



WOMEN IN FILM & TELEVISION NZ

Awards 2026

THURSDAY 12 MARCH @ ST MATTHEW-IN-THE-CITY



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WIFT NZ AWARDS 2026 WINNERS

Women In Film & Television (WIFT NZ) is delighted to announce the recipients for the 11 award categories of the WIFT NZ Awards 2026, held tonight at St Matthew-in-the-City, Auckland.

SAE Award for Outstanding Newcomer

Presented by Dr Suzette Major, Director, SAE Institute

To Kura Turuwhenua who produces and directs her own comedic short films. Her hilarious take on the world has led to her going viral multiple times on both TikTok and Instagram.

Hinterland Woman to Watch Award

Presented by Sharon Menzies, Managing Director, Hinterland

To Ve'a Mafile'o – an award-winning Tongan filmmaker whose work bridges art, drama, documentary and social impact. Her dramatic short film "Lea Tupu'anga / Mother Tongue" was selected from 17,000 submissions for the Sundance Film Festival and her feature-length documentary "For My Father's Kingdom" debuted at Berlin.

South Pacific Pictures Award for Achievement in Film

Presented by Sally Campbell, Head of Production, South Pacific Pictures

To Cass Avery whose documentary "Prime Minister" wasn't just selected for Sundance, it went on to win the coveted Audience Award for World Cinema Documentary and grossed over a million dollars at the NZ box office.

Perpetual Entertainment Entrepreneurship Award

Presented by Vicky Keogh, Managing Director and Executive Producer, Perpetual Entertainment New Zealand

To Sharlene George – As a global CEO and founding partner of Sweetshop Films – which now has six global offices – her impact on the screen industry is profound, both in terms of the stories she champions and brings to the screen, and in the pipeline of careers she nurtures.

Images & Sound Award for Success in Television and Digital

Presented by Narelle Ahrens, Foley Artist at Images and Sound

To Robyn Malcolm and Dianne Taylor for internationally acclaimed television series "After the Party" which was a sensation and a triumph for these two prodigiously talented women who personify the power of female storytelling.

Professional Lighting Services Award for Unsung Heroine of the New Zealand Screen Industry

Presented by Ruthe Kenderdine, Managing Director, Professional Lighting Services

To Michelle Turner, a line producer extraordinaire and an absolute industry stalwart, Michelle's expertise has been crucial to the success of an enormous swathe of projects.

Queenstown Camera Company Craft Award

Presented by Brett Mills, Managing Director, Queenstown Camera Company

To Sophie Lloyd, a highly skilled gaffer who not only brings world-class technical precision but her own distinctive creative voice to every project. Her credits include "After the Party" and "The Rule of Jenny Pen", and for her recent trailblazing work on "Went Up The Hill" she assembled a full lighting crew comprised entirely of women.

Wētā FX Creative Technology Award

Presented by Dame Gaylene Preston

To Jo Davison – a trailblazing creative VFX Supervisor, Jo's cinematic C.V. is a phenomenon in itself with credits on some of the biggest global hits of the last two decades: "Superman", "Avatar", "Iron Man 3", "The Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3", "The Hobbit" trilogy and "Thor: Love and Thunder".

Te Māngai Pāho Te Reo Māori Champion Award

Presented by Nadia Marsh, Hautū Te Hua Waihanga, Te Māngai Pāho

To Viv Wigby-Ngātai who, devoted to the power of Māori stories and storytellers, very deliberately chooses to support Māori productions. Her impressive career began with award-winning reo Māori shows "Tūmeke" and "Pūkana", moving through the decades bringing to life programmes "Head High", "Ahikāroa" and many more.

Sky Award for Moana Excellence in the Screen industry

Presented by Juliet Peterson, Chief Business Officer, Sky

To Lisa Taouma – leading the way with her pioneering Pasifika show "Fresh", Lisa continues to build a distinct and impressive catalogue of digital content amassed on "The Coconet TV". Lisa lives and breathes her commitment to showcasing the voices of Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa.

Great Southern Film & Television Award for Outstanding Contribution to the New Zealand Screen Industry

Presented by Phil Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Great Southern Film & Television

To Fiona Copland – producer Fiona Copland's body of work spans arts documentaries, TV series and feature films. Her most recent project, the acclaimed stop-motion children's programme "Kiri & Lou", has earned extraordinary international recognition, including a BAFTA nomination and a Rockie Award from the Banff World Media Festival. With the television series continuing to delight audiences worldwide and a "Kiri & Lou" movie out soon, Copland's work affirms her standing as one of New Zealand's leading producers.

ENDS/...

(Notes continued...)

NOTES FOR THE EDITOR:

1. The WIFT NZ Awards were established in 2004 to recognise, celebrate and encourage the achievements of women in film, television and digital media.
2. Finalists were decided by a panel of Jill Macnab (Chair), Kath Graham, Leanne Pooley, Kathleen Anderson, Jasmin McSweeney, Ngaire Fuata, Morgan Leigh Stewart, Beck Veitch and Anna Canton with input from the various category sponsors.
3. Previous award recipients include Niki Caro, Ngila Dickson, Robyn Malcolm, Rachel Lang, Mihingarangi Forbes, Janine Morrell-Gunn, Rose Matafeo, Robin Scholes, Jane Wrightson, Stacey Morrison and Kelly Martin.
4. The event was MC'd by Kate Rodger, with a surprise performance by Tinā star Antonia Eaton, accompanied by Brooke Singer of French for Rabbits.
5. The WIFT Awards are supported by **NZ On Air**, the various category sponsors, and FAT Lighting.
6. WIFT NZ receives operating grants from the New Zealand Film Commission and Foundation North.
7. The full list of finalists is:

Hinterland Woman to Watch Award

Rosie Hole
Annabel Kean
Ve'a Mafile'o

Images & Sound Award for Success in Television and Digital

Rachel Fawcett
Robyn Grace
Robyn Malcolm and Dianne Taylor

Perpetual Entertainment Entrepreneurship Award

Tracey Cochrane
Sharlene George
Lisa Taouma

Professional Lighting Services Award for Unsung Heroine of the New Zealand Screen Industry

Sarah Cull
Michelle Turner
Viv Winter

Queenstown Camera Company Craft Award

Sophie Lloyd
Maria Ines Manchego NZCS
Dayna Pomare

SAE Award for Outstanding Newcomer

Amanda Jane Robinson
Sarah Ryan
Kura Turuwhenua

SKY Award for Moana Excellence in the Screen Industry

Sandra Kailahi
Anapela Polata'ivao
Lisa Taouma

South Pacific Pictures Award for Achievement in Film

Cass Avery
Anapela Polata'ivao
Vicky Pope

Te Māngai Pāho Te Reo Māori Champion Award

Kirstin Te Wao-Edmonds
Tweedie Waititi
Viv Wigby-Ngātai

Wētā FX Creative Technology Award

Shweta Bhatnagar
Jo Davison
Stefanie Ng

The judges determined that there should be only one recipient to be announced at the Awards ceremony for the **Great Southern Film & Television Award for Outstanding Contribution to the New Zealand Screen Industry.**