

KWAZULU-NATAL TOURISM & FILM

KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Film is the authority of
Tourism and Film for the province of KwaZulu-Natal
Established by the Act No.02 of 2024



ENTRY GUIDELINES 2026 SIMON “MABHUNU” SABELA, KZN FILM AND TELEVISION AWARDS



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1. SIMON “MABHUNU” SABELA

Mr Simon “Mabhunu” Sabela, in whose honour the KZN Film and Television Awards are named, was a legend in both the big screen and television. Not only was he South Africa’s first Black film director, but he also had a long and successful career which saw him feature in over 34 movies, nationally and internationally. He was mostly known for *Zulu* (1964), *Zulu Dawn* (1979) and *Der Rivonia Prozess* (1966).

2. BACKGROUND ON THE AWARDS

The Simon “Mabhunu” Sabela KZN Film and Television Awards recognise outstanding achievement and excellence within the South African Film and Television industry, with a special focus on KwaZulu-Natal. Among those who will be honoured at the awards ceremony are actors, actresses, producers, directors and various film and television technicians. The awards are an initiative of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs and are implemented by the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Film Authority.

The inaugural Simon “Mabhunu” Sabela Film and Television Awards of 2013 celebrated heroes, legends and veterans. There was no formal call for entries and no judging process as the awards were in their first year and sought to reward icons of the film and television industry in KwaZulu-Natal. The accolades were given to celebrate the lives and careers of individuals who have made their mark in the film industry.

The awards of 2014 were a transitional phase, taking the awards to the next level to transform them into becoming traditional industry awards celebrating extraordinary talent in the KZN film industry. The 2014 awards recognised three (3) categories:

- **Heroes and legends**, which were celebratory in nature and looked at the lifetime achievements of great icons in the industry.
- **Keeping the fire burning** looked at individuals from the province who were working in the film industry. This area of the awards was adjudicated. Entrants were judged on the body of work they had produced as well as on clips of their work/show reels entered for judging.
- **Passing the baton**, judging based on the entrant’s best piece of work.

In 2020 the awards were renamed The Simon “Mabhunu” Sabela KZN Film and Television Awards. The new name was the next step towards the award brand vision, which is to recognise KwaZulu-Natal’s talent, in the film and television industry nationally and internationally.

3. CUSTODIANSHIP OF THE AWARDS

The awards were conceptualised by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development Tourism and Environmental Affairs and are a project of the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Film Authority, supported by the Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal, with the support and endorsement of the Sabela family.

The KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Film Authority appointed a committee of industry representatives who are the custodians of the awards, overseeing and guiding the process of judging for the awards from the call for entries, the judging categories rules and guidelines, composition of the judging panels ensuring that the award judging process is free, fair and transparent and that the awards are judged by industry peers and experts.

This committee is further supported by an independent auditing company which presides over the adjudication process.

4. ELIGIBILITY

The genres eligible to enter the awards are:

- Feature films.
- Non-fiction: Documentaries.
- Short Films.
- Student Films.
- Soapies.
- Telenovelas.
- Series and Miniseries.
- Drama.

The following conditions apply:

- Some of the awards are open to persons who are citizens and permanent residents of the Republic of South Africa and others are limited to those who originate from or reside in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Co-productions with foreign partners shall only be eligible where the majority of members of the key creative team are from KwaZulu-Natal.
- Official co-productions with foreign partners shall only be eligible provided that the production has been certified as an official co-production and a South African film and television production by the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) in South Africa.
- If the majority and key components of a co-produced programme or film are foreign, the production will not be eligible for the overall 'Best Production' category award.

- Programs and individuals previously entered in any other national competition are eligible.
- Commercials will not be considered for these awards.
- All South African television productions should have been produced and publicly exhibited or broadcasted in the Republic of South Africa.
- Programmes cancelled or discontinued during their transmission runs will not be eligible for entry.
- Applicants are advised that should the jury deem that the quality of the entries in a category are overall of low quality, the jury will not make an award in that specific category.
- Applications entered for the 2025 awards are not eligible for re-entry. Eligibility period is as follows:
 - Television applications that have been broadcast between **29 March 2025 – 28 March 2026**.
 - Film Applications that are completed and screened publicly, distributed through digital platforms between **29 March 2025 – 28 March 2026**. Links to productions to be provided as proof.

5. AWARDS

A total of about 34 trophies will be awarded. Special Awards will also be granted at the discretion of the Awards Committee. Each award recipient will receive a trophy and an award certificate, signed by the Chairperson of the Board of KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Film Authority and Overall Chairperson of the judges.

5.1 The Simon Sabela Award Trophy

The Award trophy embodies the essence of Simon “Mabhunu” Sabela, the historical significance of KwaZulu-Natal and brand values of the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Film Authority. It is symbolic of the provincial film industry and is a unique work of art.

5.2 List of Awards

Best Television Categories:

1. Best Actor.
2. Best Actress.
3. Best Supporting Actor.

4. Best Supporting Actress.
5. Best TV Production (Reality Shows, series & miniseries).
6. Best Director.
7. Best Telenovela/Soapie.
8. Best Made for TV Film.
9. Best Drama Series.

Best Film Categories:

10. Best Actor.
11. Best Actress.
12. Best Supporting Actor.
13. Best Supporting Actress.
14. Best Director.
15. Best Pan African Film.
16. Best isiZulu Film.
17. Best Editing.
18. Best Cinematography/DOP.
19. Best Micro-Budget Film.
20. Best Feature Film.
21. Best Short Film.
22. Best Screenplay Film.
23. Best Student Film.

Best Combined Categories for Television and Film

24. Best Newcomer Actor.
25. Best Newcomer Actress.
26. Best use of KZN as Filming Location.

Best Documentary Categories

27. Best Documentary Short Film.
28. Best Documentary Feature Film.

Special Awards Category

29. Lifetime achievement Award.

Technical Award Categories

- 30. Best Production Design.
- 31. Best Sound Design.
- 32. Best Makeup.
- 33. Best Wardrobe.

6. DEFINITION OF AWARDS

6.1 Best Actor (Film Category and Television Category)

There are two (2) Awards. Best Actor in Film and Best Actor in Television. This will be awarded to individuals with the best performance - interpretation and realisation of scripted characters excluding supporting actors and other production crew members. This award is open to performances for any production in South Africa recognising only talent that are residents or originate from KwaZulu-Natal. The clips submitted should be between 3-10 minutes long.

6.2 Best Actress (Film Category and Television Category)

There are two (2) Awards. Best Actress in Film and Best Actress in Television. This will be awarded to individuals with the best performance - interpretation and realisation of scripted characters excluding supporting actors and other production crew members. This award is open to performances for any production in South Africa recognising only talent that are residents or originate from KwaZulu-Natal. The clips submitted should be between 3-10 minutes long.

6.3 Best Supporting Actor Award (Film Category and Television Category)

There are two (2) Awards. Best Supporting Actor in Film and Best Supporting Actor in Television. This will be awarded to individuals with the best performance - interpretation and realisation of scripted characters. A support character in the narrative of the story prominently linked to the main actor. This award is open to performances for any production in South Africa recognising only talent that are residents or originate from KwaZulu-Natal. The clips submitted should be between 3-10 minutes long.

6.4 Best Supporting Actress Award (Film Category and Television Category)

There are two (2) Awards. Best Supporting Actress in Film and Best Supporting Actress in Television. This will be awarded to individuals with the best performance - interpretation and realisation of scripted characters. A support character in the narrative of the story prominently linked to the main actor. This award is open to performances for any production in South Africa recognising only talent

that are residents or originate from KwaZulu-Natal. The clip submitted should be between 3-10 minutes long.

6.5 Best Newcomer Actor (Combined Film and Television Category)

This is one (1) Award for Best Newcomer Actor in Film Television. This will be awarded to an individual with the best performance - interpretation and realisation of a scripted character who is making a television debut. A new character and new face in the industry who is prominent in the story line. This award is open to performances for any production in South Africa recognising only talent that are residents or originate from KwaZulu-Natal. The clip submitted should be between 3-10 minutes long.

6.6 Best Newcomer Actress (Combined Film and Television Category)

This is one (1) Award for Best Newcomer Actress in Film or Television this will be awarded to an individual with the best performance- interpretation and realisation of a scripted character who is making a television debut. A new character and new face in the industry who is prominent in the story line. This award is open to performances for any production in South Africa recognising only talent that are residents or originate from KwaZulu-Natal. The clip submitted should be between 3-10 minutes long.

6.7 Best TV Production (Television Category)

This award recognises excellence in television productions, including Reality shows, Series, and Miniseries produced in KwaZulu-Natal.

6.8 Best Telenovela/ Soapie

This award recognizes outstanding achievement in serialized television drama. The category honours a soapie or telenovela produced in KwaZulu-Natal that demonstrates excellence in writing, directing, production quality, emotionally driven storytelling, character development, audience engagement, and strong viewership.

6.9 Best Made for TV Film

This is a TV award. This award recognizes excellence in a Made for TV film produced in KZN, celebrating outstanding storytelling, production quality, and overall creative and technical achievement of TV format films.

6.10 Best Drama Series

This award recognizes outstanding achievement in dramatic television storytelling. The category honours a drama series that demonstrates excellence in writing, directing, acting, production quality, narrative depth, and viewership.

6.11 Best Director (Film Category)

Best Director in a Film is awarded to an individual for outstanding interpretation and realisation of a production. This includes guidance of performances (including voiceover), visual expression, guidance of script use of sound and music and the final impact of the production. This is a provincial award, only entrants who originate from or reside in KwaZulu-Natal will be considered. All film categories qualify for this award, which includes Feature Films, Pan African Film, Micro Budget Feature Films and Isizulu Film. The length of the film should be 60mins and above.

6.12 Best Pan African Film

Awarded to an individual or team for the best film - this includes concept, dialogue, and use of language, characters, narrative, structure, and emotional engagement. This award is open to all African Film feature films. This is a continental Award, only entrants from the African continent will be considered.

6.13 Best isiZulu Film

Awarded to an individual or team for the best isiZulu language film – this includes concept, dialogue and use of isiZulu language, characters, narrative, structure, and emotional engagement. This award is open to all South African feature films.

6.14 Best Editing

This is one (1) Award. This category looks at outstanding achievement in film or TV editing and the editor's contribution to storytelling, pacing, emotional impact, structure, and overall cinematic quality.

6.15 Best use of Cinematography (Film and Television Category)

This is one (1) Award. This category looks at exceptional achievement in visual storytelling through camera work, lighting, composition, movement, and overall photographic style in a film. This award

will honour the Art of Photography and Camera Work in filmmaking in a film and television production. This Award is open to all South African productions with a Department of Photography (DOP) who originates from or resides in KwaZulu-Natal.

6.16 Best Micro-Budget

This is a provincial award, only entrants that originate from or residing in KZN province will be considered. The Budget of the film must be less than R500 000.00 (budget to be attached).

6.17 Best Feature Film

This is a national Award. The film should showcase KZN talent or locations or storyline. The budget must be above R500 000.00. The duration of the film should be 60 minutes and above.

6.18 Best Short Film

This is a provincial award, only entrants that originate from or residing in KZN province will be considered. The duration of the film should be less than 60 minutes.

6.19 Best Screenplay Film

This category is awarded for the best script written for film and is open to a film/person residing or from KZN.

6.20 Best Student Film

Awarded to the student for outstanding achievement in the production of a film. Student entrants must be registered with a recognized education facility during the eligible time of entry. Professionals who produced material as students during the eligible entry period may only submit student projects under student categories. Any project produced, as a professional, must be entered into the professional categories. The student entrant must provide proof of registration for the year the film was shot. Only Student entrants that originate from or residing in KZN province will be considered.

6.21 Best use of KwaZulu-Natal as a filming location in Film, Television, or Music Video (Combined Category)

Best use of KwaZulu-Natal as a filming location in Film, Television, Reality Shows or Music Video. This Award is open to all South Africans and will be awarded to the producer(s) for outstanding

achievement in the use of KwaZulu-Natal province as a filming location in a full-length for film, television, or music video.

6.22 Best Documentary Short Film (Combined Category including Conservation and Wildlife Documentaries)

Awarded to the producer(s) for outstanding achievement in the realisation, production, and overall success of a Documentary Short Film with 60 minutes or less running time (including all credits). This award is also open to conservation and wildlife documentaries and is only for entrants who are residents or originate from KwaZulu-Natal.

6.23 Best Documentary Feature Film (Combined Category including Conservation and Wildlife Documentaries)

Awarded to the producer(s) for outstanding achievement in the realisation, production, and overall success of a Documentary Feature Subject Film with 60 minutes or more running time (including all credits). This award is also open to conservation and wildlife documentaries and is only for entrants who are residents or originate from KwaZulu-Natal.

6.24 Lifetime achievement Award

The Lifetime Achievement Award shall be presented to an individual with an extensive and outstanding contribution to South African film and television, locally and internationally.

6.26 Best Production Design (Film and Television Category)

This is one (1) Award. This award recognizes excellence in the overall visual look of the set design, aesthetic detail, and design execution of a production shot in KZN. The category honours production designers, art directors, set decorators, and creative design teams whose work demonstrates exceptional artistic vision, creativity, and technical excellence in shaping the visual world of a production.

6.27 Best Sound Design

This is one (1) Award. This award recognizes excellence in sound, including audio quality, soundscape, music, and score, and their contribution to the overall impact of a production shot in KZN. The category honours sound designers, supervising sound editors, re-recording mixers, and audio teams whose work demonstrates exceptional creativity, technical excellence, and storytelling enhancement through sound. Consideration is given to productions where sound significantly contributes to emotional depth, atmosphere, character development, and the overall audience experience.

6.28 Best Makeup

This is one (1) Award. This award recognizes excellence in make-up artistry, including character transformation, visual authenticity, and the overall contribution of make-up to the look and storytelling of a production shot in KZN.

6.29 Best Wardrobe

This is one (1) Award. This award recognizes excellence in wardrobe and costume design, including character styling, visual detail, and contribution to the overall look and storytelling of a production shot in KZN.

People with disabilities are encouraged to apply for any of the above categories.

7. SUBMISSIONS

- Only one copy per entry is to be submitted, all entries are to have individual application forms **(non-compliance with this, entrants will be disqualified)**.
- Applicants are not allowed to submit the previous year's entries.
- Submission can be made by individuals as self-entry-nominated applicants or as peer- entry nominations. Peer nominations are to be submitted with a declaration of acceptance of entry by the individual identified by the nominator.

- All productions entered must be accompanied by a signed declaration from the intellectual property copyright owner.
- An authorised entrant or representative is defined as a person appointed by the eligible copyright owner to make an entry on their behalf.
- In the case where an authorised representative, agent; manager; studio; production company or broadcast entity facilitates the entry by completing an entry form on behalf of an individual, the listed entrant will be considered as the eligible entrant.
- A confirmation letter signed by the producer, where applicable, and not an administrator in the production team or it will be a disqualified entry.
- Student entrants must be registered with a recognised education facility during the eligible time of entry. Professionals who produced material as students during the eligible entry period may only submit student projects under student categories. The student entrant must provide proof of registration of the year the film was shot.
- Applicants are to submit scripts for the best screenplay category, any other material will not be considered.
- Next of kin may make an entry on behalf of a deceased relative, provided that the deceased relative is the copyright owner of the submitted programme. Proof of relation is to accompany submission including a death certificate.
- For each category if there are less than three applications/ entries received and if the quality of entries is bad or low, the jury should drop the entry and the category.
- For any queries with regards to the Awards, and to submit entry please contact the KwaZuluNatal Tourism and Film Authority: simonsabela@visitkznsa.com

7.1 HOW TO ENTER

- Follow the link below:
<https://url.za.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/CEGvC1j7k0hMzv0MS1uKcVrU9G?domain=visitkzn-sa.com>

- **Submit a non-expiring link and/or zip folder.**
- **Entrants to ensure they include release date or film festival date under Broadcast date on the entry form.**
- **Entrants are strongly encouraged to submit snippets focusing the performance of the nominee.**
 - Best Actor (Both in Television and Film)-between 3-10 minutes long
 - Best Actress (Both in Television and Film)- between 3-10 minutes long
 - Best Supporting Actress (Both in Television and Film)– between 3-10 minutes long
 - Best Supporting Actor (Both in Television and Film)- between 3-10 minutes long
 - Best newcomer Actor (Combined Television and Film)- between 3-10 minutes long
 - Best newcomer Actress (Combined Television and Film) -- between 3-10 minutes long
- **Full film will be required for the categories below:**
 - Best TV Production (Reality Shows, series & miniseries)
 - Best Director
 - Best Pan African Film
 - Best Isizulu Film
 - Best Micro-Budget
 - Best Feature Film
 - Best Short Film
 - Best Screenplay Film
 - Best Student Film
 - Best Use of Cinematography / DOP
 - Best Production Design
 - Best Sound Design
 - Best Makeup
 - Best Wardrobe
 - Best use of KZN as filming location as Film, Television, and Music Video
 - Best Made for TV Film
 - Best Drama Series
 - Best Editing
 - Best Documentary Short Film
 - Best Documentary Feature Film
 - Lifetime Achievement
 - Special Recognition Award

- **Submit a certified copy of the South African identity document of nominee (not older than 3 months)**
- **Submit Proof of KZN origin; Proof of Address and if KZN origin residing outside of KZN home Proof of Address with an affidavit (not older than 3 months).**
- **No physical entries will be accepted**
- **NB: One (1) copy of entry material are to be submitted per entry.** Each is to be labelled in the following manner:
 - Name of production
 - Award category
 - Name of entrant or nominated entrant (both on screen and real name)
 - Release date or film festival date)
 - Duration of production
 - Contact details

7.2 ENTRY AND CLOSING PERIOD

- Opens on **08 June 2026**.
- Closes on **10 July 2026** at 23H59. No late applications will be accepted.

Please ensure that the acceptable screening formats are clearly labelled and working:

- Links attached to applications must be accessible for at least 90 days from application date.
- Passwords must be provided for links that are password protected.

KWAZULU-NATAL TOURISM & FILM

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8. ADJUDICATION

8.1 AWARD NOMINATION

The process of establishing the top 3, 4 or 5 from the entries.

8.2 WINNER JUDGEMENT

The process of distilling the ultimate winner from the top 3 nominees.

9. THE JUDGING PANEL

9.1 The judging process is audited. The Overall Chairperson and members of the Judging Panel are distinguished members of the film and television industry.

10. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NOMINEES

10.1 Nominees will be announced at a press event before end of September 2026.

12. 2026 AWARDS CEREMONY

The awards ceremony will take place on Saturday **10 October 2026** in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

All nominated persons as per the adjudication process will be invited to attend the Awards ceremony.

Contact for technical queries: simonsabela@visitkznsa.com or call 031 366 7500.

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