

FINE CUT

This festival is a tribute to Fine Cut founder, Jack Larson. In the late 1990's, actor, librettist, screenwriter and producer Jack Larson had the idea of creating a student film series that would provide talented students with the much-needed opportunity to have their short films selected for television broadcast. Mr. Larson understood how difficult it was for young filmmakers to get broad exposure for their work because, typically, student work is only seen at special screenings and film festivals. Mr. Larson thought that public television was an excellent platform for providing critical visibility to emerging filmmakers. PBS SoCal shares Mr. Larson's enthusiasm for showcasing local student filmmaking and 25 years later, *Fine Cut* continues to be a flagship program for Southern California's flagship PBS organization.

SUBMITTING TO THE 2026 FINE CUT FESTIVAL OF FILMS

1) WHEN ARE THE SUBMISSION DEADLINES AND WHAT ARE THE FEES?

SUBMISSION OPENS:

March 30, 2026
NO ENTRY FEE

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

June 3, 2026

These are the dates that Films and Trailers (as defined below) for the submitted Film and Trailer must be submitted on FilmFreeway.com. We encourage you to submit as early as possible!

The filmmaker of the submitted Film and Trailer must be enrolled or have been enrolled in a Southern California, College or University as of January 2024 to present.

The total running time of Any Film submitted into Fine Cut for consideration must not to exceed 25 minutes (00:25:00) inclusive of any Film credits.

Each submitted Film must be also include a trailer for the submitted Film ("Trailer"), must be in a digital file, and must not exceed a total running time of a thirty seconds (00:00:30).

2) WHAT ARE THE FESTIVAL PROGRAM CATEGORIES AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR EACH?

There are three (3) film categories for Fine Cut; Animation, Documentary, and Scripted.

All Films selected as a category finalist into Fine Cut will be included as part of one (1) of six (6) one-hour broadcast episodes. All Films selected as a category finalist in Fine Cut will be eligible for awards in the Competition. There are no premiere or prior screening restrictions for short films. All Films selected as a category finalist will be part of the broadcast pending determination they comply with all PBS SoCal and FCC guidelines, rules and regulations.

The winning Film in each Category (i.e., **Animation**, **Documentary** and **Scripted**) will receive a prize package to be determined.

Films that are selected to be in one of these three (3) program categories are eligible for Awards in their respective sections:

JACK LARSON SPOTLIGHT AWARD

All finalist Films in the Animation, Documentary and Scripted categories will compete against one another for the **Jack Larson Southern California Student Filmmaker Award**.

3) WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED FORMAT FOR SUBMISSION?

All Films and Trailers must be submitted via Film Freeway located at <https://filmfreeway.com/festival/FineCut>.

4) DO YOU ACCEPT SUBMISSIONS ON VHS OR ANY OTHER FORMAT?

No. All Films and Trailers must be submitted via the secure online screener system, Film Freeway located at <https://filmfreeway.com/festival/FineCut>.

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5) WHY DON'T YOU ACCEPT SUBMISSIONS ON BLU-RAY?

Although we have accepted both Blu-Ray and HD-DVD formats in the past, it has proven to be more efficient to use to one standardized format for viewing submitted Films.

6) IF MY FILM and/or TRAILER INCLUDES NON-ENGLISH DIALOGUE, DO YOU REQUIRE ENGLISH SUBTITLES?

We require that all Films and Trailers that contain significant non-English dialogue include on-screen English subtitles, and not captions supplied by a video streaming service such as Vimeo. A translated list of dialogue on paper is not sufficient. If your Film is mostly in English and you intend to intentionally leave out subtitles for any non-English dialogue included in the Film and/or Trailer, you do not need to provide subtitles for those particular sections.

7) WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE WITH MY SUBMISSION?

After you have completed the Film Freeway profile, submit a single copy of your Film and for promotional purposes only the Trailer. In an effort to cut down on waste, we ask that you do not send printed press or promotional materials to us.

8) HOW OLD CAN MY FILM BE AND STILL QUALIFY FOR SUBMISSION?

Any Film submitted for 2026 Festival consideration must have been completed in either 2024 or 2025. If your Film was completed prior to 2024, it is not eligible for submission. If your Film's production took place prior to 2024 but your final cut was not completed until 2024 or 2025, your Film is eligible.

9) MY FILM WAS NOT ACCEPTED IN THE PAST. CAN I RE-SUBMIT?

No, you may not re-submit.

10) CAN I SUBMIT A NEWER CUT OF MY FILM AFTER I'VE ALREADY SUBMITTED AN EARLIER VERSION?

In the event that the filmmaker remits an updated version of the Film to PBS SoCal after having submitted a previous version of the Film to PBS SoCal during the same calendar year, PBS SoCal is under no obligation to view any or all of the updated version. If you log into your Film Freeway account and your Film has not been marked as received, please contact us at finecut@pbssocal.org before you send another copy.

WE WILL ONLY VIEW THE FIRST CUT OF YOUR FILM THAT WE RECEIVE!

11) DO I REALLY HAVE TO REGISTER MY FILM ONLINE?

All submissions must be issued a unique tracking number in order to be recognized by our system. The only way to get a Tracking Number is to complete the online profile at Film Freeway, <https://filmfreeway.com/festival/FineCut>. Unregistered submissions will not be viewed. If you are having trouble with the online profile, please e-mail us at finecut@pmsgocal.org and we will be glad to help guide you through the process.

12) AM I REQUIRED TO OBTAIN RIGHTS CLEARANCE FOR MUSIC OR OTHER COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL INCLUDED IN MY FILM?

You must be the original author and copyright owner of the submitted Film and Trailer and have the sole authority and/or have obtained the legal authority from any 3rd party whose material or performance is incorporated in your submission, sufficient to grant the permissions and rights granted herein, and that no other permission, from any other party, is required to grant such rights. It is your sole responsibility to secure permission from the copyright, privacy, publicity, or trademark rights holder which right is incorporated in your submission, whether it is music, stock footage, or any other elements that could otherwise violate the rights of any third party. If you are accepted into the Festival you must sign a waiver stating that materials used in the Film and the accompanying Trailer do not violate any existing right of publicity, privacy right, copyright, trademark or other intellectual property right. Quite often, rights holders offer reduced rates for festival films, so you should contact them directly to avoid any possible third-party rights infringements.

13) DO I NEED TO MEET A MINIMUM AGE REQUIREMENT IN ORDER TO SUBMIT A FILM?

You must be 18 or older to submit a Film to Fine Cut.

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14) HOW MANY FILMS MAY I SUBMIT?

You may submit only one (1) Film into Fine Cut. If you submit more than one (1) Film we will only look at the first Film submitted based on the timestamp of the Film submission.

15) WHAT IF MY CONTACT INFORMATION OR ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT MY SUBMISSION CHANGES AFTER I'VE COMPLETED THE FILM FREEWAY PROFILE?

You may log into your account at Film Freeway at any time to update or revise your profile. We will use the public contact information from your Film Freeway profile to contact you regarding problems with your film submission and to notify you of your acceptance status, so please ensure that this information is up-to-date.

16) WHEN WILL I FIND OUT IF MY FILM WAS SELECTED?

We will contact you via e-mail August 3, 2026, using the contact information provided in your Film Freeway profile. Please make sure that the e-mail address you provided on your Film Freeway profile is current, correct, and operational. If your e-mail address changes after you've completed your Film Freeway profile, please log into your account and update it. We will not be held responsible for any failed delivery of notification! If you haven't heard from us by August 10th, please contact us at finecut@pmgsocal.org for an official notification.

17) IF MY FILM IS ACCEPTED, WHAT PROJECTION FORMATS DO YOU ACCEPT?

Media Based Material

XDcam Mpeg HD422 (50Mbps or 35Mbps), Frame rate 59.94i, Aspect 1920x1080, Audio 24bit 48kHz, 2ch stereo or 2ch dual mono, and Drop Frame timecode.

HDcam Frame rate 59.94i, Aspect 1920x1080, Audio 24bit 48kHz, 2ch stereo or 2ch dual mono, and Drop Frame timecode.

File Based Material

Our file based system uses the Avid Codec. (Final Cut Pro users should download the free Avid QuickTime Codecs from Avid.com)

Acceptable Avid Codecs are: Avid MPEG2 50mbit, Avid DNxHD145, Avid HD DV50.

Frame rate 59.94i, Aspect 1920x1080, Audio 24bit 48kHz, 2ch stereo or 2ch dual mono, NTSC, and Drop Frame timecode.

Avid Meridien 2:1 is acceptable only for anamorphic material.

Broadcast ready still images will be 1920x1080, 72dpi, RGB. Acceptable formats are PSD, TIFF, TARGA, and JPG.

File based delivery will be through Sony Ci Media Cloud.

18) YOU DON'T ACTUALLY WATCH ALL OF THESE SUBMISSIONS, RIGHT?

We depend on new talent and new filmmakers to uphold our mission as a Festival. If we didn't watch the films submitted to us, we would miss out on so many new works of independent film. If your Film is received prior to the expiration of the submission period (i.e., June 3, 2026) and there are no playability issues, your Film will be treated exactly the same as all other Films submitted to us for consideration.

19) IF MY FILM IS NOT CHOSEN, MAY I SPEAK WITH A PROGRAMMER FOR NOTES OR FEEDBACK?

Unfortunately, no. With a multitude of Film submissions expected, it simply isn't possible for us to correspond with each applicant individually. Don't be discouraged if your Film isn't accepted—we view far more worthy films each year than we have room to play.

20) WHEN DOES THE 2026 FINE CUT FESTIVAL OF FILMS TAKE PLACE?

The event will take place prior to the series launch in September of 2026, with the exact date to be determined at a later date. We hope to see you there!