

AMERICAN  
**The Pavilion**

# EMERGING FILMMAKER SHOWCASE

OFFICIAL SELECTION OF FILMS

CANNES 2026

PRESENTED BY



**GOLD HOUSE**

# THE AMERICAN Pavilion **EMERGING FILMMAKER SHOWCASE**

The American Pavilion presented by IndieWire proudly announces its 2026 Emerging Filmmaker Showcase at the Cannes Film Festival, with Gold House returning for a third consecutive year as presenting sponsor. As part of the program, Gold House General Partner Christine Yi and the Gold House team will present the Gold House Cultural Impact Award during the Showcase Awards Ceremony on May 20, 2026. Recognized as the epicenter of American hospitality on the Croisette, The American Pavilion has offered an unparalleled experience in Cannes to film students and emerging filmmakers worldwide since 1989, and continues its mission of championing the next generation of global storytellers.

Now in its 29th edition, this year's Emerging Filmmaker Showcase features 20 official selections presented across three categories: Student Short Films & Student Documentaries, Emerging Filmmaker Short Films & Emerging Filmmaker Documentaries, and the Emerging Filmmaker LGBTQ+ Showcase. In a milestone for the program, screenings will take place for the first time in a screening room inside the Palais des Festivals, bringing the Showcase to the heart of the festival. Screenings are scheduled for Tuesday, May 19 (Student Film Showcase) and Wednesday, May 20 (LGBTQ+ and Emerging Showcases).

A live Q&A with filmmakers in attendance will follow all screenings.

"I'm proud of this year's showcase for shedding light on the emerging filmmaker's creative storytelling and diverse voices in their narrative shorts, documentaries, and animated films," said Monika Skerbelis, Director of the Emerging Filmmaker Showcase.

Emerging Filmmaker Showcase winners will be chosen by a jury that includes agents, managers, producers, industry members, and a team from Gold House. The winners will be announced at The American Pavilion awards ceremony during this year's Cannes Film Festival.

Gold House will present the Cultural Impact award to a filmmaker across the showcase's categories whose work exemplifies excellence in multicultural narratives or underrepresented perspectives. "We're so excited to be a part of the Emerging Filmmaker Showcase again this year. We're continually on the lookout for the next leading voices, and to meet these talented filmmakers at the most prestigious festival on the circuit is extra special." Said Co-Founder and Chief Brand Officer Christine Yi.

## **STUDENT Showcase**

**Tuesday, May 19**

**5:45PM-7:35PM | Palais F**

**In the Eye of the Beholder**

*Dir. Megan Whitham*

**East Did Meet West**

*Dir. Aiko Lozar*

**At What Cost?**

*Dir. Ant Roberson*

**Blooky: The Book Who Wanted to Be Read**

*Dir. Pablo Diaz De Leon Hicks*

**Katti (unfriend)**

*Dir. Kanishka Aggarwal*

**Fuel Up**

*Dir. Anne Koolen*

**Her Wedding**

*Dir. Qinting Wang*

## **LGBTQ+ Showcase**

**Wednesday, May 20**

**9:00AM-10:50AM | Palais H**

**Dandelion**

*Dir. Fiona Obertinca*

**So Be It**

*Dir. Matthew Sorgie*

**Welcome to Tool Shed**

*Dirs. Daniel Talbott, Andrew Klaus-Vineyard*

**Queerbait**

*Dir. Nate Gualtieri*

**Big Bass**

*Dir. Drew Dickler*

**Zari**

*Dir. Shruti Parekh*

## **EMERGING Showcase**

**Wednesday, May 20**

**6:00PM-7:50PM | Palais H**

**Monster Slayer**

*Dir. Catie Skipp*

**LUKi and the Lights**

*Dir. Toby Cochran*

**Saverio**

*Dir. Ellen Ancui*

**Poisoned Skies**

*Dir. Caroline Friend*

**The Drive**

*Dir. David Arrow*

**A Matter of Time**

*Dirs. Ana Milena Rojas Alarcon,  
Brian Patrick Hoffman*

**Lawyered Up**

*Dir. Tatiana Blackington James*



**At What Cost?** 2025  
20:38 min. | USA | Sci-Fi, Drama  
University of Southern California

**Writer/Director:** Ant Roberson  
**Producers:** Mike Werner, Charlotte Marcoulis, Simeon Payne-Narcis  
**Cast:** Quincy Everidge, Ayanda Dube, Obum Eji, Raquelle Wallace  
**About:** In a drought-ravaged future where society relies on a mind-altering government drug, an obsessive scientist must choose between curing his addicted younger brother or protecting his pregnant wife before the drug turns him into something inhuman.



**Blooky: The Book Who Wanted to be Read** 2026  
5:42 min. | Canada/Mexico/USA,  
Animation | USC School of  
Cinematic Arts

**Writer/Director:** Pablo Diaz De Leon Hicks  
**Producers:** Shagun Kanwar, Nathania Djuhar  
**Cast:** Cherry Guo, Adrian Garci, Allie Costa, Christopher Borkovec, Arturo Pulido Tomas, Joshua Luper  
**About:** A brand-new little book gets lost in the vast maze of a grand library and journeys through every section in search of where he belongs, only to realize that the most meaningful place to be isn't always where you fit in best.



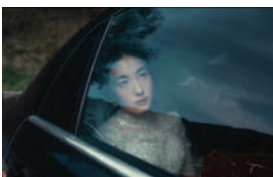
**East Did Meet West**  
2025  
15 min. | USA | Romance, Drama,  
History | Chapman University,  
Dodge College of Film and  
Media Arts

**Director:** Aiko Lozar  
**Writer:** Aiko Lozar, Alexis Berganio  
**Producer:** Alexis Berganio  
**Cast:** Kev Martinez, Tatyana Aravena, Eliza Kanter, Sharon Gardner, Francisco Martin, Aaron Smithson, Seth Goyal, Adam Acosta  
**About:** Inspired by the 1930s court case Roldan vs. Los Angeles County, Filipino Salvador Roldan and English Marjorie Rogers must find a way to convince an attorney to fight for their marriage despite the anti-miscegenation laws of the time.



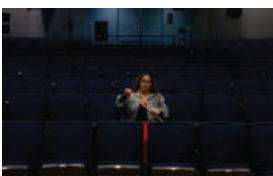
**Fuel Up** 2026  
15:27 min. | USA | Sports, Drama,  
University of Southern California

**Writer/Director:** Anne Koolen  
**Producers:** Sonia Bhatia, Maggie Mingjun Zheng, Dhruvraj Singh Bhati  
**Cast:** Casey Burke, Rick Kumazawa, Mark Simich, Joe Guintu  
**About:** Haunted by the nightmare of her boyfriend's deadly race car crash, Ava must conquer her fear of racing before she loses the dream they once shared forever.



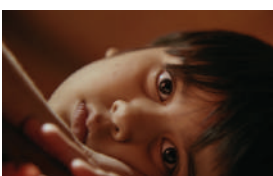
**Her Wedding** 2026  
19:20 min. | China, Subtitles  
Drama | Columbia University  
New York

**Director:** Qinting Wang  
**Writer:** Qinting Wang, Tiankuo Men  
**Producer:** Jieying Amy Wu  
**Cast:** Yi Wang, Niu Sun  
**About:** On the day of her arranged marriage, a bride reclaims the ceremony meant to contain her.



**In The Eye of the Beholder** 2025  
11:34 min. | USA | Documentary  
Loyola Marymount University

**Director:** Megan Whitham  
**Producers:** Megan Whitham, Hannah Butler  
**Cast:** Taylor Leigh Aguilar  
**About:** Halfway through her M.F.A. in film production, Taylor Leigh Aguilar unexpectedly goes blind, derailing the dream she chased since high school. Yet as she grieves her sight, she discovers that with flexibility and ingenuity, her filmmaking vision might not be lost after all.



**Katti (unfriend)** 2026  
14 min. | India/USA, Subtitles  
Drama | Chapman University,  
Dodge College of Film and  
Media Arts

**Director:** Kanishka Aggarwal  
**Writer:** Kanishka Aggarwal, Akshita Namjoshi  
**Producers:** Kanishka Aggarwal, Wenfeng Li  
**Cast:** Siyona Ailiani, Ashi Sharma  
**About:** In a vibrant, multi-generational Indian household, 8-year-old Bittoo finds herself sidelined after the birth of her baby brother. Mischievous, observant, and desperate for affection, she seeks connection from her father, aunts, grandmother, even her exhausted mother but finds her only consistent, if reluctant, anchor in her teenage sister, Mitthoo. But even Mitthoo is pulling away, lost in her own secret.



**Big Bass** 2024  
13:46 min. | USA  
Documentary, LGBTQ+

**Director:** Drew Dickler  
**Producers:** Nikki F Heyman, Jennie Kamin, David Sherwin  
**Cast:** Drew Dickler, Cheryl Bruttomesso, Eva Malkasian  
**About:** What does it mean to feel seen by others before you're ready to see yourself? A filmmaker travels back to 1997 to revisit a dream-like memory from second grade that centers around her queer identity, her legendary PE teacher and a mysterious large plastic fish.



**Dandelion** 2025  
19:59 min. | USA | Drama, Comedy,  
Coming-of-Age, LGBTQ+ |  
American Film Institute  
Conservatory

**Director:** Fiona Obertinca  
**Writer:** Corey Pinchoff  
**Producer:** Tori Ichikowitz  
**Cast:** Vic Michaelis, Ava Lalezarzadeh, Kristin Carey, Butch Klein, Sarah Cortez  
**About:** In 1970s Los Angeles, rebellious queer teen MARGARET gets thrown out of yet another foster placement and finds herself in the company of a mysterious social worker who's tasked with finding her a new home before the break of dawn. At odds and forced to travel the city together, Margaret realizes that running may not be her only option.



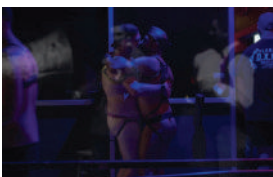
**Queerbait** 2025  
10:07 min. | USA  
Erotic Thriller, LGBTQ+

**Writer/Director:** Nate Gualtieri  
**Producers:** Bara Kim, Jesus Garcia  
**Cast:** Sydney Mae Diaz, Matthew Floyd Miller  
**About:** A precocious classics student is invited to dinner after he piques the interest of a tenured professor. But when his teacher's mentorship starts to push boundaries, he's forced to make a choice: protect his academic future, or preserve his dignity?



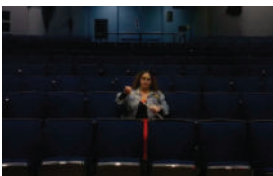
**So Be It** 2025  
7:28 min. | USA | Animation,  
Documentary, LGBTQ+  
University of Southern California

**Writer/Director:** Matthew Sorgie  
**Producer:** Liya Yang, Shagun Kanwar  
**Cast:** Rochelle (Shelley) Diamond, Barbara Belmont, Richard Zaldivar, Joselito Laudencia, Joe Healy, Gordon Bellamy, Bruce Keelan, Nitin Kale, Jim Raidl  
**About:** So Be It is an animated documentary offering a rare and tender portrait of lifelong queer love. Through candid conversation, the film shares the stories of 5 LGBTQIA+ couples reflecting on resilience, commitment, and the privilege it is to love and be loved.



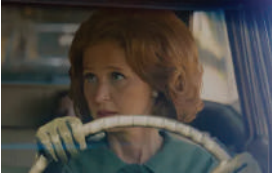
**Welcome to Tool Shed**  
2026  
22:11 min. | USA  
Documentary, LGBTQ+

**Director:** Daniel Talbott, Andrew Klaus-Vineyard  
**Producer:** Rachna Khatau, Daniel Talbott, Andrew Klaus-Vineyard, Noel Do-Murakami, Jonah Sirota, Orphan Andy Films  
**About:** A searing dive into the colorful community of queer senior citizens who congregate at the Tool Shed, a long-standing leather bar and sanctuary for queer people in Palm Springs, CA. The film examines the generation who never expected to become senior citizens in the face of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and decades of oppression, who now find themselves trailblazers again as the first openly LGBTQ seniors.



**Zari** 2024  
19:16 min. | USA/India  
Drama, Coming-of-Age, LGBTQ+

**Writer/Director:** Shruti Parekh  
**Producer:** Kajri Akhtar, Shruti Parekh  
**Cast:** Aesha Soni, Kamal Batra, Richa Kalra, Kundan Kumar  
**About:** American teen Neelu feels like a fish out of water amidst preparations for her sister's wedding in Delhi until she forges a brief and unexpected connection with Zeyb, a quiet sari store clerk who moonlights as an internet drag queen.



**The Drive** 2025  
12:21 min. | USA  
*Drama, Suspense, Historical*

**Writer/Director:** David Arrow

**Producer:** Leon Derriey

**Cast:** Amber Paul, Allen Guy Willcox, Rivers Duggan, Blair Newman, Victoria Spitalieri, Andrew Arrow, Emma Carpio, Madison Chung, Candice Clarke

**About:** It's a warm November day in the early 1960s, and Liz has just picked up the kids for her weekly carpool. Little does she know that this will be a drive she'll never forget.



**Lawyered Up** 2025  
18:48 min. | USA  
*Sci-Fi, Dramedy*

**Writer/Director:** Tatiana Blackington James

**Producers:** Tatiana Blackington James, Olia Zimarova

**Cast:** Virginia Reece, Jude Lanston, Josh Breslow, Susan Rudick

**About:** A betrayed woman hires a divorce lawyer who seems to be the perfect man. Is he too good to be true?



**LUKi and the Lights**  
2024  
10:40 min. | USA  
*Animation*

**Screenwriter/Director:** Toby Cochran

**Writers:** Toby Cochran, Sascha Groen, Janna Brouwer-Schouten, Anjo Snijders

**Producer:** Adrian Ochoa

**Cast:** Anjo Snijders, Kendra Vernon, Toby Cochran

**About:** LUKi, a charming and upbeat robot known for living life to the fullest, confronts a life-altering ALS diagnosis.



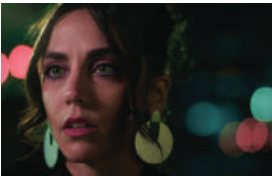
**A Matter of Time** 2025  
9:14 min., USA, *Drama*

**Writer/Director:** Ana Milena Rojas Alarcon, Brian Patrick Hoffman

**Producer:** Ashlee Espinal

**Cast:** Priscila Buiar, Blanca Harnett, Brielle Dardashtian, Hilary Ervin, Garrett Cummings

**About:** Milena, a DACA recipient mother, faces a life-altering crisis one evening when her routine with her daughter, Sofia, is disrupted by an impending ICE raid. As ICE agents close in, Milena's mother urges her to flee. In the midst of a tense escape, Milena encounters an ICE officer who, touched by a shared moment, offers her a brief chance to evade capture. The film underscores the personal and systemic struggles faced by immigrants.



**Monster Slayer** 2025  
21 min. | USA  
*Animation, Documentary*

**Director:** Catie Skipp

**Producers:** Grace Oathout, Catie Skipp

**Cast:** Stephanie 'Monty' Montgomery (Self)

**About:** After Monty is assaulted at the strip club where she works, she weaponizes public art to exact justice against a system's refusal to act.



**Poisoned Skies** 2026  
10:45 min. | USA  
*Drama*

**Writer/Director:** Caroline Friend

**Producers:** Nadia Fedchin, Caroline Friend

**Cast:** Julia Goldani Telles, Christopher Stanley, Kyle Mac, Michael Otis, Samuel Dunning

**About:** In 1954, an ambitious scientist on the brink of presenting groundbreaking pollution research is forced to make a moral decision when she becomes the target of a mining company responsible for a deadly smog disaster. Based on a true story.



**Saverio** 2025  
13:50 min. | USA  
*Dramedy, Drama, Socially Conscious*

**Writer/Director:** Ellen Ancui

**Producers:** Connie Jo Sechrist, Ellen Ancui

**Cast:** Quincy Cho, Roberto Medina, Scott Alin, Georgie August, Liv Lindell, Joy Hana Park, Renny Madlena, Pablo Sanfrancisco, Parion Roberts, Joanna Cretella

**About:** Mae, an ambitious, Korean American influencer, finds an elderly, Mexican man abandoned in her car, and must choose between her own ambition and an unresponsive healthcare system, and unwittingly journeys toward a new destination.

**The AMERICAN Pavilion**

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