

# the gotham AWARDS

# 2021 criteria and submission

**Submission Deadline: Wednesday, September 15, 2021 At 8PM EST**

- For newly registered users or those who have submitted in prior years 2016-20, [login here](#).
- If you do not have an account for 2021, go to the [Register Page](#).
- For queries on eligibility and submissions not answered below, contact: [mtabbot@thegotham.org](mailto:mtabbot@thegotham.org) or call 212-465-8200, x207

## Criteria for the Competitive Awards – Feature Films

There will be eight (8) competitive awards for feature films in 2021 – **Best Feature, Best Documentary Feature, Best International Feature, Outstanding Lead Performance, Outstanding Supporting Performance, Breakthrough Performer, Best Screenplay**, and the **Bingham Ray Breakthrough Director Award**. All eligible submissions must meet the following basic criteria for competitive awards:

- Filmmaking with a point of view.  
Each Gotham Award™ will be given to individual films or performers in films where the vision of an individual director, producer, writer, or writer/director is abundantly evident, and where the film cannot be classically defined as a "work for hire."
- Films must be American, except as noted.  
Except for the Best International Feature and the Best Documentary category, all feature films must be directed, and/or produced (credited "producer" or "produced by") and/or written by individuals who are U.S. citizens or permanently U.S.-based. A minimum of two different individuals across these roles are required. If the film's director is American as defined and fulfills at least two of these roles, this is sufficient for eligibility.
- Feature-length (defined as over 70 minutes). Series or multi-part works can only be submitted in the Breakthrough Series categories.
- Films made with an economy of means.  
Budget level and sources of financing are taken into consideration during criteria review. Eligible feature films cannot exceed a gross budget ceiling of \$35 million. Submission of budget top sheets are required for films over \$25 million.
- Screening availability by the Nominating Committees.
- The film submission form must be submitted by the deadline, and the film must be made accessible by password protected viewing link or hosted "virtual screening room" or otherwise made available for screening by the nominating committees.
- Theatrical, Day and Date, or Digital Platform Release.  
The release can be through a theatrical releasing entity or by direct or self-distribution by filmmakers, either in an exclusively theatrical release or day and date with digital platforms or VOD release.

**ELIGIBILITY PERIOD:** Feature films must be scheduled for a theatrical and/or digital platform release\* during the period (**Midnight March 1, 2021 – 11:59 pm December 31, 2021**). Films will only be considered in the eligibility year in which they first meet the release criteria. By the submission deadline, films must have a confirmed release date for this period. Films are also eligible this year if they were dated for theatrical release as required below but had release plans altered due to COVID-19 and had a virtual release or other digital platform or broadcast release during the eligibility period.

Theatrical Release: The planned release can be through a theatrical releasing entity or by direct or self-distribution by filmmakers, either in an exclusively theatrical release or day and date with digital platforms or VOD release. The film must be screened for paid admission in a commercial motion picture theater in New York City, Los Angeles County, the Bay Area, Chicago [Cook County, Illinois]; Miami [Miami-Dade County, Florida]; or Atlanta [Fulton County, Georgia] and must run for a minimum of seven consecutive days. As noted under “Eligibility Period,” for the 2021 release year, films are also eligible if they meet the virtual release terms described above. The film must be advertised, marketed, and available for press review during the qualified city runs or a nationwide virtual run in a manner considered normal and customary to the industry for the official theatrical release of independent films and not as an “under the radar” release for awards consideration only. The film can be publicly exhibited in film or digital formats, delivered to the screen by an image and sound file format suitable for exhibition in existing commercial cinema sites. **See also special criteria for VOD and digital platforms below.**

\*Digital Platform/VOD: Films that are not released theatrically but have played or were scheduled for Gotham Award qualifying festivals and are subsequently released exclusively via a digital platform or PayTV/Cable or VOD within the 2021 eligibility period may qualify for consideration in all relevant categories, with the stipulation that the films first screened at one of the following qualifying festivals: **BAMcinemaFest, Berlin, BlackStar Film Festival, Cannes, CPH:DOX, DOC NYC, Hot Docs, IDFA, New York Film Festival, San Francisco International Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, SXSW, Telluride Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, Tribeca Film Festival, True/False, Urbanworld Film Festival, Venice International Film Festival.** The digital platform release can be via streaming, VOD, DTO, or DTR.

## **Criteria for the Competitive Awards – Television**

There will be four (4) competitive awards for new series in 2021 – **Breakthrough Series (Over 40 minutes), Breakthrough Series (Under 40 minutes), Breakthrough Nonfiction Series,** and **Outstanding Performance in a New Series**

### **Breakthrough Series**

- For new fiction series originally aired or transmitted for the first time during the eligibility period on television (network, basic cable, pay cable, pay television, pay-per-view, interactive cable, broadband) or digital distribution through internet platforms.
- The premiere of the first season of an eligible series must have been within the 12-month eligibility period of **October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021.**

- There will be three awards presented in the fiction categories and a single award for nonfiction series of any length:
  - **Breakthrough Series (Over 40 minutes)**  
A continuing or limited fiction series with episodes averaging 40 minutes and longer and consisting of three or more episodes.
  - **Breakthrough Series (Under 40 minutes)**  
A continuing or limited fiction series with episodes averaging under 40 minutes and consisting of five or more episodes.
  - **Breakthrough Nonfiction Series**  
A continuing or limited series consisting of three or more episodes
  - **Outstanding Performance in a New Series**  
For an outstanding performance in a new fiction series of any program length eligible for the Breakthrough Series category.
- Majority of the episodes of a series must be broadcast, transmitted, or available for download within the eligibility period. For series premiering in September 2021, a minimum of three episodes must be made available to the Gotham nominating committee. Anthology series are only eligible in the debut season. Series returns, revivals, reboots, or continuations after a hiatus are not eligible as “new” series.
- Foreign television production is only eligible if it is the result of a co-production (both financially and creatively) between U.S. and foreign partners and with a purpose to be shown to U.S audiences in the same eligibility year.

### **Additional Criteria by Category**

- **BEST FEATURE** – an exceptionally realized fiction film that raises the possibilities of filmmaking and that will withstand the test of time. This is a director and producers’ award. The Gotham Award will be presented to the film’s credited director(s) and producer(s).
- **BEST DOCUMENTARY** – an exceptionally realized nonfiction film that deals creatively with cultural, artistic, historical, social, scientific, economic, or other subject matter. This is a director and producers’ award. The objective is to recognize the significant artistic and/or social impact of the director’s vision. It may be photographed in actual occurrence, or may employ partial re-enactment, stock footage, stills, animation, stop-motion or other hybrid techniques, as long as the overall emphasis is on fact and not fiction. The Gotham Award will be presented to the film’s credited director(s) and producer(s).
- **BEST INTERNATIONAL FEATURE** - an exceptionally realized fiction film that raises the possibilities of filmmaking and that will withstand the test of time. Only features that do not meet the criteria to qualify as an American film in the Best Feature category will be considered. The key roles of director, producer (“produced by”), and screenwriter should be based outside the U.S. and are not U.S. citizens. This is a director and producers’ award. The Gotham Award will be presented to the film’s credited director(s) and producer(s).
- **OUTSTANDING LEAD PERFORMANCE**  
For an outstanding single performance in an eligible feature film. The role should be considered a leading role or co-leading role in the film, with the understanding that a film can have several leading roles. Up to 10 performances may be nominated. The Gotham Award will be presented to the performer.

- **OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING PERFORMANCE**

For an outstanding single supporting performance in an eligible feature film. The award is to honor a performer making an indelible impact with limited screen time and who cannot be considered a lead or co-lead in the film. Billing and screen time will be taken into consideration when determining eligibility and nominations. Up to 10 performances may be nominated. The Gotham Award will be presented to the performer.

**BREAKTHROUGH PERFORMER** – an outstanding debut or “breakthrough” performance. The performance is not necessarily their first screen role but is considered the first role to display the expanse of their talent or suggests significant future accomplishment. The role must be a lead or a strong supporting character in a specific film. Performers who have won or been nominated for significant film or television awards (Academy Award®, Golden Globe, Spirit Award, Emmy, etc.) for work released prior to 2021 or who have been previously nominated in this category are ineligible. In instances in which a performance could be considered for both “Breakthrough” and another acting award the category placement will be at the discretion of the nominating committees. The Gotham Award will be presented to the performer.

- **BINGHAM RAY BREAKTHROUGH DIRECTOR AWARD** – to a filmmaker whose first fiction film pushes the boundaries of creativity and demonstrates a unique vision. The Gotham Award will be presented to the film’s credited director(s).
- **BEST SCREENPLAY** – an outstanding screenplay for an independent fiction feature. The screenplay may be an original work or one adapted from previously published or existing work in any medium. The Gotham Award will be presented to the film’s credited writer(s).
- **BREAKTHROUGH SERIES** – The awards honor exceptionally realized new fiction and nonfiction series that expand the possibilities of creative storytelling in serialized content. The series should be realized with an economy of means and characterized by innovation, risk taking, creative freedom and vision, and the introduction of new voices and non-traditional subject matter that enrich the landscape or push the boundaries of “television.” The Gotham Award will be presented to the film’s credited Creators and Executive Producers.
- **OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE IN A NEW SERIES** - For an outstanding single performance in a new fiction series submitted for Breakthrough Series. The role should be for a lead or significant featured or supporting role. The Gotham Award will be presented to the performer.

## **Our Selection Process**

### **Executive Criteria Committee**

An internal committee comprised of IFP Gotham Awards staff and IFP Board ensure that submitted films meet the award criteria.

### **Nominating Committees**

Committees are comprised of film and TV critics, journalists, film curators, festival programmers and others not directly engaged in the production and distribution of films and television will review submitted films and programs that meet the criteria and determine the final nominees in the competitive categories.

### **Final Selection Juries and Award Voting**

A final jury of distinguished filmmakers will determine the winners in each category. Final juries are frequently comprised of directors, writers, producers, editors, actors, directors of photography and others directly associated with making films and television. Executives of companies which release or sell films do not participate in these selections at any stage.

If the film's director is American as defined and fulfills at least two of these roles, this is sufficient for eligibility.