



**FIRST**  
INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL  
XINING  
青年电影展

2023.7.23-7.31

# **The 17th FIRST International Film Festival Competition Rules and Regulations**



## 1. General Information

### 1.1 About FIRST Competition

FIRST International Film Festival is dedicated to documenting the rich specimen of emerging sinophone filmmaking landscape and offering an effective and fair evaluation standard for that matter through the format of main competition. FIRST IFF aspires to provide the explorers of cinematic art with the returning spirit of cinema and forward-looking guidance, encouragement and accompaniment.

### 1.2 Festival Dates

The 17<sup>th</sup> FIRST International Film Festival will take place from July 23, 2023 to July 31, 2023 in Xining, Qinghai Province, People's Republic of China.

### 1.3 Eligibility

Submission to FIRST IFF is open to narrative features (60 minutes and over), feature-length documentaries (60 minutes and over) and short films (up to 30 minutes).

The following eligibility criteria must be taken into account when submitting a film to the festival:

- 1) The film must fulfill **one of** the following conditions:
  - The director is a citizen of the People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR and Taiwan), in the case of co-directed work, one of the directors' qualification suffices.
  - The majority of the film's dialogues is in Chinese language (including



Mandarin, Cantonese and other dialects). Dubbed foreign-language film is not eligible.

- A minimum of 50% of the filming locations are situated within the border of the People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR and Taiwan).
- A minimum of 50% of the cast and crew of the film (including director, screenwriter, cinematographer, production designer, composer, editor, sound effect, main cast, producer) are citizens of the People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR and Taiwan).

2) The film was completed after January 1, 2022 (the completed version has not been public screened at any film festivals or released before this date).

3) For narrative features, the film should be among the director's first three Independently directed narrative features. In the case of co-directed work, each of the directors must fulfill the condition.

4) Films that have already been theatrical/online released in mainland China or have scheduled the release before the FIRST IFF festival dates are not eligible.

5) Films, including any updated version, previously submitted to or publicly screened at FIRST IFF will not be reconsidered for the 2023 edition.

#### **1.4 Submission and Registration Fee**

Films should be submitted online through the website of FIRST International



Film Festival ([www.firstfilm.org.cn](http://www.firstfilm.org.cn)). Submission is subject to a registration fee payable during the submission process. The fee varies according to the chosen deadline and film type.

	Early Bird	Standard	Late
Narrative Feature and Feature-length Documentary	January 1, 2023 to February 16, 2023	February 17, 2023 to April 7, 2023	April 8, 2023 to April 28, 2023
	RMB200	RMB360	RMB960
Short Film	January 1, 2023 to February 16, 2023	February 17, 2023 to April 7, 2023	April 8, 2023 to April 28, 2023
	RMB120	RMB260	RMB560

The submission time is determined by the time all submission materials (including online submission and delivery materials) arrive at the festival office. Please take the delivery time into consideration. If the film fails to complete submission or is withdrawn from the competition, no submission fee will be refunded. If the delivery materials arrive later than the chosen deadline, you will be required to pay for the extra fee. When the extra payment is made, your film will officially enter the selection process. After the submission is closed (24:00 of April 28, 2023, UTC+8), submitted films are not allowed to be withdrawn from the Competition.



## 2. Official Selection

The official selection of FIRST IFF presents three curated competition programs to promote talented filmmakers:

- Narrative Feature Competition
- Feature-length Documentary Competition
- Short Film Competition

No premiere status is required for the above competitions. Each film could only be submitted to one competition. The festival committee reserves the right to switch a submitted film to a different competition, should it does not fit the qualifications in the competition it is submitted to.

Out of the competitions, FIRST IFF presents programs including Debut Spotlight and other thematic curations. No awards will be presented by the Jury Committee to the films in the non-competitive sections.

### 2.1 Narrative Feature Competition

Eligible for Narrative Feature Competition are feature-length fictional films, 60 minutes or longer, that meet the requirements listed in '1. General' - '1.3 Eligibility'.

### 2.2 Feature-length Documentary Competition

Eligible for Feature-length Documentary Competition are feature-length non-fiction films, 60 minutes or longer, that meet the requirements listed in '1. General' - '1.3 Eligibility'.

### 2.3 Short Film Competition



Eligible for Short Film Competition are films 30 minutes or shorter, that meet the requirements listed in '1. General' - '1.3 Eligibility'.

## **2.4 Debut Spotlight**

Debut Spotlight presents 3 to 5 films selected by the festival committee from the Narrative Feature Competition and Feature-length Documentary Competition as the festival's highlight. The section is not open for submission. The films shall be the 1<sup>st</sup> directorial work of the director presented in world premiere or, in consultation with the festival, at least in mainland China premiere at FIRST IFF. No awards will be presented by the Jury Committee to the films in this section. Whether a film is selected into Debut Spotlight will not affect its award-judging process in the competition it belongs.

## **2.5 Film Screening**

Film Screening presents films selected by the festival committee from the Short Film Competition Pre-selection. The section is not open for submission. No awards will be presented by the Jury Committee to the films in this section. Whether a film is selected into Film Screening will not affect its award-judging process in the competition it belongs.

## **3. Awards**

### **3.1 Official Awards**

[Best Narrative Feature]

[Best Director]



[Best Performance]

[Best Artistic Originality]

[Best Screenplay]

[Best Documentary]

[Spirit of Freedom]

[Grand Jury Prize]

[Best Short Film]

[Best Animated Short Film]

### 3.2 Official Award Introduction

#### 1) Award presented to films (5 awards):

Award presented to films will be decided by the jury among shortlist films and honor the entire filmmaking ensemble of the film.

##### **[Best Narrative Feature]**

Selected among films in Narrative Feature Competition to honor the film that shows creativity in the narrative, cinematic language, and aesthetic form. The award is presented with a trophy and an award certificate.

##### **[Best Documentary]**

Selected among films in Feature-length Documentary Competition to honor the non-fiction work with archival value, humanistic concern, and the ability to reflect on the social context while being unbiased. The award is presented with a trophy, an award certificate, and a prize bonus of RMB50,000 (to the director).

##### **[Grand Jury Prize]**

Selected among films in the Narrative Feature Competition to honor the film that explores the frontier and shows foresight in the scope of sinophone cinema. The award is presented with a trophy and an award certificate.



### **[Best Short Film]**

Selected among live action films in Short Film Competition to honor the film that presents unlimited possibility within limited time span and deals with cinematic elements in a creative manner. The award is presented with a trophy and an award certificate.

### **[Best Animated Short Film]**

Selected among animated films in Short Film Competition to honor the film that explores the language of animation within limited time span and expands the aesthetic paradigm of animation with creativity. The award is presented with a trophy and an award certificate.

## **2) Award presented to individuals (5 awards):**

Award presented to films will be decided by the jury among shortlist films and honor the individual contributors of the films.

### **[Best Director]**

Selected among films in the Narrative Feature Competition to honor the filmmaker with outstanding sense as a director and shows a perfect combination of personal experience with cinema practice. The award is presented with a trophy and an award certificate.

### **[Best Screenplay]**

Selected among films in Narrative Feature Competition to honor the screenwriter who shows extraordinary ability and skills of writing that creatively





and effectively combines literariness and cinematic language together. The award is presented with a trophy and an award certificate.

**[Best Performance]**

Selected among the leading actor/actress from films in Narrative Feature Competition to honor the individual's outstanding performance in the conveyance of the character's charisma. The award is presented with a trophy and an award certificate.

**[Best Artistic Originality]**

Selected among films in Narrative Feature Competition and Feature-length Documentary Competition to honor the filmmaker who has made vital contribution or breakthrough in the field of cinematography, music, editing, sound, and production design. The award is presented with a trophy and an award certificate.

**[Spirit of Freedom]**

Presented to film in Narrative Feature Competition and Feature-length Documentary Competition with avant-garde aesthetics, this award honors the self-consciousness, culture value and the combination of independent thinking with cinematic practice. The award is presented with a trophy and an award certificate.

**3.3 Other Awards**

The festival committee reserves the right to add ad hoc awards, including awards



decided by independent juries, the audience, third-party film critic organizations, sponsors and so on. The decision maker, judging procedure, time and form of award presentation will be notify in due course. Applicants do not need to submit to other awards specifically. Whether a film is selected into other awards will not affect its award-judging process in the competition it belongs.

### **1) FIRST FRAME Award**

The award winner is decided by an independent jury decides from the nominated films, in recognition of the diverse images of women in the works of emerging filmmakers and to encourage creative depiction of female characters and themes. The winning film shall break through the shackles of traditional narratives and issues regarding femininity with rich cinematic vocabulary, creative observations and depictions that are closely connected to contemporary life. For details, please refer to the *17<sup>th</sup> FIRST International Film Festival FIRST FRAME Award Guidelines*.

### **1) Award of Pioneering**

The award winner is decided by an independent jury decides from the nominated short films. The award aims to encourage filmmakers to inherit and create the spirit of short films, to achieve the establishment and breakthrough of cinematic language, to focus on film works that make pioneering explorations in aesthetic forms and narrations, and to capture the sustainability in narrative value of the times. For details, please refer to the *17<sup>th</sup> FIRST International Film Festival Award of Pioneering Award Guidelines*.



### **3) Audience's Choice Award**

The festival committee select films from the Competition to constitute the Audience's Choice Award participation pool. The winner is decided by the votes cast after screenings during the festival and is endowed with a cash prize.

### **4) Outstanding Figure of the Year**

This Award is presented by the festival committee to a back-stage industry practitioner who proactively changes, leads, or pushes forward the filmmaking and industry environment for emerging filmmakers, independent and arthouse cinema.

## **4. Submission Instructions**

### **4.1 Deadlines**

The submission windows of the 17<sup>th</sup> FIRST International Film Festival are:

From 0:00 of January 1, 2023, to 24:00 of April 28, 2023 (UTC+8).

The registration fee varies according to chosen submission time. Please refer to '1.4 Submission and Registration Fee'.

The online submission, material delivery and registration fee payment should all be completed before the deadline for the film to be considered for competition.

Please take the extra time needed for shipment into consideration. The festival committee and juries are not obliged to review entries received after the deadline.

### **4.2 Submission Process and Required Materials**



The film should be submitted online through the FIRST IFF website: <https://www.firstfilm.org.cn/annual/main/competition> with the following materials:

**1) Preview Copy:**

To complete the submission FIRST IFF requires a preview copy of the film submitted in the following format:

- MOV or MP4 in H.264 encoded video file
- File size limited to 3G for feature-length films and 1G for short films
- Embedded Chinese and English subtitles required
- The only acceptable watermark is "FIRST Preview" on the upper right corner of the frame. Please do not add other watermarks in order for the jury to review the film properly.

The preview copy may be submitted in one of the following ways:

a. Uploading (recommended)

The file may be uploaded directly to the FIRST encoded server through the submission form.

b. By Post

Please send your film (in USB disk, hard disk, etc.) to the following address:

FIRST International Film Festival

Yard No.7, Huitong Office Park,

Yaojiayuan South Road,

100025 Beijing, China



Tel: 86-010-85564221

To guarantee the submission materials reach the festival committee in time, please use a trackable and signed delivery service. Please mark "no commercial value" and "cultural use only" on the package and mark a tax value of under 10 USD.

The submission materials will not be returned. All shipping and insurance costs covering the transport of films and press materials to the festival is at the expense of those presenting the films. The festival committee reserves the right to reject pay-on-delivery packages containing submission materials.

#### **4.3 Material Replacement**

Please be careful when filling in the online submission form, as the information will be used in the selection process. The applicant is fully responsible for the information provided. If replacement of information or material is needed after the submission, please contact [submission@firstfilm.org.cn](mailto:submission@firstfilm.org.cn). At the discretion of the festival, the film's submission materials can be replaced **ONLY ONCE** before the submission windows close.

#### **4.4 Work-in-Progress Version**

The festival accepts submission of working-in-process preview copy, which must be at least picture-locked (no adjustment in editing). The jury will review the film based on the version submitted with no replacement allowed. The preview copy



of the Work-in-Progress film must state clearly which part of the film is not complete at the beginning in the form of subtitles or intertitles (i.e. music yet to be replaced; no color grading etc.). If the film is selected, a screening version is required before July 2023.

#### **4.5 Copyright**

The applicant is liable for the originality of the film and must guarantee that the music, sound, archival footage, and texts are legally licensed or authorized by the right holders. For documentary footages, please make sure to obtain permission of the filmed individuals. Any legal disputes regarding copyright or filming permission are at the stake of the applicant. The festival committee reserves the right to reject the film for competition in the case of copyright infringement.

### **5. Selection Process**

The Pre-selection Jury and the Shortlist Jury will decide the Official Selection films and the Jury Committee will decide on the award winners. The juries will be appointed by the festival committee. No jury member may be involved professionally with the production or distribution of any film eligible for the award.

#### **5.1 Pre-selection Jury**

The Pre-selection Jury consists of the Narrative Feature Jury and the Short Film Jury, who will review the submitted titles in corresponding categories. The film



will be informed via email of the pre-selection result no later than late May, 2023.

The pre-selection results will not be publicly announced.

## **5.2 Shortlist Jury**

The Shortlist Jury will decide the titles in the Official Competition of FIRST International Film Festival, the nominees of FIRST FRAME Award and Award of Pioneering. Documentary Shortlist Jury will decide the titles of Feature-length Documentary independently. The selected films will be screened during the festival. The Official Selection will be announced before late June, 2023, and the nominees of FIRST FRAME Award and Award of Pioneering will be announced in early July, 2023. The applicant will be notified by email. The applicant must complete the official form.

## **5.3 Jury Committee**

The Jury Committee will decide the award winners among shortlisted films, and the award result will be announced on the Award Ceremony on July 31, 2023.

## **6. Selected Films**

### **6.1 Screening Copy**

Screening copy (standard DCP) of the selected film is required. Apart from sound mixing, color tuning and subtitles adjustment, the screening copy must be the same as the preview copy. No replacement during the Jury Committee review process is allowed. As a public platform aiming to promote new films and



filmmakers, FIRST IFF does not offer screening fees to its selected films.

## **6.2 Publicity Materials**

The entry information and materials of the selected films will be used on the festival brochure, website and online/offline promotional materials and shared with collaborating press. The festival is entitled to edit and use the information publicly. In case of incomplete information or materials, the applicant is requested to submit upon selection.

## **6.3 Filmmaker Participation**

The shortlisted film is preferably represented by the major cast and crew of the film, who should attend the festival screening, Q&As and other related events during the festival. The festival committee undertakes to provide travel and accommodation for these representatives in accordance with its hospitality regulations.

## **6.4 Premiere Status**

Once the film is selected, no further screenings that will affect the film's premiere status at FIRST are allowed.

## **6.5 Scheduling**

All selected films will have 2 public screenings and 2 exclusive screenings to the accredited professionals during the festival. The time, date and venue of the screenings are entirely at the discretion of the festival committee. The schedule is subject to the written notice of the festival committee.





## 6.6 Festival Laurels and Logo

The filmmakers, producers and distributors of all films selected undertake to make mention in their publicity and advertising materials of the selection of the film for FIRST IFF, by featuring the official laurels and logo which will be supplied by the festival after the film is selected or awarded. The laurels and logo must not under any circumstances be modified or altered without the prior permission of the festival.

\* Participation in FIRST International Film Festival by submitting the work and/or accepting FIRST's invitation implies acceptance of the rules and regulations by the filmmaker, producers, and rights holders. The festival committee reserves the right to amend the rules and regulations and will announce them in due course. The Chinese text of these Rules and Regulations is the authentic and binding version.