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**FILM INDEPENDENT MOVES TO GENDER-NEUTRAL ACTING CATEGORIES AND  
INCREASED BUDGET CAPS FOR THE 2023 SPIRIT AWARDS**

**CEREMONY TO TAKE PLACE ON MARCH 4, 2023**

**– Call for Submissions Now Open –**

LOS ANGELES (August 23, 2022) – Film Independent announced today a move to gender-neutral acting categories for the 2023 Spirit Awards. The acting categories encompass both film and television. In response to the rising cost of production, the organization also announced that the budget cap for eligible films has increased to \$30 million, with the budget cap for the beloved John Cassavetes Award now \$1 million. The Spirit Awards will be held on March 4, 2023. Submissions are now open.

“We’re thrilled to join the other festivals and award shows that are already moving to celebrate great acting without reference to gender. We’re also happy to welcome non-binary performers into the Spirit Awards without forcing them to choose to identify as male or female,” said Film Independent President Josh Welsh. “Additionally, it has been a long time since we substantially increased the budget limit for eligibility. This new cap allows us to continue to celebrate the same breadth of work that we have in the past.”

Honoring a long-standing commitment to inclusivity and representation, Film Independent is the most recent organization to implement non-gendered awards. Other awards to embrace non-gendered categories include The Grammys, The Gotham Awards, The British Independent Film Awards, and the MTV Movie & TV Awards. No longer defined by gender, awards in the lead and supporting film acting categories will instead be known as Best Lead Performance and Best

Supporting Performance. Awards in the television acting categories will similarly be known as Best Lead Performance and Best Supporting Performance in a New Scripted Series.

Other category updates include new awards for Best Breakthrough Performance (film) and Best Supporting Performance in a New Scripted Series (television). All performance categories, excluding Breakthrough Performance, will feature up to ten nominees. The modified performance categories are as follows:

#### **SPIRIT AWARDS PERFORMANCE CATEGORIES – FILM**

- Best Lead Performance (10 nominees)
- Best Supporting Performance (10 nominees)
- Best Breakthrough Performance (5 nominees) *\*new award*

#### **SPIRIT AWARDS PERFORMANCE CATEGORIES – TELEVISION**

- Best Lead Performance in a New Scripted Series (10 nominees)
- Best Supporting Performance in a New Scripted Series (10 nominees) *\*new award*

Film Independent has also increased the budget cap for eligible films to \$30 million to account for the rising cost of production. Over the years, the budget cap has increased incrementally from \$20 million in 2006 to \$22.5 million in 2019. The budget cap for The John Cassavetes Award, presented to a film's writer, director and producer, also increased from \$500K to \$1 million.

In response to the continuing effects of COVID on filmmakers and the industry, Film Independent is once again waiving the theatrical run typically required for eligibility, ensuring more opportunities for independent filmmakers to be recognized and celebrated.

The Spirit Awards is the primary fundraiser for Film Independent's year-round programs, which help cultivate the careers of emerging filmmakers and promote inclusion in the industry. Film nominations for the 2023 Spirit Awards will be announced virtually on November 22, 2022. Television nominations will be announced on December 13, 2022. The ceremony will take place on March 4, 2023.

#### **SPIRIT AWARDS SUBMISSIONS DEADLINES – FILM**

- Early Deadline is September 6
- Regular Deadline is September 20
- Final Deadline is October 4
- Extended Deadline for Arts Circle and Filmmaker Pro Members is October 7

#### **SPIRIT AWARDS SUBMISSIONS DEADLINES – TELEVISION**

- Regular Deadline is September 20
- Final Deadline is October 4
- Extended Deadline for Arts Circle and Filmmaker Pro Members is October 7

The full list of submission guidelines and forms can be found at [spiritawards.com](https://spiritawards.com).

Film Independent Members comprise the exclusive voting body which determines the winners of the Film Independent Spirit Awards. Members are filmmakers, film industry leaders, and film lovers. Anyone passionate about film can join at [filmindependent.org/join](https://filmindependent.org/join) by December 20, 2022 to be eligible to vote for the winners of the 2023 Spirit Awards and receive full nominee screening privileges. To learn more about voting and membership, please contact Evan Ward-Henninger at [eward-henninger@filmindependent.org](mailto:eward-henninger@filmindependent.org).

For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Kate Walker D'Angelo at [kwalker@filmindependent.org](mailto:kwalker@filmindependent.org).

To learn more about attending the Spirit Awards and supporting Film Independent, please contact Jennifer Murby at [jmurby@filmindependent.org](mailto:jmurby@filmindependent.org).

## **ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT**

Film Independent is the nonprofit arts organization that champions creative independence in visual storytelling and supports a community of artists who embody diversity, innovation and uniqueness of vision. Film Independent helps filmmakers make their movies, builds an audience for their projects and works to diversify the film industry. Film Independent's Board of Directors, filmmakers, Staff and constituents are comprised of an inclusive community of individuals across ability, age, ethnicity, gender, race and sexual orientation. Anyone passionate about film can become a Member, whether you are a filmmaker, industry professional or a film lover.

In addition to producing the Spirit Awards, the organization supports creative professionals with Artist Development programs, grants and labs. Signature mentorship program Project Involve fosters the careers of talented filmmakers from underrepresented communities. Robust Education events and workshops equip filmmakers of all ages and experience levels with tools and resources. Global Media Makers, a cultural exchange program produced in partnership with the U.S. Department of State, provides career-building opportunities for international film professionals. And year-round screening series Film Independent Presents delivers monthly, unique cinematic experiences to Members in Los Angeles and beyond.

The winners of the Film Independent Spirit Awards are voted upon by Film Independent Members. Membership is open to the public.

For more information or to become a Member, visit [www.filmindependent.org](https://www.filmindependent.org).

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