



## The 31<sup>st</sup> Edition of the San Luis Obispo International Film Festival Announces Film Lineup for 2025

*With over 22 countries represented, Sundance winner **DJ AHMET** opens the festival and Daryl Hannah's **Coastal** is the Closing Night selection*

(San Luis Obispo, CA)—San Luis Obispo International Film Festival (SLOIFF) has announced this year's exciting film lineup, led by the Opening Night selection of 2025 Sundance Audience Award winner **DJ Ahmet**, and Daryl Hannah's documentary on Neil Young's solo tour, **Coastal**, as the Closing Night selection.

With a slate of over 100 films including narrative features, short films, documentary features, and doc shorts, the festival is known for its dedication to diversity and inclusivity, highlighting both emerging and established filmmakers from around the globe. The festival runs from Thursday, April 24 through Tuesday, April 29.

Also on tap are the fest's famous **Surf Nite**, the popular **Central Coast Filmmaker Showcase**, **Cal Poly Short Cuts**, and **Music Video Showcase**. **Community of Skate** is returning for a repeat performance after a successful launch in 2024.

Additional programs include short films curated by **R.A.C.E. Matters**, **Filmmakers of Tomorrow**, featuring short films by those 18 and under, a program curated by

**The Coastal Awakening** celebrating David Lynch and his passion for meditation, and new this year, **Ecologistics**, a series of environmental documentary shorts.

San Luis Obispo International Film Festival Director Skye McLennan said, “This year, we made a concerted effort to showcase a variety of stories and perspectives that bring the world to San Luis Obispo while also delivering a message of hope, joy and perseverance.”

The Opening Night Reception on Thursday, April 24th kicks off the 31st edition of SLOIFF and presents an opportunity to meet special guests, filmmakers, and major contributors, along with catered bites by Luna Red and wine from Vina Robles Winery at the historic Fremont Theater.

The opening night feature, ***DJ Ahmet***, written and directed by Georgi M. Unkovski comes to SLOIFF following its debut at Sundance. ***DJ Ahmet*** introduces Ahmet, a 15-year-old boy from a remote Yuruk village in North Macedonia, who finds refuge in music while navigating his father’s expectations, a conservative community, and his first taste of love.

On Closing Night, the SLO Film Festival wraps up with the announcement of the Jury and Audience award winners, alongside a screening of ***Coastal***. ***Coastal***, invites viewers to take a journey with maverick musician Neil Young in a personal, behind-the-scenes documentary as he cruises the coast on his recent solo tour. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker and Young’s wife, Daryl Hannah, ***Coastal*** offers a glimpse behind the curtain of this unguarded iconoclast, as he navigates a return to the stage post-Covid – from his everyday observations on the bus to his candid, wry banter with his audience.

SLOIFF is presenting its Spotlight Award to Director/Writer/Actor/Producer Jay Duplass and will screen his new film ***The Baltimoreans***. The film marks Jay’s return to his roots of writing and directing for the first time in 14 years. ***The Baltimoreans*** tells the story of how a newly sober man's Christmas Eve dental emergency leads to an unexpected romance with his older dentist as they explore Baltimore together. It stars Michael Strassner, who co-wrote the screenplay with Duplass, Liz Larsen, and Olivia Luccardi.

More feature film highlights include ***Magic Hour***, starring Miriam Shor and Josh Stamberg; the Finnish/U.S. production ***The Summer Book***, starring Glenn Close; the West Coast premiere of the Mexican film ***Corina***; the U.S. premiere of the Canadian production ***The Players***; and the post-apocalyptic thriller ***40 Acres*** starring Danielle Deadwyler.

Documentary features include ***Mr. Nobody Against Putin***, ***Middletown***, ***Speak***, ***Sally***, and ***Third Act*** – all fresh from their premieres at Sundance 2025. ***Porcelain War***, a 2025 Oscar® nominee for Best Documentary Feature, is also in the lineup, as is ***Bob Mackie: Naked Illusion***. The documentary's subject, the legendary costume and fashion designer **Bob Mackie**, will be attending the Monday screening and participating in a Q & A afterwards.

The San Luis Obispo International Film Festival is an Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences Qualifying Festival. As a result, films that win in the category of “Best Documentary Short” at SLOIFF may be qualified to enter the 98<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards® (2026) making them eligible to win an Oscar®. This year's eight documentary short films include the U.S. premiere of ***Kopala***, the West Coast premiere of ***Tiger***, and the West Coast premiere of ***The Wilhelm Scream***.

In the Narrative Short category, SLOIFF will be presenting the U.S. premiere of ***Don't Even Know You***, the West Coast Premiere of ***Cherry Colored Funk***, and the California premieres of ***Flight 182*** and ***Palindrome***. New to the category this year is “Red Eye Shorts,” an extension of the festival's late-night genre and horror section including the world premiere of ***Sundown*** by Rafael Agustín (writer, Jane the Virgin).

**Surf Nite in SLO**, the film festival's signature one-of-a-kind surfing film event, is screening three short surf films, ***Creatures of Habit***, ***Making Waves: The Lakey Peterson Story***, and ***Nø Way***. The evening kicks off with a set by popular local band RIFF TIDE and guests are encouraged to enjoy drinks and mingle in the Fremont Theater's stunning art deco lobby prior to introductory comments and the screening of the three films.

**Community of Skate** is returning after a smashing debut in 2024. The event kicks off in the lobby of the Fremont Theater with live music and an exhibition of skateboard designs and live-screen printing by the San Luis Obispo High School

Advanced Graphic Design class. The reception is followed by the screening of three films that celebrate the culture, community, and challenges of skateboarding – ***Skategoat***, ***Against the Current*** and ***Chico Brenes' "7X7"***. After the screening is a discussion with pro skaters Leandre Sanders and Chico Brenes, skate film director Aaron Meza, and ***Skategoat*** director, Van Alpert.

For the fifth year in a row, music videos have a home at SLOIFF. The festival is delighted to present the opportunity to experience an eclectic mix of creative music videos in person with an acoustic set at the SLO Film Center. Many of the filmmakers will be in attendance to talk about their films.

Every year **Coastal Awakening**, a collective of writers, artists, historians, chefs, surfers, and philanthropists, sponsors a film series grouped around a theme close to the creative spirit of the Central Coast. This year's Coastal Awakening film series honors the visionary artistry of David Lynch, whose meditative storytelling blurs reality to reveal deeper dimensions of existence. Entitled "In Heaven Everything Is Fine: The Spiritual Cinema of David Lynch", the scheduled films are ***Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*** (1992) and ***Eraserhead*** (1977) which Lynch called his most spiritual film. In addition, there will be a screening of the documentary ***Meditation, Creativity, Peace (2012)*** which follows Lynch on a 16-country tour as he celebrates the potential of Transcendental Meditation (TM) for personal and global transformation. After the film, there will be a special Q&A with Bob Roth, CEO of the David Lynch Foundation and close friend of Lynch, as he offers deeper insight into how TM helped shape Lynch's creative alchemy.

**R.A.C.E. Matters** teams up again with the film festival on Sunday, April 27 to present **Culture, Strength, and Stories That Matter...United We Thrive**, a program of five contemporary short films (open to SLOIFF ticket holders and the general public). Before the film screenings at the Palm Theatre, R.A.C.E. Matters will hold a Sunday Brunch fundraiser at Luna Red with appetizers and bubbly.

Also open to the public is **Ecologistics**, a new environmental short documentary series. This collection showcases three powerful, thought-provoking stories that highlight the wonders of nature, and the challenges faced in preserving it.

Now in its 19th year, **Filmmakers of Tomorrow** continues to inspire young filmmakers from around the world to share their talents with the SLOIFF audience. This showcase presents some of the very best films submitted from around the world by under 18 filmmakers in Elementary, Middle, and High School.

On Monday, April 28, the **Central Coast Filmmakers Showcase** highlights the work of twelve talented filmmakers from Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara counties. Later in the evening, **Cal Poly Short Cuts** features eight short films created by Cal Poly students under the mentorship of Professor Randi Barros and James Werner, Associate Professor of Art & Design.

A slate of 68 films, in the categories of Narrative Feature, Narrative Short, Documentary Feature, Documentary Short, Student Film, and Music Video will be participating in the **George Sidney Independent Film Competition**. Central Coast Filmmaker Showcase Films are eligible in the same categories. George Sidney and Central Coast films will also be eligible for **The Audience Awards** in five categories.

Among the Narrative Features jurors are Marc Marriott (Director, Tokyo Cowboy), Borys Kit (Hollywood Reporter), and Alexandra Fredricks (Oscilloscope Laboratories). Documentary Features jurors include veteran filmmakers John Hoffman (The Weight of the Nation), Sophie Kissinger (Couples Therapy), and Sav Rodgers (Chasing Chasing Amy).

In addition to film programming, the festival features **Behind the Scenes Panels** with industry professionals. This year's talks include "The Festival Circuit and Beyond," "How to Finance your Indie Film," "Beyond Entertainment," and "Understanding Light." Panels take place in the festival lounge and are free for SLOIFF ticket holders, with tickets available for the general public.

For a complete list and description of this year's films, and to purchase film festival passes, please visit:

<https://sloiffestival2025.eventive.org/welcome>

#### **ABOUT SAN LUIS OBISPO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

Celebrating its 31st anniversary in 2025, the San Luis Obispo International Film Festival is a six-day annual event, showcasing creative, diverse, and impactful works from around the world in a wide variety of venues, from the city's classic art deco Fremont Theater to the SLO Film Center

at the vintage Palm Theatre. Named to MovieMaker Magazine's "25 Coolest Film Festivals" list, and USA TODAY's 10Best Readers Choice Awards, the 2025 festival runs from April 24-29. SLOIFF is an Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences Qualifying Festival in the category of "Best Documentary Short". Tickets and festival passes can be purchased here.

Located halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, San Luis Obispo with its laid-back vibe and serene natural beauty is the perfect setting for this highly regarded annual film celebration. Filmmakers rave about the warmth and engagement that is so much a part of the SLO Int'l Film Festival experience, as do the industry pros and film critics who are fast discovering the fest's thoughtful audiences and unique programming sensibility.

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Film images are available by request.