

JUDGES CRITERIA LIST

ARTS ALIVE! SUMMER FILM FESTIVAL 2021

All films should be appropriate for a family audience. This is not to say that a team's film cannot tackle real, deep, or dark issues. Rather, it is a guideline as to how one tackles such an issue. There is no area of life where the Gospel does not reach and Christ does not have dominion. Therefore, any area of life can be examined through the medium of film, but tactfully rather than explicitly, adhering to the confines of good taste. It is our hope that all films will seek to honor God and further His kingdom with the talents He has given them.

FILMS WILL BE JUDGED ON THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS OF FILM:

1. Theme: THE MOST IMPORTANT CRITERIA OF ALL when evaluating films overall will be the question, "**HOW WELL DID THE FILM COMMUNICATE THE THEME?**" Even the most beautifully planned and executed film will not win this competition if it cannot be seen to address the competition theme – namely, for the 2021 competition, "Standing Against the Tide." The challenge is to use the best craftsmanship and artistry possible to beautifully communicate truth that speaks clearly to this competition theme. All other goals teams may have in producing their films should be secondary to this and will be evaluated as so by the judges.

2. Overall Impact: Judges will evaluate how well films work as whole artistic piece.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. Is it a great story that is clearly communicated? All the technical aspects can be stellar, but if the story is junk, the film is junk. The story is everything!!

B. Is it a quality piece? Was it worth the time it took to put it together? Is it a worthy endeavor? Did it accomplish what it set out to do? If it was supposed to make us laugh, think, or educate us- did it succeed?

C. How effective was the team ensemble? Was it clear they worked together with their strengths and weaknesses to produce something that is well done? Did they stretch themselves as artists or human beings?

D. How did it all fit together? Each piece of the film needs to come together in the end to make the finished product. Each piece must support the overall theme of the story. All categories play a vital role in the overall piece, though not every category must be included in the film. For example: a film could include every single element except for Special Effects and that would be okay. A film may not have the very "best" in any of the respective categories, but still be considered the best picture overall due to effective use and coordination of the various pieces described above.

3. Lead Actor: Judges will evaluate teams' actors in leading roles (the main character) for the best performance. Example of a leading role: Frodo Baggins, not Samwise Gamgi.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. How much the actor immerses himself into the character. In other words, how much the actor steps out of his own skin and into the skin of his character, becoming this character during the film?

B. Does the actor ever “drop” the character? Basically, is there ever a point in the film where the actor stops being that character and goes back to being himself?

C. How much did this actor stretch himself? Does the actor virtually act like himself or does he take on a character very different from himself, therefore having to stretch his acting ability?

D. Does this actor support the theme of the overall storyline? Or is he a loose cannon drawing attention to himself and away from what the story is trying to communicate?

4. Lead Actress: Judges will evaluate teams’ actresses in leading roles (the main character) for the best performance. Example of a leading role: Anne Shirley (Anne of Green Gables), not Diana Barry.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. How much the actress immerses herself into the character. In other words, how much the actress steps out of her own skin and into the skin of her character, becoming this character during the film?

B. Does the actress ever “drop” the character? Basically, is there ever a point in the film where the actress stops being that character and goes back to being herself?

C. How much did this actress stretch herself? Does the actress virtually act like herself or does she take on a character very different from herself, therefore having to stretch her acting ability?

D. Does this actress support the theme of the overall storyline? Or is she a loose cannon drawing attention to herself and away from what the story is trying to communicate?

5. Supporting Actors: Judges will evaluate teams’ actors in supporting roles (NOT the main character) for the best performance. Example of a supporting role: Samwise Gamgi, not Frodo Baggins. The supporting actor is not to steal the screen from the lead actor. They are called supporting characters because they exactly support the main characters.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. How much the actor immerses himself into the character. In ways, how much the actor steps out of his own skin and into the skin of his character, becoming this character during the film.

B. Does the actor ever “drop” the character? Basically, is there ever a point in the film where the actor stops being that character and goes back to being himself?

C. How much did this actor stretch himself? Does the actor virtually act like himself or does he take on a character very different from himself, therefore having to stretch his acting ability?

D. Does this actor support the theme of the overall storyline? Or is he a loose cannon drawing attention to himself and away from what the story is trying to communicate?

6. Supporting Actresses: Judges will evaluate teams' actresses in supporting roles (NOT the main character) for the best performance. Example of a supporting role: Diana Barry, not Anne Shirley. The Supporting character is not to steal the screen from the lead character. They are called supporting characters because they exactly support the main characters.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. How much the actress immerses herself into the character. In ways, how much the actress steps out of her own skin and into the skin of her character, becoming this character during the film.

B. Does the actress ever "drop" the character? Basically, is there ever a point in the film where the actress stops being that character and goes back to being herself?

C. How much did this actress stretch herself? Does the actress virtually act like herself or does she take on a character very different from herself, therefore having to stretch her acting ability?

D. Does this actress support the theme of the overall storyline? Or is she a loose cannon drawing attention to herself and away from what the story is trying to communicate?

7. Sound Design: Judges will evaluate how teams utilized sound effects, equipment, and mixing to tell the story.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. Are the effects appropriate to the film and each individual scene?

B. Can all dialogue and effects be heard at appropriate levels?

C. Does the use of sound support the overall story and not distract from it? Nothing should draw our focus away from the overall theme of the story being told.

D. Do natural sounds, such as wind, distract from the story being told?

8. Special Effects: Judges will evaluate how teams used Special Effects to enhance the telling of the story. In actuality, there is a difference between Special Effects (which happen during shooting) and Visual Effects (Which happen in editing or are placed in once filming is done.) However, for this competition, both of these will be considered as "Special Effects." A Special Effect is anything virtual or mechanical that had to be inserted or rigged up for the film. Examples of a Special Effect would be: A fire in the story that had to be made and maintained/ a fire that was added in through editing, a gun shot where the muzzle flash had to be created/ an explosion (not recommended because it's really dangerous), rigging something to fly in, using stop motion animation, or even something such as having the lights flicker on and off for effect.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. Use: As with all the other categories, the main question for the judges is how well the effects were used in the film. A film does not have to have special effects to be good, but good special effects can bring a film a long way. Make sure that all special effects are only used when needed

and that they support the story. Pointless special effects don't mean anything at the end of the day aside from looking nice.

B. Do the effects support the story or detract from it? Nothing should draw our focus away from the overall theme the story is trying to communicate.

C. Difficulty: The more difficult a special effect is to pull off, or the more work that was put into it will mean something at the end of the day. While it won't be as important as Criteria A, it will weigh in a good deal on the judges' decision.

9. Musical Score: Judges will evaluate how well teams used music to support their story.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. Does the music fit the film? In other words, does the style of music fit the piece and aid the story? For example: Using the Indiana Jones music in Jaws as he is about to attack his victim would be terribly out of place. Likewise, to have the Jaws music play while Indiana Jones swings to rescue someone would be equally out of place. But put each theme with their proper film, and they help perfectly in what the film is trying to do. Jaws sounds suspenseful and scary, whereas Indiana Jones sounds heroic.

B. Does the music support the story or detract from it? Nothing should draw our focus away from the overall theme the story is trying to communicate.

C. Is the music clearly recognizable? If your story is not Indiana Jones, but you use his theme music the judges will naturally think of Indiana Jones. But if your story is not Indiana Jones, nor is it intended to be, then that cannot help your film that we have that stuck in our heads. It is best to pick the kind of sound you want the music to have then find a lesser known piece that has a similar feel/sound to it.

10. Production Design: Judges will evaluate how teams used costume and make-up to support their story.

Costume is anything a character wears or carries (such as a prop).

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. How does the costuming fit the time period/location of the story? For example, if the film is supposed to take place in the Medieval times, it would not make sense to have the characters wear t-shirts and blue jeans. However, if the story takes place in Modern day America then the blue jeans and t-shirt fit perfectly.

B. Does the costuming/props tell us anything about the characters? Even something as simple as the t shirt the character wears or the good luck charm they carry can give insight into the character. For example, in Star Wars Episode IV, Luke Skywalker wears primarily white, and he is clearly the good guy. In contrast, Darth Vader wears complete black and is the film's villain. In the middle, you have Han Solo who wears mostly white, but also has some black thrown into his costume. But it doesn't have to be that blatant. You can give insight into a character by having him wear a funny graphic T-shirt instead of a t-shirt for a band or nothing on it at all.

C. Do the costumes support the story or detract from it? Nothing should draw our focus away from the overall theme the story is trying to communicate. Of course, all clothing should be appropriate for all audiences.

Makeup is not just ordinary makeup, but also any makeup that would be used for things such as bite marks or a black eye.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. Does the Makeup fit? Obviously, having a character with a black eye but it is never explained as to why he has one is not a good idea as far as story goes. Any makeup like that that is used needs an explanation of some kind.

B. How much work was put into the makeup? Makeup can be time consuming and a team should be careful before planning to do a lot of makeup. However, the amount of work a team put into the makeup, and assuming the end result helps to reflect that work, means a lot when they are being looked at for the judging.

C. Does the make-up support the story or detract from it? Nothing should draw our focus away from the overall theme the story is trying to communicate. All make-up should be appropriate.

11. Screenplay: Judges will evaluate how well the teams have created a story.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. Plot: A story needs to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. There should be the setup of the story, the conflict, and then the resolution to that conflict. It's a three step process unless there is some specific and clear reason one of them is left out.

B. Characters: it can be difficult to watch a film where you have no idea who any of the characters are or what they are doing. If this happens, then the viewer is left wondering why they should care what happens to that character. One of the keys to a good story is to have the audience feel a certain way toward a character, whether they feel sympathy or anger towards them.

C. Theme: All stories communicate something. How clearly is the message of the film communicated? What tactics are utilized to do this?

D. Originality: Is this an original story is it adapted from another source?

E. Language: What is the style of language used in the film? Is the dialogue simple or complex?

F. Content: What is the film about? Is it a worthy topic and is the information in the film complete?

G. Creativity: How is the story delivered? Is it written in an interesting setting? Is it written as a poem? Does it have anything clever about it?

12. Editing: The judges will evaluate how well the teams have edited their films. Editing is the assembling and cutting together of the film after everything has been filmed.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. Flow: While it depends on the feel you want as a filmmaker, most of the time, you want the audience to forget they are watching a film. This can be achieved by making the film flow through editing. Is it obvious that the camera just cut? Or did the editor manage to “hide” the cut and thus make the scene flow better?

B. Information: The editor decides what information is shown in the finished product. For example, a character could look at his watch. The editor gets to make a decision: show the watch so that the audience knows what time it is, or not show the watch and simply stay on the character? Which one is correct or incorrect depends on the film and the situation, but those are the kinds of decisions that the editor has to make, imparting the desired information to the audience.

C. Overall Use: There many things that can be done with editing. For example, the editor can make the room look darker or lighter than it was when they filmed it. They can even change the tint of the film to make everything look blue. They can spin the picture, throw the picture, shrink it or make it bigger. But with great power comes great responsibility. This section isn't judged on what the team used in their film, but how well they used it. In other words, you can make the picture shrink all you want or make it as blue as you want; but if that doesn't help the story, then it won't help you in the judging either.

13. Director: Judges will evaluate how well the film directors directed their respective film. A director is responsible for bringing the different pieces together, coordinating all of the other categories, and bringing the script to life on screen through the camera. He decides what camera positions to use and what things get shot on filming day. Most consider the director to be the “author” of the film.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. Shots/Camera Positioning: The director decides whether or not the camera will look up at or look down upon a character. He/she decides whether to be close up on a person's face, or far enough away to get both characters in the shot. Not only is a variety of different shots important, but how they are used is far more important. Some films consist of only one shot. The camera never cuts once. But that can be every bit as good and powerful as the director who wants to cut every second.

B. The Feel: As stated above, the Director is the person in the middle who puts it all together. He/she works with the costume people, the makeup people, the set people, the music people etc. in order to bring the film to the screen to create the feel they want the film to have. If a movie is supposed to be sad, it is the director's responsibility to take the different pieces of the project and make it sad. If the movie isn't sad, it mostly reflects on the director for not bringing the piece together as a whole.

C. Acting Direction: Were the actors given direction on their acting? Actors are not able to be objective about their acting. They know what they are trying to communicate so they believe they are being clear. A director should guide them, with insight and encouragement, towards an honest and clear performance that supports the story and does not detract from it. Behind a winning actor is a winning director.

14. Cinematography: The Cinematographer (DP, Director of Photography as they are known in the film world), is the one responsible for executing the shots and lighting given by the Director to bring about the decided vibe of the film. The DP would follow the storyboards of the director, and work with the director on choosing the lighting, focal lengths, and camera movements. Together, they create each “Shot”. They would also work with the director in Post Production on the color grading of the film.

Criteria - The following is what the judges will be looking for:

A. How well are the shots executed? While the DP and Director work together on what the shot should be (that is actually the director, with the DP helping him), it is up to the DP to make sure the shot is executed smoothly. For example: The camera could be shaky the entire scene. If this is intentional and aids the story the scene is telling, then awesome! Job well done! However, if the shots were supposed to be perfectly still, and the shakiness is distracting, then that was a poor job of execution by the DP. Shots do so much to convey the messages of the film, and the DP is key in carrying those out.

B. How's the lighting?: Lighting is something else that plays a massive role in the storytelling of a film. It is never to be underestimated. That being said, Cinematography is often called the art of placing shadows. Do the filmmakers utilize lighting to help tell the messages of their story? Or is the lighting simply there?