibility of women of color in directing roles. Her upcoming projects continue to explore horror, science fiction, and biopics as vehicles for emotional truth and sociopolitical critique.

Short Film Jury

Brooke H. Cellars

Brooke H. Cellars is an independent filmmaker with a passion for horror, authenticity, and storytelling through film. As the founder of Warped Witch Cinema and the Warped Witch Film Festival in Lafayette, Louisiana, Brooke champions underrepresented voices in the industry. Her 16mm short film *Violet Butterfield: Makeup Artist for the Dead* earned both the Audience Award and Jury Award at the Overlook Film Festival in 2023. She recently completed production on her debut feature *The Cramps: A Period Piece*, shot on 35mm and set for release in 2025.

Deirdre Crimmins

Deirdre Crimmins has been a professional film critic for the past 15 years. She primarily writes for *Rue Morgue* magazine and ThatShelf.com, and has contributed to the A.V. Club, Paste Magazine, Polygon and Birth.Movies.Death. She is a programmer for the Alamo Drafthouse's Weird Wednesday series, lives in Chicago with two black cats and wrote her master's thesis on George A. Romero.

Addison Heimann

Addison Heimann is a queer genre filmmaker currently residing in Los Angeles. His first feature *Hypochondriac* premiered at the 2022 SXSW Film Festival and was distributed by XYZ Films. His second feature *Touch Me* premiered in the Midnight section at the Sundance Film Festival. His goal is to tell queer stories that explore mental health in the genre space.

To keep up to date with The Overlook Film Festival, visit [overlookfilmfest.com](https://www.overlookfilmfest.com).

2025 Overlook Film Festival partners include OFFICIAL SPONSORS Academy of Magical Arts, American Immersion Theater, IFC Films, Shudder PREMIERE SPONSORS Bywater Wonderland, MUBI; SIGNATURE SPONSORS Dark Sky Films, Film New Orleans, SAGIndie; PATRON SPONSORS Kodak, FANGORIA, Louisiana Office of Tourism, Magnolia Pictures, Vinegar Syndrome; EVENT SPONSORS Daily Dead, Welcome Villain, University of New Orleans; VENUE SPONSORS Prytania Theatres, Toulouse Theatre, Westin New Orleans; SIGNATURE HOTEL SPONSOR International Hotel House; MEDIA SPONSORS Antigravity, Gambit, Where Y'At. Additional sponsors can be found on our website.

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About The Overlook Film Festival

The Overlook Film Festival is a 4-day celebration of all things horror held in haunted, historic & iconic venues throughout New Orleans. Presenting superior film programming with an expanded focus on experiential events, the festival showcases exciting work in new and classic horror cinema alongside the latest in interactive and live shows for a fully immersive weekend. As a summer camp for genre fans, The Overlook is a community event bringing the best of horror storytelling to an enthusiastic and appreciative audience within an intimate and inspirational environment. Evoking the spirit of the Overlook hotel, horror's most infamous fictional haunt, the 2025 Overlook Film Festival runs from April 3 - April 6, headquartered at the Prytania Theatres at Canal Place in Downtown New Orleans and Prytania Theatres Uptown. The festival advisory board includes Joe Dante (Filmmaker - *Gremlins*, *The Howling*), Karyn Kusama (Filmmaker - *Jennifer's Body*, *The Invitation*), Ryan Turek (VP of Feature Film Development, Blumhouse Productions), Leigh Whannell (Actor / Writer / Filmmaker - *Saw*, *Insidious*), Diana Williams (CEO & Co-Founder, Kinetic Energy Entertainment), Elijah Wood (Founding Partner, SpectreVision), and more.