



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug 21, 2025

THE PACIFIC ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL CELEBRATES ITS THIRD YEAR IN NEW YORK CITY THIS FALL

Featuring 26 films from 11 countries, the festival looks to the future of Pacific Island filmmaking with a special focus on environmentalism.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK – [August 19, 2025] The Pacific Island Film Festival (PIFF) proudly unveils its 2025 Fall Festival lineup; a powerful celebration of boundary-pushing storytelling, including free, family-friendly screenings and motivating conversations about the current state and future of Pacific Island cinema.

From September 18-21, the 3rd annual festival will take over New York City with a diverse slate of Pacific Island Films.

Stimulating panels will feature special guests from **Sundance’s Indigenous Institute**, the **Smithsonian’s Native Cinema Showcase** and the **International Cultural Arts Network**.

*“Over the past ten months, Hollywood has brought Pacific Island storytelling centerstage with **Chief of War**, **Moana 2**, and a live-action **Lilo and Stitch**. For four days in September, we will bring the stories of these and many other amazing filmmakers to New York City!”* said Stacey Young, Executive Director of PIFF.

*“Supported by entities including the **The Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations** and New York’s **Coalition of Asian American Children and Families**, we are thrilled to open the doors and welcome everyone to experience Pacific Island storytelling at its finest. Spanning historical narratives, documentaries, family-friendly comedies, and riveting personal journeys, these stories do not just reflect an abundance of creativity. They reveal the future of film.”*

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

Pacific Island Film Festival

The 3rd Annual Pacific Island Film Festival returns with a vibrant and powerful showcase celebrating storytelling of the Pacific Island peoples. The festival opens on Thursday, September 18 with an inspiring evening dedicated to environmental storytelling and global progress, followed on Friday by an elegant “Dinner and a Movie” experience at the acclaimed modern Hawaiian restaurant **noreetuh**, where guests will enjoy an upscale meal before a special screening of **Tinā**, a standout New Zealand film garnering international acclaim. Saturday begins with a free family-friendly screening of **The**



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Mountain, a heartfelt New Zealand feature, at a special event at the **Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian**. The day continues with a provocative discussion on the future of Indigenous filmmaking, featuring voices from **Sundance's Indigenous Program, the Smithsonian's Native Cinema Showcase, 'Ohina Labs** and **the visionary Hawaiian filmmaking community**. That same day, the festival proudly presents over 20 films from across the Pacific—representing Guam, Fiji, Hawai'i, Aotearoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Samoa, Tokelau, and Tonga—offering an extraordinary look at the rich diversity and storytelling power of Oceania. The festival concludes with the **International Cultural Arts Network** on Sunday with a star-studded closing night, spotlighting the highly anticipated blockbuster **Chief of War**, followed by an in-depth discussion on the future of filmmaking in Hawai'i and the presentation of the **2025 PIFF Award winners** in a celebration of Pacific excellence in cinema.

[Thursday, September 18, 2025]: Opening Night

The Opening Celebration of the 3rd Annual Pacific Island Film Festival promises an unforgettable evening of cinematic storytelling and environmental advocacy at the beautiful **Judith O. Rubin Theater at Playwrights Horizons (416 West 42nd Street)**. Presented by **The Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations** the program will feature special screenings of **National Geographic: Pristine Seas** and **Oceanbone**—two powerful films that highlight the fragile beauty and urgent challenges facing our oceans and island communities. The evening will culminate in an engaging Q&A session with the filmmakers and representatives from various Pacific Island Missions, who have played a pivotal role in the recent landmark International Court of Justice decision on climate change.

National Geographic: Pristine Seas [2025]: Pristine Seas is a National Geographic Society program that works with local communities, Indigenous peoples, governments and other partners to study and protect our oceans. This film highlights the continuing efforts of Pristine Seas to support Pacific Island ocean conservation initiatives.

Oceanbone [2025]: Stolen ancestors lie in museum vaults, waiting to return home. *Oceanbone* is a poetic reckoning with history, confronting the colonial theft of Indigenous remains and spotlighting the urgent fight to bring them back.



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[Friday, September 19, 2025]: *Dinner and a Movie* with *noreetuh* and *We Were Dangerous*

One of the most anticipated highlights of this year's Pacific Island Film Festival is the intimate and lively "Dinner and a Movie" night—an evening designed to bring people together over incredible food and heartfelt storytelling. The night begins with a prix-fixe dinner at *noreetuh*, the Michelin-recommended East Village gem known for its inventive take on modern Hawaiian cuisine. Guests will enjoy a curated menu crafted by Chef Chung Chow, whose dishes reflect both island roots and fine-dining finesse, paired perfectly with the restaurant's award-winning wine list. After dinner, the group will take a short stroll to the theater for a screening of *We Were Dangerous* — a festival favorite and Winner of ImagineNative's Best Narrative Feature of 2025.

We Were Dangerous [2025]: Set in 1954 New Zealand, *We Were Dangerous* follows Nellie and Daisy, two delinquent girls attempting to escape their institution. After being caught, they are transferred to a remote island facility. There, they form a trio with Lou, a well-to-do newcomer, and together they challenge the authority of the strict Matron. As they rebel against a system, they find strength in their friendship, questioning faith and authority in a world that seeks to control them.

[Saturday, September 20th, 2025]: Free *Community Event* at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Indian

This year, our free-to-the-community event spotlights the family-friendly New Zealand film, *The Mountain*, at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. Following the screening a motivating and inspiring talk about the futures of Indigenous filmmaking across the world with visionary curators Adam Piron from Sundance, Cynthia Benitez, National Museum's of the American Indian's film and program manager , Gerard Elmore of 'Ohina Labs, and Creator and Writer of Chief of War Thomas Pa'a Sibbett.

The Mountain [2024]: This engrossing drama explores the journey of three young people as they seek solace and companionship under the watchful gaze of the Taranaki mountain.

[Saturday, September 20, 2025]: *Let 'Em Roll!* at Village East by Angelika

On Saturday, the Pacific Island Film Festival takes over the iconic Village East by Angelika with a dynamic showcase of over 20 films from across the Pacific, including Guam, Fiji, Hawai'i, Māori communities, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Samoa, Tokelau, and Tonga. The program features five powerful feature films spanning heartfelt documentaries, historical narratives, gripping dramas, and bold



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adventures—each offering a window into the lived experiences and vibrant cultures of Oceania. The shorts blocks represent a stunning collection that explores themes of artistic expression, dance, environmental connection, resilience, powerful women,

steadfast men, and healing through adversity. It's a cinematic journey of laughter, tears, and love—a night to be moved, inspired, and united in celebration of Pacific storytelling.

[Sunday, September 21st, 2025]: International Cultural Arts Networks: presents *The Power of Culture* featuring *Chief of War* and the **PIFF Awards Ceremony** at **Ascent Lounge**

The Pacific Island Film Festival ends in unforgettable style with our Closing Awards Ceremony and Gala, once-again held at the elegant **Ascent Lounge**, perched high above Columbus Circle. **Angela Laprete**, Co-founder of the **International Cultural Arts Network** (ICAN) and Producer *Chief of War* presents the FINALE episode with a conversation highlighting the creative forces shaping a new era of Indigenous cinema with **Thomas Pa'a Sibbett**, **Angela Laprete** and **Brandon Finn** moderated by **Hope King**.

Chief of War [2025] Apple TV's newest hard-hitting action drama that's making waves for its bold storytelling and authentic representation of Pacific history.

The evening will be capped with the announcement of the winners of the **PIFF 2025 Awards**. Stunningly designed and generously provided by **Native Woodworks LLC**, these awards honor outstanding talent and voices from across the Pacific. Closing the night is R&B sensation and soulful Mana Wāhine, musical guest **Keilana**.

With breathtaking views, cinematic excellence, and a room full of trailblazers, this is the perfect finale to a festival grounded in celebration, culture, and connection.

FULL PROGRAM & TICKETS

Full Program, Tickets & Passes: To review visit www.PIFFNYC.org.

Tickets for festival passes are currently on sale. Individual screening tickets will be available on sale beginning on September 1.



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Attendees are encouraged to secure their spots early as many events are expected to sell out.

We invite you to explore our additional programming on the afternoon and evening of Saturday, September 20, including:

Afi Afi [2024]: Sunset is a time to *tutu le afi* (light the fire) and prepare for the hosting of the *po ula* (night dancing of play and pleasure). The *po ula* was a passionate and erotic practice banned by the missionaries over 200 years ago. Fast-forward to 2024, we use

the medium of film to illuminate the *po* (night) and shed light on the *po ula* as a way of reframing the expression of Samoan femininity.

Ho'omau [2025]: *Ho'omau* is a short, hand-drawn animation that honors generational strength, ancestral love, and the resilience passed down through Hawaiian lineage.

Cherries [2025]: When two single ladies attend an orgy for the first time, they end up exposing more than they ever could have imagined.

Grace [2025]: Honolulu, 1959: Over a family dinner, two women hide their love for each other as one resists her impending marriage and the other her country's admission to the U.S.

Healing Through Hula [2025]: A film produced entirely by incarcerated people. Incarcerated men striving to reconnect to culture and reach their ceremonial Makahiki. Despite the toxic environment, ideals of American masculinity, and their personal struggles, will they succumb to the pressure or will they persevere and reach their zenith and celebrate Makahiki.

Ho'omau [2025]: *Ho'omau* is a hand-drawn short animation that honors generational strength, ancestral love, and the resilience passed down through Hawaiian lineage. As grief, identity, and connection intertwine, she learns that to carry her story forward is to continue theirs. *Ho'omau* — to persist, to perpetuate.

Kāinga Tupu [2025]: *Kāinga Tupu* brings attention to New Zealand's endangered forest parrot, the Kākāpō, as he tries to escape monsters that seem to be following him.

Kōkā [2024]: Māori elder Hamo and local delinquent Jo form an unlikely bond on a road trip. As they confront past traumas and each face their demons, their shared path becomes a journey of healing, community and reconciliation.

MĀHŪ [2025]: *A Trans-Pacific Love Letter* is a short documentary about an innovative theater production by master hula teacher, Kumu Hula Patrick Makuakāne, which aims to reclaim and celebrate the traditional place of honor and respect given to mähū (transgender) people.

Memory is a Missionary Position [2025]: A Pasifika femme dancer moves between two worlds with the narration of Kanaka 'Ōiwi poet No'ukahau'oli Revilla. By shifting between



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'āina (land) and the dark expansive landscape of cultural memory, she becomes a conduit for ancestral connection and resistance.

Nothing is Impossible: The Primanavia Story [2024]: With six weeks to prepare for the World Choir Games, the odds stacked up against the newly formed Fijian choir PRIMANAVIA seem impossible to overcome. What would unfold is a triumphant story of faith, love of music and relentless drive to prove that anything is possible.

Oceanbone [2025]: Stolen ancestors lie in museum vaults, waiting to return home. Oceanbone is a poetic reckoning with history, confronting the colonial theft of Indigenous remains and the urgent fight to bring them back.

Oriental Ornamental [2024]: This short, three-part film follows a subject through three deprogramming therapy sessions and three core memories. Each damaging narrative forced upon us is addressed to us as a collective. Through radical honesty, we come to a reckoning.

Palau, An Ocean Inheritance [2024]: Palau, An Ocean Inheritance transports viewers to the incredible islands of Palau, where ancient legends, cultural connections, and unparalleled marine biodiversity converge. This documentary celebrates Palau's natural wonders, from vibrant coral ecosystems to the majestic species that call these waters home.

Puti [2024]: A teenage girl living in poverty in an urban city in New Zealand loses her innocence while making the ultimate sacrifice to help her family.

St. Albert's Park [2024]: 23 year-old James returns home after completing his university degree, but finds himself overwhelmed by conflicting memories from his past while attempting to find solace at his old childhood hangout.

Something to Call Our Own [2025]: A compelling documentary that delves into the origins, obstacles, and evolution of modern CHamoru dance. From the small island of Guam to the international stage of FestPAC, the documentary showcases the inspiring story of cultural revival, resilience, and the ongoing journey to reclaim and preserve a tradition that belongs to the CHamoru people.

Stranger Brother [2024]: When Adam, a self absorbed and lonely millennial, wakes to find his estranged half-brother on his footsteps one morning, he must face the family he's been running away from.

Testimony [2022]: Forty-five years after his parents were wrongfully imprisoned for overstaying, a Tongan New Zealander finally admits the painful truth behind what really happened to his family during the Dawn Raids.

The Arrangements [2025]: The Arrangements depicts the resilience of youth in response to the death of another young person, which has become common in the public housing community of Kamehameha IV, in Kalihi, urban Honolulu.



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The Forgotten Pacific [2024]: Take a journey into the hearts of our Pacific people who stand on the frontline of the climate crisis. Presented by our young Pacific climate warrior, Suluafi Brianna Fruean, this documentary offers a bold and inspiring look into how five Pacific Island communities (Fiji, Samoa, Tuvalu, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Vanuatu) are using indigenous knowledge in the modern day fight to adapt, rebuild and save their islands from climate change.

The Mountain [2023]: Explores the journey of three young people as they seek solace under the watchful gaze of the Taranaki mountain and companionship in the spirit of adventure.

The Rain [2025]: The Rain features a narrated poem written by myself about living in the moment like the birds do day to day. Different types of birds are animated along to the poem.

The Whispering Glass [2024]: When Tokelauan-Australian woman Nifo's mother dies suddenly, she is faced with the task of packing up her Mt Druitt home. Nifo and her sisters find that not all things can just be packed away; some things have to be set free.

Tina [2024]: Still mourning the death of her daughter, Mareta Percival reluctantly takes a substitute teaching role at an elite private school. She soon draws on the musical traditions of her Samoan roots to form a rebellious, soulful student choir, rekindling connection, identity and healing across generations.

Vaha'a [2025]: After his mother's death, a boxer struggles with grief and a strained relationship with his father, who coaches him in the ring but remains distant outside of it, forcing him to fight both opponents and inner demons.

We were Dangerous [2024]: Nellie, Daisy and Lou form a rebellious alliance at a 1954 island institution for delinquent girls. Their friendship empowers them against the system until the matron's tactics threaten their bond.

Broken down by topic, our programming blocks are:

Art

Afi Afi
Ho'omau
Memory is a Missionary Position
Oriental Ornamental

Drama/Loss

Picking Crew
Puti
St. Albert's Park
The Arrangements
Whispering Glass

Family Relations

Dance

Mahu
Something to Call our Own

Environmental

Kainga Tupu
Palau, An Ocean Inheritance
The Forgotten Pacific
The Rain

Mana Wahine



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Vaha'a
Stranger, Brother
Koka

Cherries
Grace
We Were Dangerous

Through Adversity
Healing Through Hula
Nothing is Impossible
Testimony

PIFF MISSION

The Pacific Island Film Festival (PIFF) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to presenting and amplifying Pacific Island cinema and storytelling in New York City.

ABOUT THE PACIFIC ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL

The Pacific Island Film Festival (PIFF), is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting and highlighting the experiences of the Polynesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian people through film screenings, live performances, and panels throughout the year and at the annual fall film festival.

Founded in 2023 as the Halawai Film Festival, and in 2024 transitioned to the Pacific Island Film Festival, PIFF is a volunteer-run initiative hosting Pacific Island films in some of the most iconic locations in New York City. Through community collaboration, strategic partnerships, and a lot of elbow grease, PIFF strives to create a place for Pacific Island filmmakers in New York City and globally.