



Criteria and Submission

Submission Deadline: Thursday, September 19, 2019 At 5PM EST

- For newly registered users or those who have submitted in prior years 2016-18, login [here](#).
- If you do not have an account for 2019, go to the [Register Page](#).
- For queries on eligibility and submissions, contact: mabbot@ifp.org or call 212-465-8200, x207

Criteria for the Competitive Awards – Feature Films

There will be eight (8) competitive awards in 2019 – **Best Feature, Best Documentary, Best Actor, Best Actress, Breakthrough Actor, Best Screenplay, the Bingham Ray Breakthrough Director Award, and the IFP Gotham Audience Award**. All eligible submissions must meet the following basic criteria for competitive awards:

- Filmmaking with a point of view.
Each IFP Gotham Award™ will be given to individual films or performers in films where the vision of an individual director, producer, writer or writer/director is abundantly evident, and where the film cannot be classically defined as a "work for hire."
- Films must be American.
The film must be directed and/or produced by (a credited lead producer ["produced by"] a U.S. citizen or U.S.-based filmmaker.
- Feature-length (defined as over 70 minutes). Series or multi-part works can only be submitted in the Breakthrough Series categories.
- Films made with an economy of means.
Budget level and sources of financing are taken into consideration during criteria review.
- Screening availability by the Nominating Committees.
The film must be submitted by password protected viewing link (direct link or third party "screening room") or on DVD by the deadline or otherwise made available for screening by nominating committee. (Not applicable to the Gotham Audience Award)
- Theatrical, Day and Date, or Digital Platform Release.
The release can be through a theatrical releasing entity or by direct or self-distribution by filmmakers, either in an exclusively theatrical release or day and date with digital platforms or VOD release.

Feature films must be scheduled for a theatrical and/or digital platform release during calendar year 2019 (Midnight January 1 – 11:59 pm December 31). Films will only be considered in the year in which they first meet the release criteria. By the submission deadline, films must have a confirmed 2019 release date and booking. [See special criteria for cable and digital platforms below](#).

Theatrical Release: The release can be through a theatrical releasing entity or by direct or self-distribution by filmmakers, either in an exclusively theatrical release or day and date with digital platforms or VOD release. The film must be screened for paid admission in a commercial motion picture theater in New York City and/or

Los Angeles County and must run for a minimum of seven consecutive days. The film must be advertised, marketed, and available for press review during the New York and/or Los Angeles County run in a manner considered normal and customary to the industry for the official theatrical release of independent films and not as an “under the radar” release for awards consideration only. The film can be publicly exhibited in film or digital formats, delivered to the screen by an image and sound file format suitable for exhibition in existing commercial cinema sites.

Digital Platform/Pay TV: Films that are not released theatrically but have played Gotham Award qualifying festivals and are subsequently released exclusively via a digital platform or PayTV/Cable or VOD in 2019 may qualify for consideration in all relevant categories, with the stipulation that the films first screened at one of the following qualifying festivals: **Berlin, Cannes, DOC NYC, Hot Docs, IDFA, New York Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, SXSW, Toronto International Film Festival, Tribeca Film Festival, True/False, Venice International Film Festival.** . The digital platform release can be via streaming, VOD, DTO, or DTR.

Criteria for the Competitive Awards – Television

Breakthrough Series

- For new series originally aired or transmitted for the first time during the eligibility period on television (network, basic cable, pay cable, pay television, pay-per-view, interactive cable, broadband) or digital distribution through internet platforms.
- There will be two awards presented in this category based on program length:
 - Breakthrough Series (Over 40)
A continuing or limited series with episodes averaging 40 minutes and longer and consisting of three or more episodes.
 - Breakthrough Series (Under 40)
A continuing or limited series with episodes averaging under 40 minutes and consisting of five or more episodes.
- The premiere of the first season of a series must have been within the 12-month eligibility period of October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019
- Majority of the episodes of a series must be broadcast, transmitted, or available for download within the eligibility period. For series premiering in September 2019, a minimum of three episodes must be made available to the Gotham nominating committee. All genres eligible; anthology series are only eligible in the debut season. Series returns, revivals, reboots, or continuations after a hiatus are not eligible as “new” series.
- Foreign television production is only eligible if it is the result of a co-production (both financially and creatively) between U.S. and foreign partners and with a purpose to be shown to U.S audiences in the same eligibility year.

Additional Criteria By Category

- BEST FEATURE – an exceptionally realized fiction film that raises the possibilities of filmmaking and that will withstand the test of time. This is a director and producers’ award. The IFP Gotham Award will be presented to the film’s credited director(s) and producer(s).
- BEST DOCUMENTARY – an exceptionally realized non-fiction film that deals creatively with cultural, artistic, historical, social, scientific, economic or other subject matter. The objective is to recognize the significant artistic and/or social impact of the director’s vision. It may be photographed in actual occurrence, or may employ partial re-enactment, stock footage, stills, animation, stop-motion or other hybrid techniques, as long as the overall emphasis is on fact and not fiction. The Gotham Award will be presented to the film’s credited director(s) and producer(s).

- **BEST ACTOR** – an outstanding performance by a male actor in a leading or significant featured role. The Gotham Award will be presented to the actor.
- **BEST ACTRESS** – an outstanding performance by a female actor in a leading or significant featured role. The Gotham Award will be presented to the actor.
- **BREAKTHROUGH ACTOR** – an outstanding debut or “breakthrough” performance. The actor’s performance is not necessarily the actor’s first screen role but is considered the first role to display the expanse of his/her talent or suggests significant future accomplishment. The actor’s role must be a lead or a strong supporting character in a specific film. Actors who have won or been nominated for significant film awards (Academy Award®, Golden Globe, Spirit Awards, etc.) for work released prior to 2019 or who have been previously nominated in this category are ineligible. In instances in which a performance could be considered for both “Breakthrough” and “Best Actor/Actress,” the category placement will be at the discretion of the nominating committees. The Gotham Award will be presented to the actor.
- **BINGHAM RAY BREAKTHROUGH DIRECTOR AWARD** – to a filmmaker whose first fiction film pushes the boundaries of creativity and demonstrates a unique vision. The IFP Gotham Award will be presented to the film’s credited director(s).
- **BEST SCREENPLAY** – an outstanding screenplay for an independent fiction feature. The screenplay may be an original work or one adapted from previously published or existing work in any medium. The Gotham Award will be presented to the film’s credited writer(s).
- **BREAKTHROUGH SERIES** – The awards honor an exceptionally realized new fiction or documentary series that expands the possibilities of creative, independent storytelling in serialized content. The series should be realized with an economy of means and characterized by innovation, risk taking, creative freedom and vision, and the introduction of new voices and non-traditional subject matter that enrich the landscape or push the boundaries of “television.” The Gotham Award will be presented to the film’s credited Creators and Executive Producers.
- ***Nominations in the following category are pre-determined – not through open submissions:***
- **GOTHAM AUDIENCE AWARD** – The nominees for this award are comprised of the films nominated for Best Feature, Best Documentary, and Breakthrough Director. The winner is chosen through online voting in November by current IFP members. The IFP Gotham Audience Award will be presented to the film’s credited director(s) and producer(s).

Our Selection Process

Executive Criteria Committee

An internal committee comprised of IFP Gotham Awards staff and IFP Board ensure that submitted films meet the award criteria.

Nominating Committees

Committees comprised of film critics, festival programmers and others not directly engaged in the production and distribution of films and television will review all submitted films that meet the criteria and determine the final nominees in the competitive categories.

Final Selection Juries and Award Voting

A final jury of distinguished filmmakers will determine the winners in each category except the Audience Award. Final juries are frequently comprised of directors, writers, producers, editors, actors, directors of photography and others directly associated with making films and television. Executives of companies which release or sell films do not participate in these selections at any stage. For the Audience Award, IFP members vote online to choose a winner.