

Q&A: Rose Anderson, NYF executive director

In this in-depth Q&A with Rose Anderson, NYF Television & Film Awards executive director, she looks at (among other issues) what makes the Awards what they are, how they impact on the sectors they cover and why it reflects its 'one world' approach.



1. New York Festivals [Television & Film Awards](#) receives entries from over 50 countries, to what do you attribute the global appeal and how does the competition continue to be relevant to international content creators?

We want to honour the very best TV and film being created today. Broadcast, online, exhibition - we welcome all platforms. I think our entrants appreciate that kind of universal approach. There are no geographical boundaries for talent and innovation so we have no boundaries in our entry process. Our entrants come from hundreds of production companies around the globe and they embody the wide spectrum of content being made today.

The world-wide scope of the competition's field is very appealing to our entrants - many of whom are internationally prominent brands like CNN, ESPN, HBO, ITV, BBC, PBS, ZDF, NBC, FOX, RTHK, Televisa, Canal Plus, Discovery, Fuji TV, and National Geographic. As non-domestic syndication rights opportunities have become even more important these days, this kind of broad exposure becomes more valuable to content creators. Many awards competitions are national in scope, are by invitation-only, or have other restrictions limiting eligibility. Our rules make it clear: one world, one competition, one show.

Consider the documentary field. Today, although there are fewer and fewer local venues for this type of programming, there is an enormous amount of significant content being produced - so award recognition is very important for filmmakers either for clearance or funding for future projects. NYF has over two dozen documentary categories - among the 2013 medals winners were world leaders like Testimony Films, Bunim-Murray, Florentine Films, and PBS. NYF's medal-winning documentaries covered a wide variety of subjects noteworthy for their points of view and impassioned story-telling:

Brooklyn Castle (PDA); Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide (Show of Force); Exposure: The Other Side of Jimmy Savile (ITV Studio); The World According to Lance (ABC Australia); The Great Flight (KNN); In My Lifetime (PBS) are just a few that come to mind.

In addition earning Gold, Silver and Bronze World Medals, entrants are considered for Grand Trophy honours - the "Best in Show"- recognising the highest scores from Grand Jury and showing a true mastery of the form. If we review the three 2013 Grand Trophy winners you'll see what I mean:

Opening Ceremony of the Games of the XXX Olympiad (IOC/LOCOG/OBS/Done and Dusted/YLE) on June 27th 2012, London opened the 30th Olympic Games. Directed by Hamish Hamilton and Danny Boyle, this Special Event has become one of the most watched programs in history with an estimated 1 billion viewers worldwide.

Hatfields & McCoys (History) Led by an all-star cast including Kevin Costner and Bill Paxton, the three part mini-series chronicles the story of a legendary family feud.

Paul Simon's Graceland Journey: Under African Skies (A&E) Directed by Joe Berlinger, the documentary travels back to South Africa for the 25th anniversary of Simon's historic Graceland album to reunite with the original band and to explore the story of the turbulent birth of the album.

Our agenda is simple - to celebrate the achievements of the many talented men and women who make up the worldwide creative community.

2. How has the content creation landscape evolved since you've been at the helm?

These are very interesting times for content creators - many say that we are in another Golden Age. Without a doubt, platform expansion has encouraged new types of programming very popular with new audiences who are viewing them in new ways - we hear a lot about second screens, cord-cutting, millennial versus boomer behaviour, big live events as must-see and series binge viewing as VOD. Online content is highly produced with bold-faced names on both sides of the camera - for example, in 2013, NYF's Grand Jury awarded medals to Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee (Sony Pictures Television/ Crackle), Fresh Guacamole By PES (Showtime), WIGS" (YouTube), Early Cuts Dexter (Showtime), Temps mort / Time out (Societe Radio-Canada /Productions Babel), The Dalai Lama at St. Paul's (CTN Communications/The John Templeton Foundation), and Memorable Moments. The Olympics. (Yahoo! Studios). One aspect hasn't changed at all - the value of excellence.

3. What new categories have you unveiled this year and will you explain your strategy for launching new categories?

The TV and film industries are specially attuned to innovation and that means new formats for storytelling that engages viewers. Here at NYF, we want to continue to be responsive to global creative trends and make sure that the outliers and risk-takers are being recognised. We stay in touch with our advisory board and grand jury members and thought leaders to keep fresh ideas in the forefront of NYF's dashboard.

Each year, we update some [categories](#) and create new ones - it is an organic ecosystem. New categories in 2014 include: Best Host, Best Screenplay, Best Non-fiction Series, Corporate Social Responsibility, Business & Finance documentary, Human Concerns documentary, Legal Issues documentary, Financial & Legal Reporting, and Production Design/Graphic Design for Promos.

Last year, medal recipients in our new categories included Julia Stiles (WIGS), Troian Bellisario (WIGS), and Robert Taylor (Longmire), for their performances; The Fabric Of The Cosmos: What is Space? (Nova/PBS/Pixeldust) and You, Planet - An Exploration in 3D (Terra Mater) for Special Visual Effects; Exposure: The Other Side of Jimmy Savile(ITV) for Current Affairs; The Resurrection Tomb Mystery (Discovery Channel) for Innovation; Titanoboa Online (Smithsonian) and The Dalai Lama at St Paul's (CTN) for Online Special Event; and X Games (ESPN), for their Technical Production Team.

By the way, over the summer, we redesigned our website to include an Op-ed section featuring interviews with recent winners - in keeping with the industry trend of sharing - and a more intuitive online entry system.

4. What is the selection process for nominating the TV & Film Lifetime Achievement Recipient? Can you touch on your choices for the last three years?

In 2011, we made the decision to recognise some of the driving forces in the television and film industry - hands-on leaders with a body of work that has made a lasting impression.

Legendary documentary filmmaker Albert Maysles received our inaugural Television & Film Lifetime Achievement Award. Called "the greatest American cameraman" by Jean-Luc Godard, Albert, along with his brother David (1932-1987), is recognised as a pioneer of direct cinema.

In 2012, the recipient was Geoffrey Mason, one of sports television's most accomplished executives, who has more than 40 years of domestic and international production experience, including seven Olympic Games, six World Cups, and multiple America's Cup races. Mason has worked for ABC, NBC, Fox, ESPN, and NFL Network over five decades in the business, mentoring hundreds of co-workers along the way.

In 2013, Susan Zirinsky, senior executive producer of the CBS News broadcast 48 HOURS, received the third Lifetime Achievement Award. In addition to her work on 48 HOURS, now in its 25th full season, Zirinsky routinely is the Senior Executive Producer of breaking news specials events for CBS News and her extensive journalism career at CBS News has provided her with a front seat to some of the most iconic moments in TV news history.

The 2014 Lifetime Achievement recipient will be honoured at our gala at NAB Show in April.

5. How are the recipients of the prestigious New York Festivals United Nations Department of Public Information Awards chosen and why is this honour so important?

New York Festivals, in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Public Information, established the United Nations Awards in 1990 to honour programs that best exemplify the aims and ideals of the United Nations. Global concerns of particular interest to the UN include peace and security; advancement of women; social development; health issues including HIV/AIDS; tobacco use; human rights; crime and violence; literacy; sustainable development; and the fight against poverty.

Nominated Television & Film Finalists are judged by a panel convened by the United Nations to select Gold, Silver, and Bronze United Nations Awards.

Past winners have included: Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (NBC Universal); Ladies Detective Agency - Botswana Gem of Africa (HBO); Pakistan Beauty Salon (CTV News); Mother Earth Speaks (MediaCorp Pte Ltd Singapore); Corrective Rape (ESPN); Afghanistan - Standing on the Sky (ABC Australia); The Dark Side of Chocolate (NDR); L'Arbitre (BDA/ESPN); Jeene ki Aasha (NDTV); Heartache and Hope Through the Viewfinder - 49 Days of Life and Death" (Higashi Nippon Broadcasting).

The 2013 UNDPPI Medallists were Gold - Inside Story (Discovery DCEGP); Gold - Once Upon a Time in Cabramatta (Fredbird Entertainment and Northern Pictures, Australia); and Bronze - Perfectly Normal (Bunim-Murray Productions, USA).

To have your program saluted as a vehicle for improving people's lives - the heart of the UN's mission - that is a profoundly gratifying level of recognition.

6. For the last three years the competition has held its awards ceremony at the annual NAB Show in Las Vegas. How has this relationship forged between NYF and NAB

benefited entrants?

Having [NAB Show](#) as our Official Partner makes it possible for our festival to be a multi-day event at the world's largest media entertainment marketplace. The international scope of NAB Show and New York Festivals entries is quite extensive - over 155 countries were at the 2013 NAB Show, accounting for nearly 30% of all attendees - and that attendee number was over 93,000! NYF's entries came from over 50 countries. That being said, when you consider that the exchange of ideas is the starting place for deals, projects, and creative solutions, this is really a sweet spot in several ways:

First, NYF's tickets to the gala include access to the NAB Show exhibition floor- a terrific opportunity to keep current with the industry's advances by engaging with experts in the forefront of technical innovation and going one-on-one with all the bells and whistles.

Second, it's Las Vegas, a great destination.

Third, in keeping with the celebration of achievement on an international level, last year Dr Kamal Haasan, the legendary film actor, screenwriter, producer and director, accepted a special award from NAB Show which honoured the 100th anniversary of cinema in India. For his equivalent in US films' star power, think a combination of Robert Redford, Ron Howard, and Tom Hanks.

Fourth, every year the Grand Trophy winners are featured in a Creative Master Series panel the day following the gala. A great press opportunity and one that continues the networking begun at the gala - which by the way finishes with champagne toasts to the NYF Medal winners.

The 2014 ceremony will take place the evening of Tuesday April 8th in Las Vegas at NAB Show. In terms of overall ROI for our entrants, I always keep in mind this scenario - Because you earn an award, maybe you get a raise - or a new client, or a promotion. Maybe one of our jury members thinks so highly of your work that they reach out to you to offer a new opportunity. Maybe you attend the NYF gala in Las Vegas and compare notes with writers, directors and producers from all over the world and get new ideas for your own future projects. It really can be a life-changer -

7. New York Festivals Television & Film Awards Jury is a "who's who" of creative media professionals from around the globe, how do you recruit such top talent to judge the competition's entries?

Every year, our [Grand Jury](#) is made up of over 200 award-winning directors, producers, journalists, writers, actors, creative directors, art directors, filmmakers, composers and programming executives. They are actively involved in what is being made today and include recent NYF medal winners.

Last year, the jury members came from over 40 countries and that mix of perspectives is one of the strengths of this jury process. NYF's 2014 Grand Jury is listed on our website. We look for wide experience and demonstrated achievement in our jury members as a way of quantifying fairness in the selection process. The most common feedback from our judges is the unique experience of viewing programs, stories, and news on a global level. They comment over again that they are impressed with the quality and diversity of the programs, presentations, and promos they view. They love the opportunity to see new talent! Content creators are by nature seekers of new ideas, always interested in the "how did they do that?" aspect - and our jury members are no exception.

Each entry is judged on its own merits, not in competition with others in the same category. Because each entry is, in effect, in competition with itself, the odds are totally even. Our jury members view and score entries based on industry-accepted standards of excellence using a scale of 1 to 10 for these criteria: Production Values, Creativity, Content Presentation, Direction, Writing, Achievement of Purpose and Audience Suitability. Jury members abstain from judging entries submitted by their companies.

8. How has your experience as an Emmy-Award winning producer influenced the way

you guide the New York Festivals International Television & Film Awards competition?

A really good question, thank you - and it even has a bearing on how we process our entry submissions. Before our online jury scores entries, I screen each entry. That level of care is a direct result of my experience in production with its strict rules of on-air quality control. So, since your entry didn't air out of synch, our jury won't see it out of synch.

I've been lucky enough to work on some award-winning, high-profile productions over the years: five Olympics, The Three Tenors, The Miss America Pageant. When there is a lot on the line, you learn that there is no substitute for discipline, preparation, teamwork, and focus. I have enormous respect for the men and women who have that capacity for detailed attention - who can be in the moment and look ahead at what's next.

9. How does the competition champion students and young television content creators/filmmakers?

When students enter - and we have seven categories specifically for their programs - their submissions are viewed by the same jury members as NYF's professional entrants.

That puts their work in front of industry experts from around the world - a wonderful audition.

In 2013, students earned medals for Drawn (The Animation School, South Africa), Day Shift (St. Xavier High School, USA), Thief (Public TV, Taiwan), A day in the Life (Corcoise Films, India), and Better Than Baghdad (Light House Studios, USA).

10. Do you have any advice for the next generation of storytellers? Any success strategies from your personal playbook?

There is no formula for making a great piece of television or film programming - if there were, it would be easy! Every great program has a level of engagement, a resonance with the viewer that was painstakingly created in the field, on the set, in the edit bay, in the mobile unit, in the sound mix, at the computer, and was a function of passion, dedication, total commitment, and talent. You can learn from everything - when things go right or when they don't. Just pay attention and follow through to go the extra mile in search of perfection.

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