

Love Local | Arohaina tō Hapori

Screen Sector Success in Aotearoa New Zealand

This summary of Aotearoa New Zealand's screen industry achievements has been compiled by Spada (Screen Producers NZ). It highlights a selection of recent notable successes across film, television and digital content and is intended as an illustrative rather than exhaustive record. Some productions, awards, festival selections, commercial achievements and industry recognitions may not be included.

Celebrating Success in Aotearoa and the World

New Zealand films are achieving commercial success with recent releases setting new domestic and international benchmarks. *Tinā* has become the fifth highest-grossing New Zealand film of all time, with more than \$6.4 million in domestic box office earnings and over \$10 million globally, including \$3.3 million in Australia alone. This is complemented by strong documentary performance, with *TENOR: My Name Is Pati* recently surpassing NZ\$1 million at the local box office to become one of the top five highest-grossing New Zealand documentaries ever made. *Prime Minister* had the strongest opening week for a documentary since 2018 (\$432k) with over \$1.2 million at the local box office (becoming the third highest grossing New Zealand documentary) and an additional almost \$1 million internationally. These results reflect a broader trend of local films finding real audiences and revenue both at home and abroad, reinforcing New Zealand's growing reputation as a producer of commercially successful, internationally competitive feature films.

New Zealand stories are premiering at the world's leading film festivals and winning awards, reflecting the growing international standing of local storytelling. *Big Girls Don't Cry* held its world premiere in Sundance's World Cinema Dramatic Competition before screening at SXSW, BFI Flare and TIFF Next Wave, and winning the Grand Prix at the Nouvelles Vagues International Biarritz Film Festival.

Crocodile had its world premiere in competition at Berlinale 2026 and later won the Viewpoints Award at Tribeca. *Prime Minister* won Best Documentary and Outstanding Politics and Government Documentary at the 2026 News & Documentary Emmy Awards, along with the Audience Award for World Cinema Documentary at Sundance and Best International Documentary at the Sydney Film Festival. *Mārama* claimed the Grand Jury Prize at the Seattle International Film Festival alongside multiple wins at the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival, while *We Were Dangerous* won the Special Jury Award for Filmmaking at SXSW and the Pasifika Award for Best Feature Film at the Hawai'i International Film Festival. Together, these premieres and honours demonstrate that New Zealand stories are consistently reaching, and succeeding at, the world's most prestigious festival stages.

New Zealand TV series are reaching global audiences on a remarkable scale with several long-running local productions now among the country's most successful screen exports. *The Brokenwood Mysteries* celebrated its 12th season in 2026 with international sales to more than 150 countries, making it one of New Zealand's most enduring exports. *Wellington Paranormal* and *Under the Vines* have each screened in over 100 territories worldwide, while *Border Patrol* has reached 50 territories across 15 seasons. *My Life is Murder*, starring Lucy Lawless, has achieved distribution across 90 territories including North America, the UK and Australia, and *Kiri and Lou* has become a globally recognised children's franchise reaching more than a dozen territories including BBC UK, Nick Jr US, ABC Kids Australia and CBC Canada, earning a BAFTA nomination along the way.

Newer titles are following the same path: *Ms. X* has secured broadcast and streaming partnerships with Peacock in the US and Disney+ in the UK and Ireland, while *The Ridge* and *Bust Up* have been distributed internationally through the BBC and ZDF respectively. Collectively, these examples show that New Zealand series are not only being made for local audiences but are consistently finding lasting success on the world stage.

Screen Success in Aotearoa and the World *(continued)*

New Zealand TV series have been recognised with prestigious global awards, with *Choir Games* winning Best Unscripted Pilot and Best Unscripted Series at SeriesFest, *Happiness* earning nominations for a Rose d'Or Award and a C21 International Drama Award, *Bigsies and Littles* winning a New York Festivals TV & Film Awards Gold Tower for Children's Programme, *Secrets at Red Rocks* winning Outstanding Music Direction and Composition at the Children's & Family Emmy Awards and Best Children's Programme at the Asian Academy Creative Awards. Success in recent years includes *Traitors NZ* winning Best Adaptation of an Existing Format at the 2025 Asian Television Awards, *After the Party* winning Gold for Best Drama at the New York Festivals 2024, and both *Rūrangi* and *INSiDE* winning Best Short-Form Series at the International Emmy Awards. This breadth of recognition across genres and markets illustrates a strong and sustained international appetite for New Zealand series.

Feature Film - Project Summary

> **Tinā** (*The Brown Factory*): Achieved significant box office success both domestically and internationally:

- Became the **fifth highest-grossing New Zealand film of all time**, surpassing *Whale Rider* with more than \$6.4 million in domestic box-office earnings.
- Achieved more than **\$10 million in global box office earnings**, including \$3.3 million in Australia.
- Screened across **132 locations** in Aotearoa, Papua New Guinea, the Cook Islands, Fiji and Sāmoa - the widest Pacific release of a New Zealand film to date.
- Awarded the **Best Narrative Feature Audience Award** at the 2025 Palm Springs International Film Festival.
- Won the **Golden Space Needle Award** for Best Film at the 2025 Seattle International Film Festival.
- Won **Best Supporting Actress** and **Best Actress** in a Feature Film at the 2025 NZ Screen Awards.
- Selected for **13 international festivals**, including opening night at the Hawaii International Film Festival, Perth Festival, Māoriland Film Festival and Shanghai International Film Festival.

> **TENOR: My Name Is Pati** (*Minerva Productions*): Achieved significant New Zealand box office success by surpassing NZ\$1 million at the New Zealand box office and becoming one of the top five highest-grossing New Zealand documentaries of all time.

> **Big Girls Don't Cry** (*POP Film and Tomorrow, Rain*): Paloma Schneideman's New Zealand coming-of-age debut is building strong international success:

- Selected for **Sundance's World Cinema Dramatic Competition**, where it received its world premiere.
- Screened at A List international festivals including **SXSW, BFI Flare and TIFF Next Wave**.
- Won the **Grand Prix at the Nouvelles Vagues International Biarritz Film Festival**.
- Selected as the **Opening Night film for Whānau Mārama New Zealand International Film Festival**.

> **Crocodile** (*Crocodile Film Ltd. NZ/Nigeria*): Pietra Brett Kelly and The Critics' documentary achieved major festival recognition:

- **Official selection at Berlinale 2026**, with a world premiere in competition.
- Won the **Viewpoints Award at Tribeca Festival 2026**.
- Won **Best Documentary on Art and Music at Docs Against Gravity 2026**.

> **Mārama** (*Sweetshop Entertainment*): Taratoa Stappard's gothic horror feature received awards and nominations across international genre and music awards:

- **Grand Jury Prize at Seattle International Film Festival**
- **Best Fantastic Feature Film at the Imagine Film Festival**
- **Best Dramatic Feature, Audience Choice Feature Award, Outstanding Performance in a Feature Award at the 2026 imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival**; and
- the **Audience Award for Best Film at Abertoir – International Horror Festival** of Wales in 2025.
- Received a Hollywood Music In Media Awards 2025 nomination for Best Original Score for composers Karl Sölve Steven and Rob Thorne.

Feature Film - Project Summary *(continued)*

> **Mum, I'm Alien Pregnant** (*Hot Candle Wave*): THUNDERLIPS' debut feature drew festival, production and genre recognition:

- **Premiered at Sundance Film Festival**
- Won the **New Flesh Award for Best First Feature at Fantasia International Film Festival**.
- Shortlisted for the Global Production Awards.
- Screened at NZIFF.

> **Kōkā** (*Aku Films, Krafty Productions, and Awa Films*): Kath Akuhata-Brown's feature received acting, directing and Indigenous-focused film recognition:

- **Best First Time Feature Director** and **Best Actress** at the 2026 **New York Film & Actress Awards**.
- **NETPAC Award at Hawai'i International Film Festival**
- **Best Actor at Orion International Film Festival 2026**
- Received a **Highly Commended Award for Best Indigenous-Focused Film at Orion International Film Festival 2026**.
- Nominated at the Septimius Awards for Best Oceanian Film and Best Oceanian Actress.

> **Prime Minister** (*Dark Doris NZ / Maddison Wells & Divergent Pictures US*): Documentary following Jacinda Ardern's leadership, recognised across international documentary and political journalism awards:

- **Best Documentary** and **Outstanding Politics and Government Documentary** at the 2026 **News & Documentary Emmy Awards**
- **Audience Award for World Cinema Documentary at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival**.
- **Best International Documentary** at the 2025 **Sydney Film Festival**
- **The Unforgettables Award at the 2026 Cinema Eye Honors**

> **Sukundimi Walks Before Me** (*Brown Sugar Apple Grunt NZ / Walking Fish Productions AUS*):

Received festival and documentary awards recognition:

- **Sustainable Future Award at Sydney Film Festival**; and
- **Best Director at the 2026 Doc Edge Awards**.

> **Lomu** (*Tahi Production with support from Velvet Moss NZ / Sylver Entertainment UK*): Expanded its international festival profile before returning to New Zealand audiences:

- World premiere at Dublin International Film Festival.
- Screened at Glasgow Film Festival, Sydney Film Festival and Melbourne International Film Festival.
- Selected as the **NZIFF 2026 Centerpiece Film**.

> **Kiri and Lou Go Raaa!** (*Stretchy Productions*): New Zealand's first animated stop motion feature film:

- World Premiere at Annecy International Film Festival
- Selected for the 2026 NZ International Film Festival

> **Holy Days** (*Velvet Moss*): feature film selected for TIFF Industry Selects, Santa Barbara International Film Festival and Victoria Film Festival - Opening Gala.

Television and Online Series - Project Summary

> **Secrets at Red Rocks** (*Libertine Pictures*): family adventure TV series:

- Children's & Family Emmy Awards: Won Outstanding Music Direction and Composition
- Asian Academy Creative Awards: Won Best Children's Programme as a national winner.

> **Choir Games** (*Spacific Films NZ / Husk Media Canada*): documentary series won major recognition at SeriesFest and in New Zealand craft awards:

- Won Best Unscripted Pilot / Best Unscripted Series and Unscripted Audience Award at the SeriesFest
- Won Best Editing – Documentary at the NZ Screen Awards 2025.

> **Biggies and Littles** (*The Downlow Concept*): animated children's series

- New York Festivals TV & Film Awards Gold Tower Entertainment/Children's Programme

Television and Online Series - Project Summary *(continued)*

- > **Live and Let Dai** (*SPP*): documentary series starring Dai Henwood
 - New York Festivals TV & Film Awards Gold Tower Documentary
- > **The Brokenwood Mysteries Series 11** (*SPP*): mystery series (cosy crime)
 - New York Festivals TV & Film Awards Bronze Tower Crime / Entertainment / Drama
- > **K' Road Chronicles** (*Magnetic Pictures*): online documentary series:
 - Best Documentary at die Serieale 2026 in Germany
- > **Earth Oven** (*Hi Mama Productionsa*): factual series, season two recently funded:
 - Nominated for a BANFF Rockie Award
- > **Happiness** (*Greenstone TV*): musical comedy series
 - Nominated for a Rose d'Or Award, a C21 International Drama Award (Comedy-Drama finalist), and an Asian Academy Creative Award

International Sales & Distribution - Television and Online Series

- > **The Brokenwood Mysteries** (*SPP*): Celebrated its 12th season in 2026, with international sales to more than 150 countries, making it one of New Zealand's most enduring and successful screen exports.
- > **My Life is Murder** (*Greenstone TV*): A successful New Zealand-produced drama starring Lucy Lawless, the series has achieved global audience reach with distribution by DCD Rights across 90 territories worldwide, including North America, the UK and Australia.
- > **Kiri and Lou** (*Stretchy Productions, alongside co-production and credit involvement from Filmwork and Yowza Animation*): A globally recognised NZ children's franchise, with four seasons screening internationally and the feature film Kiri and Lou Go Raaa! selected for the 2026 Annecy Intl Animation Film Festival. The series has reached more than a dozen territories, including BBC UK, Nick Jr US, ABC Kids Australia and CBC Canada, with international recognition including a BAFTA nomination.
- > **Border Patrol** (*Greenstone TV*): Factual series with 15 seasons, screening in 50 territories worldwide.
- > **The Ridge** (*Great Southern (NZ) / Sinner Films (Scotland)*): a six-part New Zealand-Scotland psychological thriller co-production commissioned by BBC Scotland and Sky NZ Originals. Distributed worldwide by Boat Rocker Studios, the series premiered on BBC Scotland and BBC iPlayer in the UK, Sky Open and Neon in New Zealand, and streams on Acorn TV in the US.
- > **Bust Up** (*Lippy Pictures (NZ) / MadeFor Film (Germany)*): a six-part NZ-German co-production set in Northland, bringing together local creative talent and international partners including ZDF, ZDF Studios and Sky New Zealand Originals. ZDF Studios is managing global distribution, supporting the series' international reach.
- > **Ms. X** (*SPP and Plus6Four (NZ) with Dynamic Television (US)*): a crime comedy-drama success story, with its first season released in 2026 and a second season already financed. The series has achieved international reach through broadcast and streaming partnerships with Peacock (US) and Disney+ (UK and Ireland), alongside audiences in NZ and Australia.
- > **Blue Murder Motel** (*Great Southern TV*): a comedy murder mystery series that secured international distribution across key English-language markets, including Australia, the United States, Canada and the UK.

International Sales & Distribution - Television and Online Series

(continued)

- > **A Remarkable Place to Die** (*Screentime (NZ) with Real Film and ZDF (Germany)*): two seasons of crime drama series screening in NZ, AUS, Germany, and US.
- > **Happiness** (*Greenstone TV*): musical comedy series screening in NZ, HBO Max AUS, PBS in US and Canada.
- > **Small Town Scandal** (*Miss Conception Films*): screening in AUS via ABC and broadcasts on BBC in the UK.
- > **New Zealand Spy** (*Kevin & Co.*): comedy series screening NZ and AUS, with BBC Studios managing worldwide release.
- > **Dead Ahead** (*Hi Mama Productions*): two seasons of bilingual dramedy series screening in NZ and on Netflix AUS.
- > **Crackhead** (*WBITVP*): dark comedy series screening in NZ and AUS.
- > **Traitors NZ** (*SPP*): Three seasons of the internationally successful reality format, reaching audiences in NZ, the UK, Canada and Australia. The series has received international recognition, winning Best Adaptation of an Existing Format at the 2025 Asian Television Awards and the 2024 Asian Academy Creative Awards.
- > **Taskmaster New Zealand** (*Kevin & Co.*): screening in UK, Norway, Sweden and AUS.

Recent Screen Achievements and Industry Recognition

- > **After the Party** (*Luminous Beast (NZ) and Lingo Pictures (AUS)*): drama series screened in NZ, AUS and UK. Nominated for 2025 BATFA Best International TV Series, Won Best Actress Series Mania 2024 (France), New York Festivals 2024: Won Gold for Best Drama. Serializados International 2024: Won Best Actress, broke local record with nine wins at the 2024 New Zealand Television Awards including NZ On Air Best Drama, Best Script: Drama, Best Actor and Best Actress.
- > **Bookworm** (*Firefly Films*): Audience Award for Best International Film at the Fantasia International Film Festival
- > **Far North** (*SPP and White Balance Pictures*): Achieved international reach through distribution by All3Media International, with sales to Sundance Now (US) and Paramount+ (Australia). The series won Silver for Best Drama and Gold for Best Director (David White) at the 2024 New York Festivals.
- > **INSiDE** (*Luminous Beast*): Won Best Short-Form Series at the International Emmy Awards 2021
- > **Madam** (*Tavake, NZ and XYZ Films, US*): Achieved global reach across Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, the UK, Asia and South America via HBO Go, with multiple international awards including the Golden Nymph Award for Best Creation, C21 International Drama Awards Comedy Drama Series, Berlin TV Festival Best Comedy Series, and Asian Academy Creative Awards Best Comedy.
- > **Mystic** (*Libertine Pictures and Slim Film + Television*): teen drama series screened in over 75 territories worldwide.
- > **One Lane Bridge** (*Great Southern TV*): crime drama series with 3 seasons has screened in over 20 territories worldwide.

Recent Screen Achievements and Industry Recognition *(continued)*

> **Rūrangi** (*Autonomous*): Won Best Short-Form Series at the International Emmy Awards 2022.

> **The Gone** (*Kōtare Productions and Kingfisher Films (NZ) and Keeper Productions (Ireland)*): two series of mystery drama, screened in NZ, AUS, Ireland and UK winning nine NZ Screen Awards across the two seasons.

> **TransGenerations** (*Trajectory Media*): Won Best Web Series at the Berlin Short Film Festival and screened globally across the US, UK, and Europe.

> **Under the Vines** (*Libertine Pictures*): comedy drama with 3 seasons, screened in over 100 territories worldwide.

> **We Were Dangerous** (*Piki Films*): Won the Special Jury Award for Filmmaking at the SXSW Film Festival, the Pasifika Award for Best Feature Film at the Hawai'i International Film Festival, Best Narrative Feature at Kerry International Film Festival, and nominated for five New Zealand Screen Awards.

> **Wellington Paranormal** (*NZ Documentary Board*): Mockumentary series, screened in over 100 territories worldwide.

> New Zealand costume designer **Kate Hawley** received an **Academy Award and BAFTA for Best Costume Design** for her work on FRANKENSTEIN.

> **Peter Jackson: honoured with the Palme d'Or d'Honneur at the Cannes Film Festival**, recognising his outstanding contribution to cinema.

> **Avatar: Fire and Ash** (*Lightstorm Entertainment, 20th Century Studios, and TSG Entertainment*): Produced in Wellington with a highly skilled New Zealand crew and cast, the film received international recognition including **Academy Award and BAFTA wins for Best Visual Effects**, along with multiple Visual Effects Society Awards, Critics' Choice Awards, Saturn Awards and a Satellite Award.

> **Viva La Dirt League**: local YouTube comedy collective achieved billions of international views.

> **Country Calendar** celebrated 60 years on screen.

> Celebrating New Zealand screen talent and leadership:

- **Four screen practitioners were recognised in the 2026 King's Birthday Honours**, including Chloe Smith (CNZM), Dan Buckingham (MNZM), Dr Shuchi Kothari (MNZM), and Dr Paul Davidson (MNZM), recognising their significant contributions to New Zealand's screen sector.
- **Sir Richard Taylor KNZM**, Co-founder and Chief Creative Officer of Wētā Workshop, received the **Visual Effects Society Visionary Award** for his contribution to the global visual effects industry.
- Two New Zealand Pasifika filmmakers, **Tusi Tamasese and Ve'a Mafile'o**, were **invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences**.