

Gabriela Paciel's Sibling Drama Wins Best Film at 2026 Conch Shell International Film Fest

"Pan Gyul" takes two honors, including Audience Choice, as the Queens festival names ten winners in Caribbean and diaspora cinema



New York City, New York Oct 14, 2026 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Gabriela Paciel's *I F*cking Hate You!*, a raw, darkly funny portrait of two estranged siblings stranded in the desert on the way to a wedding, won Best Film at the 2026 Conch Shell International Film Fest (CSIFF26), which wrapped October 11 after three days of screenings, panels, and celebration in New York City.

Guyanese-British filmmaker Noella Letitia Mingo won Best Director for *Mummy?*, and Juliette Jeffers's *Pan Gyul*, a steel pan coming-of-age story set on the island of Nevis, earned two honors: Best Cinematography and the Audience Choice Award.

Presented by Conch Shell Productions, Inc., CSIFF26 showcased 42 films from 14 countries under the theme "Our Culture Lives in Our Stories." This year's winners trace their roots to Cuba, Guyana, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Aruba, Trinidad, Belize, and St. Kitts and Nevis, and span drama, comedy, documentary, animation, and experimental film.

"Caribbean stories are not one story," said Magaly Colimon-Christopher, Founder and Festival Director of Conch Shell International Film Fest. "This year's winners took us from a desert roadside to a New York subway car to a steel pan yard in Nevis. Whether these filmmakers are exploring family, history, identity, or belonging, they are creating work that deserves to be seen and celebrated far beyond our festival. That is why Conch Shell International Film Fest exists."

The CSIFF26 Award Winners

BEST FILM

*I F*cking Hate You!* — Gabriela Paciel | Cuban Heritage

When a flat tire strands two siblings in the desert on their way to a wedding, long-buried grief and family tensions surface, forcing them to confront the complicated bonds between them.

BEST DIRECTOR

Noella Letitia Mingo — *Mummy?* | Guyanese-British Heritage

An emotionally charged drama about a nineteen-year-old mother navigating domestic abuse, homelessness, and generational trauma while refusing to give up hope of finding her missing child.

BEST SCREENPLAY

Hanif James — *A Shade of Indigo* | Jamaican Heritage

A screenplay examining colorism across generations through six-year-old Kerine, whose attempt to make a rag doll brings her face-to-face with painful assumptions about beauty, identity, and belonging. James is also a photographer, writer, and architect whose photography has been exhibited at the National Gallery of Jamaica; he has served as a script editor in the British Council's Film Lab.

BEST DOCUMENTARY

Raizal: The Jamaican Connection — Jamar Cleary | Jamaican Heritage

Through personal narratives and historical research, Cleary uncovers how Jamaican migration shaped the language, traditions, and identity of the Raizal community of San Andrés, Colombia.

BEST STUDENT FILM

Cadencia — Paulís Cofresí | Puerto Rican Heritage

Nine-year-old Lola navigates the backstage world of an orchestra on the day her mother makes history as its first female concertmaster, in a story of childhood, ambition, and the complexities of a mother-daughter relationship.

BEST EXPERIMENTAL FILM

Adrift Wak-Leu — Velvet Zoé Ramos | Aruban Heritage

A visually poetic work blending landscape, memory, and sound from an interdisciplinary artist whose practice spans installation, ceramics, and performance.

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

Michelle Clementine — *Pan Gyul*

Clementine's camera captures the cultural landscape of Nevis in Juliette Jeffers's story of a young girl determined to connect with her father through steel pan music.

BEST LEAD PERFORMER

Stacey Sargeant — *Stand Clear ' the Closing Doors* | Trinidadian-American Heritage

Filmed on the New York City subway and inspired by true events, this comedy uses humor and fantasy to examine the everyday experiences of Black women navigating public spaces.

BEST ANIMATION

Suspicious — Maison Evan Teixeira | Belizean-American Heritage

A mysterious man in a trench coat provokes suspicion among his neighbors in an animated short that challenges audiences to reconsider the judgments we make about others.

AUDIENCE CHOICE AWARD

Pan Gyul — Juliette Jeffers | St. Kitts and Nevis Heritage

Festival audiences embraced the story of Roshan, a spirited young girl determined to earn a place in her father's steel pan world while challenging traditional expectations.

Three Days of Film, Conversation, and Community

CSIFF26 opened October 9 with free industry panels at HB Playwrights Theatre in Manhattan, where filmmakers and industry professionals discussed storytelling, creative careers, and the changing media landscape. Screenings and filmmaker Q&As followed October 10–11 at Regal UA Midway in Forest Hills, Queens, home to one of the largest Caribbean communities in the United States.

The festival closed October 11 with an awards ceremony hosted by Mss. Francois (host of Caribbean Brilliance), with music by DJ Wise, followed by an after-party at Lowkey Garden Lounge in Forest Hills.

The recording of the panels will be released on [YouTube](#) @conchshelliff in December 2026. Follow CSIFF26 on Instagram @conchshelliff to receive video release updates.

To learn more about upcoming events, go to www.conchshelliff.com.

About Conch Shell International Film Fest

Conch Shell International Film Fest is presented by Conch Shell Productions, Inc., a Queens-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to amplifying the voices of Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora artists through theater and film, and to inspiring social change through storytelling. Through screenings, industry conversations, and professional development, the festival gives independent filmmakers a platform to share their work, engage audiences, and build connections across the global filmmaking community.

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