



# Criteria and Submission

## Submission Deadline: Thursday, October 1, 2020 At 5PM EST

- For newly registered users or those who have submitted in prior years 2016-19, login [here](#).
- If you do not have an account for 2020, go to the [Register Page](#).
- For queries on eligibility and submissions, contact: [mtabbot@ifp.org](mailto:mtabbot@ifp.org) or call 212-465-8200, x207

## Criteria for the Competitive Awards – Feature Films

There will be nine (9) competitive awards for feature films in 2020 – **Best Feature, Best Documentary, Best International Feature, 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.  
Except for the Best International Feature category, all feature films must be directed, and/or produced (credited "producer" or "produced by") and/or written by individuals who are U.S. citizens or permanently U.S.-based. A minimum of two different individuals across these roles are required.
- Feature-length (defined as over 70 minutes). Series or multi-part works can only be submitted in the Breakthrough Series Television categories.
- Films made with an economy of means.  
Budget level and sources of financing are taken into consideration during criteria review. Eligible films cannot exceed a gross budget ceiling of \$35 million. Submission of budget top sheets are required for films over \$25 million.
- Screening availability by the Nominating Committees.
- The film must be submitted by password protected viewing link or hosted "virtual screening room" (both these options preferred), or alternately on DVD by the deadline or otherwise made available for screening by nominating committees.
- 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.

**ELIGIBILITY PERIOD:** Feature films must be scheduled for a theatrical and/or digital platform release\* during the extended window for the calendar year 2020 (**Midnight January 1, 2020 – 11:59 pm February 28, 2021**). 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 release date and booking for this period. Films are also eligible this

year if they were dated for theatrical release as required below but had release plans altered due to COVID-19 and had a virtual release or other digital platform or broadcast release during the extended calendar dates.

**Theatrical Release:** The planned 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. As noted under “Eligibility Period,” for the 2020 release year, films are also eligible if they meets the virtual release terms described above. The film must be advertised, marketed, and available for press review during the New York and/or Los Angeles County run or nationwide virtual 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. **See also special criteria for cable and digital platforms below.**

**Digital Platform/Pay TV:** Films that are not released theatrically but have played or were scheduled for Gotham Award qualifying festivals and are subsequently released exclusively via a digital platform or PayTV/Cable or VOD within the 2020 eligibility period may qualify for consideration in all relevant categories, with the stipulation that the films first screened at one of the following qualifying festivals: **BAMcinemaFest, Berlin, BlackStar Film Festival, Cannes, CPH:DOX, DOC NYC, Hot Docs, IDFA, New York Film Festival, San Francisco International Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, SXSW, Telluride Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, Tribeca Film Festival, True/False, Urbanworld Film Festival, 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 minutes)**  
A continuing or limited series with episodes averaging 40 minutes and longer and consisting of three or more episodes.
  - **Breakthrough Series (Under 40 minutes)**  
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, 2019 – September 30, 2020.**
- Majority of the episodes of a series must be broadcast, transmitted, or available for download within the eligibility period. For series premiering in September 2020, 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. This is a director and producers’ award. 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 INTERNATIONAL FEATURE** - an exceptionally realized fiction film that raises the possibilities of filmmaking and that will withstand the test of time. Only features that do not meet the criteria to qualify as an American film in the Best Feature category will be considered. The key roles of director, producer (“produced by”), and screenwriter should be based outside the U.S. and are not U.S. citizens. 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 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 or television awards (Academy Award®, Golden Globe, Spirit Award, Emmy, etc.) for work released prior to 2020 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, Best International Feature, and Breakthrough Director. The winner is chosen through online voting 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 and programs 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.

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