

PRESS RELEASE
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Absolut presented first ever spirit of positive change award at Nordic International Film Festival

NIFF and Absolut are proud to acknowledge those driving positive change in the industry with this new award, given to Kirsikka Saari for her inspirational film highlighting diversity and inclusivity.

Image from Nordic International Film Festival, woman speaking on stage

This weekend saw the annual Nordic International Film Festival (NIFF) award ceremony take place in New York, celebrating the festival's 10th anniversary and the announcement of a new award for 2024 with presenting partner Absolut Vodka. The Spirit of Positive Change Award recognises filmmakers who strive for progression and positive change in the film industry by promoting diversity, highlighting underrepresented voices and challenging stereotypes.

The evening was filled with independent Nordic and international films, each showcasing the best of creativity and inclusivity, a common ground for both NIFF and Absolut. However, only one winner could take home the new award. Giancarlo Martins, Creative Content Director of Marketing from The Absolut Group, presented Kirsikka Saari with the award for her film **Fat Dance** which the jury felt represented the true meaning of what it is to bring positive change to the film industry.

The jury selected *Fat Dance* by Kirsikka Saari *for its bold challenge to stereotypes and promotion of diversity. The film highlights underrepresented voices, showing how narrow roles for women persist in both dance and film. By focusing on self-acceptance and breaking traditional norms, Fat Dance inspires positive change in the industry through fresh, inclusive storytelling.*

Speaking at the event last night Kirsikka Saari, Screenwriter and Director of *Fat Dance* from Helsinki said *“I'm really happy and honored about this. We've all heard so many times that we should accept ourselves the way we are - but my main character Evaleena shows that it's actually a radical thing to do.*

Making this film challenged my own thinking and showed how narrow role women still have both in the dance scene and on film screens. It's time to see more diversity in films - and I believe that it would help us to tell also fresh stories.

Making this film wasn't always easy. Still it was so much fun, thanks to my main character Evaleena's frenetic vigor, humor and the determination to change things. The biggest thanks goes to her!”

One of NIFF's core missions is to highlight the diversity of the independent filmmaking community and Absolut is a long-standing advocate of inclusivity and representation, believing that when we mix different people, places and ideas, we can create a better, more open and inclusive world. These shared values inspired the brands to create this new award, giving a platform for those helping bring about positive change in the film industry while inspiring others to continue doing so.

Linnea Larsdotter Mikkela, Founder and President of NIFF "Being a Nordic film festival in New York it is our duty to commit to a diverse and inclusive experience. Because the Nordic region is less of a monolith than one might think, but also because our home is here, in this gorgeous melting pot of cultures, and that gives us the opportunity to share stories with each other that you might never have come across otherwise."

Deb Dasgupta, Global Marketing VP at Absolut Vodka, said "It's an "Absolut" privilege to present Kirsikka Saari and *Fat Dance* with **The Spirit of Positive Change Award**, recognizing their bold strides in reshaping the film industry. At Absolut, we've always believed that the most inspired creations come from mixing – ideas, identities, perspectives, and, of course, drinks. When we mix, we make magic. The work at NIFF's 10th anniversary festival brought a much-needed splash of diversity to the filmmaking

canvas, and with our shared vision of driving inclusion and representation forward, this partnership wasn't just natural – it was inevitable.”

Please find additional imagery [here](#) and [here](#).

About Kirsikka Saari

Kirsikka Saari is a Screenwriter and Director living in Helsinki. She was Oscar nominated for the short film Do I Have to Take Care of Everything? She has written the script for the feature Stupid Young Heart, which won the Crystal Bear in Berlinale. Her works include seven female directors' collection film Force of Habit, and awarded short films After the Reunion and Super Comfort.

About Fat Dance

Dancehall dancer Evaleena Vuorenmaa gains 40 kilos and is forced to face the judging gaze of her employers, society and even herself. Fat Dance is a short documentary about a woman, who decides to take the power into her own hands and build her image the way she wants it to be. Is it really true that sexiness is not about size?

About Absolut Vodka

Absolut Vodka is a world-leading premium spirit, made in one of the most energy-efficient distilleries in the world. Every drop of Absolut Vodka is produced in and around Åhus in Sweden – and while Sweden is its home, Absolut Vodka spans more than 140 markets around the world. Part of the Pernod Ricard group since 2008, Absolut Vodka is a champion and platform for social progression through creative collaborations and innovative products – its iconic bottle has been interpreted hundreds of times by renowned international artists and fashion designers. It launched the world's first flavoured premium vodka, Absolut Peppar, in 1986 to inspire the flavoured spirits that are commonplace today.

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