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Press Contacts:

Jason Fox Berger, Film Independent
jberger@filmdependent.org

Seanna Hore, Ginsberg/Libby
seanna.hore@ginsberglibby.com

**EMERGING FILMMAKER AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED FOR
2026 FILM INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARDS**

Film Independent Hands Out \$75,000 in Honors to Emerging Artists

Hannah Einbinder and Natasha Rothwell Serve as Hosts

LOS ANGELES (January 10, 2026) – Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization dedicated to fostering independence and inclusivity in visual storytelling, announced the winners of its three Emerging Filmmaker Awards today at its annual Spirit Awards Nominee Brunch held at the London West Hollywood. Hannah Einbinder (*Hacks*) and Natasha Rothwell (*White Lotus*) served as hosts for the event and handed out the honors. Winners for the remaining categories will be revealed at the 2026 Film Independent Spirit Awards on Sunday, February 15.

“Supporting independent artists and allowing them to pursue their visions without compromise is central to the mission of Film Independent, and the Emerging Filmmaker Awards have always been an essential tool towards achieving that goal,”

said Brenda Robinson, Acting President of Film Independent. “We are incredibly proud to be able to help elevate these artists early in what are sure to be long and esteemed careers.”

Tatti Ribeiro, director of *Valentina*, received the Someone to Watch Award, which recognizes a talented first-time narrative filmmaker of singular vision who has not yet received appropriate recognition. The award, which is in its 32nd year, includes a \$25,000 unrestricted grant. The finalists for the award included Neo Sora for *Happyend* and Annapurna Sriram for *Fucktoys*.

Rajee Samarasinghe, director of *Your Touch Makes Others Invisible*, received the Truer Than Fiction Award, which is presented to a first-time director of non-fiction features who has not received significant recognition. The award is in its 31st year and includes a \$25,000 unrestricted grant. Tony Benna for *André is an Idiot* and Brittany Shyne for *Seeds* were also finalists for the award.

Tony Yang received the Producers Award, sponsored for the first time by Producers United. The award honors emerging producers who, despite highly limited resources, demonstrate the creativity, tenacity and vision required to produce quality independent films. The annual award, in its 29th year, includes a \$25,000 unrestricted grant. Finalists were Emma Hannaway and Luca Intili. This year's Producers Award is presented by Producers United, a new advocacy group of veteran and next wave producers working to ensure the sustainability of dedicated producing, or what they've coined Career Producing, against the many hurdles facing these devoted originators, champions and caretakers of film and television. Film Independent and Producers United are proud to join forces to protect the integrity of the career producer's vital role.

Presenting the honors at the annual Spirit Awards Nominee Brunch were celebrated artists Hannah Einbinder and Natasha Rothwell. Einbinder, the widely acclaimed actress and comedian, is best known for her role as Ava in HBO's *Hacks*, for which she has won an Emmy and Critics Choice Award as well as received three Golden Globe nominations. Her debut comedy special, *Everything Must Go*, premiered last year on HBO Max, with *The New York Times* highlighting it as one of the top specials of the Summer.

Natasha Rothwell is the creator, executive producer and star of the Hulu series *How to Die Alone*. She recently earned her second Emmy nomination for her standout performance in Season 3 of HBO's *The White Lotus*. Natasha is also known for her

critically acclaimed work as a series regular, writer, director and producer on HBO's *Insecure*, for which she received both a Peabody and an NAACP Image Award.

The 2026 Film Independent Spirit Awards, MC'd by the [recently announced host](#), *Saturday Night Live* alum Ego Nwodim, will take place on Sunday, February 15. The 41st annual show, held at the historic Hollywood Palladium, will be streamed live on the [Film Independent](#) and [IMDb](#) YouTube channels, as well as across other social platforms. The Spirit Awards are the primary fundraiser for Film Independent's year-round slate of programs, which cultivate the careers of emerging filmmakers and celebrate creative independence, diversity, innovation and uniqueness of vision in independent film and television. The previously announced nominees can be viewed [here](#).

Film Independent Spirit Awards are supported by Premier Sponsor Lavazza Coffee, Principal Sponsor IMDbPro and Official Sponsor FIJI Water, with additional support from PEPSI. Easterseals Disability Services is the accessibility partner. The London West Hollywood and W Hollywood are the Official Hotels. Getty Images is the Official Photographer. Vision Media is the exclusive screening partner.

To learn more about attending the Spirit Awards and supporting Film Independent's mission and programs, please contact Jennifer Murby at jmurby@filmindependent.org.

To learn more about the Spirit Awards eligibility rules and regulations, please visit [filmindependent.org/spirit-awards/faq](#).

The winners of the Film Independent Spirit Awards are voted on by Film Independent Members. Membership is open to the public. For more information or to become a member, visit [filmindependent.org](#).

Press and publicist credential applications for the 2026 Film Independent Spirit Awards are now open at [filmindependent.org/press](#). For any questions regarding credentials, please contact Jason Fox Berger at publicity@filmindependent.org.

ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT

For over 40 years, Film Independent has helped filmmakers get their projects made and seen. The nonprofit organization's core mission is to champion creative independence in visual storytelling in all its forms and foster a culture of inclusion, in

support of a global community of artists and audiences who embody diversity, innovation, curiosity and uniqueness of vision.

In addition to producing the [Film Independent Spirit Awards](#), the organization supports creative professionals with [Artist Development](#) programs, grants and labs. Signature mentorship program [Project Involve](#) fosters the careers of talented filmmakers from underrepresented communities. Weekly Education events and workshops equip filmmakers of all ages and experience levels with tools and resources. International programs provide cultural exchanges and career-building opportunities for film professionals around the world. And year-round screening series [Film Independent Presents](#) offers a robust program of unique cinematic experiences, including screenings, conversations, Live Reads and Bring the Noise musical events.

For more information or to become a Member, visit [filmindependent.org](#).

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