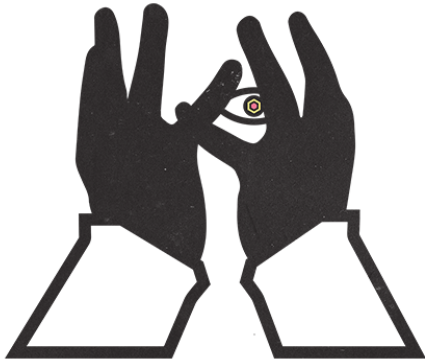




A 4-DAY CELEBRATION OF ALL THINGS HORROR

THE OVERLOOK FILM FESTIVAL

COME PLAY | APRIL 9 - 12, 2026

NEW ORLEANS

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Media Contact

Jason Fox Berger

jberger@overlookfilmfest.com

AUDIENCE AND JURY AWARDS ANNOUNCED FOR TENTH ANNUAL OVERLOOK FILM FESTIVAL

Obsession, Never After Dark, Mārama, Scissors and Man Eating Pussy
Among the Awarded Films

Festival Highlights Include Rick Baker Receiving Master of Horror Award, New Film Section SIDE SHOWS, *Family Movie* with Kevin Bacon and Kyra Sedgwick and the Shudder Second Line with the Grand Marshall Crypt Keeper

April 16, 2026 | 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 the Opening Night film, Focus Feature's *Obsession*, director Curry Barker's tale of wish-fulfillment gone wrong. For the short films, the **Audience Award** was given to Hannah Alline's *Scissors*, which told the story of a creep who meets his match in the form of a group of queer friends on a weekend getaway. And for the new section, Side Shows, the **Audience Award** went to Kenji Tanigaki's *The Furious*, in which a desperate father teams up with a street-smart journalist as they fight

their way through an international criminal network in a desperate bid to save his daughter.

“They say ‘be careful what you wish for’, but *Obsession* winning the Audience Award is beyond anything we could have wished for,” said Curry Barker. “We are truly grateful to everyone at the Overlook Film Festival for embracing our movie and are thrilled that audiences had as much fun watching the film as we had making it.”

“Holy shit!” said *Scissors* director Hannah Aline and writer Hannah Aslesen. “We’re honestly a little overwhelmed (in the best way) by this, because this isn’t just any award, this is THE AWARD in our eyes. Overlook isn’t just any festival, it’s the place where true horror fans show up ready for the weird, the wild and the unexpected. These are our people. We made this out of a deep love for horror, a deep love for comedy and a strong belief that the two belong together, crashing into each other like a pair of rusty shears. Getting to share it with a room full of fellow horror sickos was already a dream, this just takes it to a whole other level. Thank you for laughing with us, cringing with us and celebrating our little queer darling.”

For the **Grand Jury Prize for Feature Film**, the jury awarded ***Never After Dark*** from director Dave Boyle, stating that "with fantastic performances, an eerie command of atmosphere and unexpected twists, this tautly-constructed ghost story burns slow before exploding into a uniquely chilling nightmare. It's the best J-horror film of the last decade – and it's made by an American."

“Getting to experience the wonderful programming and enthusiastic audiences at Overlook was like a dream come true,” said Dave Boyle. “To receive this award, from a festival that truly represents what horror is all about, is such an honor and our whole team is thrilled beyond words. My weekend at Overlook is one I'll always remember -- thanks to the entire programming staff, the volunteers and to the jury for making this happen!”

The jury awarded the **Scariest Feature Award** to Taratoa Stappard’s ***Mārama***, declaring that "the cruelty and violence of colonialism, its brutality seen through the eyes of Indigenous women, bring terrifying power and haunting imagery to Taratoa Stappard's chilling Māori Gothic tale of reclamation, repatriation and retribution."

“Ngā mihi nui” said Taratoa Stappard. “It’s a massive honour for *Mārama* to receive the Scariest Feature Film Award. I love this festival’s inclusive vibe! It was my first time in fabulous NOLA and I was able to meet and talk with passionate audience members, filmmakers and critics. I’m already manifesting my return...”

The jury also awarded a **Special Jury Mention** for the performance of **Midori Francis** in *Saccharine*, stating that "the effectiveness of body horror films and supernatural thrillers like

Saccharine hinge on the lead, and here Midori Francis brings an unraveling yet grounded mania and warmth to the material."

The features jury was composed of filmmaker **Vera Drew**, film programmer **Jongsuk Thomas Nam** and journalist and karaoke virtuoso **Jen Yamato**.

In the shorts prizes, **Grand Jury Prize for Short Film** was awarded to ***Man Eating Pussy*** by Lee Lawson, with the jury stating that "Lee Lawson's heady, sensual sci-fi/horror hybrid immediately struck our jury members with the uniqueness and audacity of its vision, as well as the skill of its execution."

"Thank you so much to the jury and the Overlook team for embracing my strange, tender, goopy baby," said Lee Lawson. "*Man Eating Pussy* was born out of a need to reclaim space within horror as a female filmmaker, and so knowing that it resonated at such a Mecca of genre cinema is beyond meaningful. This film was made with an extraordinary community of collaborators and I share this with all of them. THANK YOU!"

The award for **Scariest Short** went to ***Ghoststory*** from director Alex Jacobs, with the jurors saying that "Alex Jacobs' lo-fi ghost story is destabilizing and unsettling, using experimental techniques and analog aesthetics to evoke a haunting beyond."

"Thank you so much!" said Alex Jacobs. "I am honored and quite stunned. Thanks to programmer Katie Rife and the shorts jury and everyone at Overlook, a great festival full of all kinds of amazing scares - thank you for letting our *Ghoststory* be part of it. I'm thrilled to hear that it got under your skin and followed you home."

The jury also awarded an **Honorable Mention for Best Kitty** to ***House Cat*** star Katy Wicker, explaining that "for her intense commitment to an emotionally and physically challenging performance, we recognize *House Cat* star Katy Wicker as the Best Kitty at this year's festival."

"Katy is the heart of *House Cat*, and the team and I are ecstatic to see her recognized," said director Kyle Spleiss, before adding "meow."

Finally, the shorts jury presented *Homemade Gatorade* from director Carter Amelia Davis with a **Doomscroll Award for Most Harrowing Digital Nightmare**, stating that "although it's a very funny short, *Homemade Gatorade* also captures the dissociative terror of online life in a profound, upsetting way."

"I animated this film alone in my room with audio and visual contributions from some of my dearest friends, and I couldn't have imagined the journey it's gone on since - it's beautiful to know that it's unnerved people around the world," said Carter Amelia Davis. "I think everyone's

aware that there's something really wrong with the internet in its current state. I hope that can change in the future. Idk! We'll see, I guess."

The 2026 Overlook Film Festival **Short Film Jury** was composed of journalist and playwright **Sharai Bohannon**, author and film critic **Payton McCarty-Simas** and filmmaker **Jenn Wexler**.

The 2026 festival welcomed 96 filmmaker guests to America's most haunted city, New Orleans, LA, from April 9-12, for the tenth annual horror celebration. The record-breaking edition included 25 sold out screenings and events and approximately 8083 audience members in attendance — the festival's highest number of attendees to date.

Among the highlights of this year's festival was the presentation of the festival's prestigious **Master of Horror Award** to the legendary makeup artist **Rick Baker**, who was on hand to present a special 45th anniversary screening of ***An American Werewolf in London***, the film for which he won the first ever Academy Award for Best Makeup (an award he would go on to win a record seven time). Previous recipients of the award include Roger Corman, Ernest Dickerson, Mick Garris, Stuart Gordon, Mike Flanagan and Joe Dante.

"What a great experience going to the Overlook Film Festival was!" said Rick Baker. "Across the volunteers, the organizers and guests - everyone was helpful, friendly and, most of all, passionate about the films. I am honored to have received the Master of Horror Award - it's by far the most lethal award I've ever received."

Also on hand to present their new film ***Family Movie*** were Kevin Bacon, Kyra Sedgwick and Travis Bacon. The new horror-comedy was made as a family, with Kevin Bacon serving as director and actor, Kyra Sedgwick acting and Travis Bacon acting and providing music for the film.

"We had a blast at the Overlook!" said Kevin Bacon and Kyra Sedgwick. "Horror fans are the most weird and wonderful and we felt lucky to be there to share *Family Movie*!"

New this year was the **Side Shows** film section. In a first for the Overlook, this section featured upcoming genre films which may fall outside of horror but still feel tailor-made for the world of the Overlook. The lineup included the Audience Award-winner ***The Furious*** from Lionsgate; Magnolia's ***Normal***, from director Ben Wheatley and starring Bob Odenkirk, about a small-town sheriff, who uncovers a web of dark dealings in the place he calls home; and IFC's ***Over Your Dead Body***, the latest work from comedic mastermind Jorma Taccone, who was on hand for this action-comedy in which a married couple (Jason Segel and Samara Weaving) use a romantic getaway as an excuse to plot each other's murder.

“Don’t overlook the Overlook film festival!” said Jorma Taccone. “If anything, you should look UP at it with awe and wonder but, on second thought, you should occasionally look straight ahead or you’ll miss seeing the great films that they project on the screens that are, presumably, right in front of you.”

And returning this year to kick off the festival was Shudder’s Second Line Parade, but with a new twist. Joining the festivities was the **Crypt Keeper** himself, serving as Grand Marshall of the parade, alongside the voice of the Crypt Keeper, **John Kassir**. They also participated in a panel on the legendary show, which was just announced to be coming to stream on Shudder next month.

“Guess who had one HELL of a SCREAM at the Overlook Film Festival this last week!!!” exclaimed the undead ghoul. “Your Old Pal and Grand Marshall, John Kassir, the Crypt Keeper!”

Other highlights also included the Centerpiece screening of NEON’s **Leviticus** from director Adrian Chiarella; the Closing Night screening of **Hokum**, from previous Overlook Audience Award-winner Damian Mc Carthy; a one-of-a-kind 100th anniversary screening of **A Page of Madness**, the first ever Japanese horror film, which was accompanied by a live orchestra and a new score composed by New Orleans’ own **Jeff Pagano**; and the **Boulet Brothers** kicking off their new tour with **The Boulet Brothers' Dragula: Titans Tour**, among much more!

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

More information about this year's award-winning films is available below.

Audience Awards

Winner — Feature Film

Obsession

Director: Curry Barker

Cast: Michael Johnston, Inde Navarrette, Cooper Tomlinson, Megan Lawless, Andy Richter
United States, 2025

Hopelessly paralyzed by his unrequited crush on one of his closest friends, a lovelorn 20-something makes a wish on a mysterious novelty toy, only to find out that his dreams are far worse than any nightmare he could imagine in this bone-chilling relationship horror.

Honorable Mention — Feature Film

Buddy

Director: Casper Kelly

Cast: Cristin Milioti, Delaney Quinn, Topher Grace, Keegan-Michael Key, Michael Shannon, Patton Oswalt

United States, 2026

From the unique and twisted mind of iconic writer-director Casper Kelly (*Too Many Cooks*, *Yule Log*) comes the tale of a courageous girl and her friends who must fight to escape the sinister clutches of a kid's television show.

Never After Dark

Director: Dave Boyle

Cast: Moeka Hoshi, Kento Kaku, Kurumi Inagaki, Mutsuo Yoshioka, Bokuzo Masana, Tae Kimura

Japan, 2025

A medium for hire, assisted by the spirit of her deceased sister, takes on the case of a grotesque apparition that haunts an isolated country home. As she peels back the layers of the spine-tingling investigation, she realizes that the greatest threats don't lie in the world of the dead, but rather in with the living people around her.

Winner — Side Shows

The Furious

Director: Kenji Tanigaki

Cast: Miao Xie, Joe Taslim, Yang Enyou, Brian Le, Joey Iwanaga

Hong Kong SAR China, 2026

When his daughter Rainy is abducted, humble tradesman Wang Wei is thrust into a deadly underworld of corruption and violence. His only ally is Navin, a relentless journalist haunted by his own past. Together, they fight their way through an international criminal network in a desperate bid to save Rainy and uncover the truth.

Winner — Short Film

Scissors, dir. Hannah Alline, United States, 2025

A slasher with a grudge meets his match when a group of queer friends on a weekend getaway turns his killing spree into a bloody night he never saw coming.

Honorable Mention — Short Film

House Cat, dir. Kyle Spleiss, United States, 2026

Living out of her car and hustling gig to gig, a woman takes a last-ditch job house-sitting a cat, only to discover she isn't there to care for the cat; she is the cat.

Juried Awards

Grand Jury Prize for Feature Film

Never After Dark

Director: Dave Boyle

Cast: Moeka Hoshi, Kento Kaku, Kurumi Inagaki, Mutsuo Yoshioka, Bokuzo Masana, Tae Kimura

Japan, 2025

A medium for hire, assisted by the spirit of her deceased sister, takes on the case of a grotesque apparition that haunts an isolated country home. As she peels back the layers of the spine-tingling investigation, she realizes that the greatest threats don't lie in the world of the dead, but rather in with the living people around her.

Scariest Feature Film Award

Mārama

Director: Taratoa Stappard

Cast: Ariana Osborne; Toby Stephens; Umi Myers

New Zealand, 2025

Set in on the moors of 1859 North Yorkshire, this gothic horror follows a Māori teacher who travels to the manor of a wealthy whaler in search of buried truths about her family. What she finds there is something far more threatening - dark secrets that define the grim legacy of the British empire in this bone-chilling Kiwi tale.

Special Jury Mention for Performance

Saccharine

Director: Natalie Erika James

Cast: Midori Francis, Danielle Macdonald, Madeleine Madden

Australia, 2026

Looking for a quick weight loss fix, a medical student accepts a mysterious drug, setting her off on a path of unwanted transformation in this goopy, sickening, violent body-horror from the director of *Relic*.

Grand Jury Prize for Short Film

Man Eating Pussy, dir. Lee Lawson, Canada, 2026

A dying man seeks comfort in a mysterious sex worker whose monstrous anatomy offers not just pleasure—but the ultimate release.

Scariest Short Film Award

Ghoststory, dir. Alex Jacobs, United States, 2026

A cursed artifact wrapped in static.

Honorable Mention for Best Kitty

House Cat, dir. Kyle Spleiss, United States, 2026

Living out of her car and hustling gig to gig, a woman takes a last-ditch job house-sitting a cat, only to discover she isn't there to care for the cat; she is the cat.

Doomscroll Award for Most Harrowing Digital Nightmare

Homemade Gatorade, dir. Carter Amelia Davis, United States, 2025

A woman embarks on a road trip to deliver her creamy homemade sports drink to a mysterious online buyer.

Film stills and festival artwork available to download at www.overlookfilmfest.com/press

To keep up to date with The Overlook Film Festival, visit overlookfilmfest.com.

2026 Overlook Film Festival partners include OFFICIAL SPONSORS American Immersion Theater, IFC Films, Shudder; PREMIERE SPONSORS Charming Stranger, MUBI; SIGNATURE SPONSORS Bywater Wonderland, Dark Sky Films, Magnolia Pictures, SAGIndie; Vinegar Syndrome PATRON SPONSORS Full Armor Films, Louisiana Office of Tourism; EVENT SPONSORS Boutique Du Vampyre, Daily Dead, Yellow Veil Pictures; VENUE SPONSORS Canal Place, Prytania Theatres, Toulouse Theatre; MEDIA SPONSORS Antigravity, FANGORIA, Where Y'At SIGNATURE HOTEL SPONSOR International House Hotel., 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 2026 Overlook Film Festival runs from April 9 - April 12, 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.