

# FILM INDEPENDENT

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## **9 FILMMAKERS SELECTED FOR THE FILM INDEPENDENT 2016 PRODUCING LAB**

### **FILM INDEPENDENT AWARDS \$80,000 IN ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION GRANTS**

#### **KARIN CHIEN, HEATHER RAE AND DANIEL WAGNER TO MENTOR**

Los Angeles (October 25, 2016)— Film Independent, the non-profit arts organization that produces the Spirit Awards and LA Film Festival, announced the producers selected for its 16<sup>th</sup> annual Producing Lab. The 2016 Producing Lab is supported by Artist Development Lead Funder Time Warner Foundation. Additional funding is provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. The four-week intensive program is designed to help filmmakers develop skills as creative independent producers. Producers participate with a feature length narrative fiction project that they are in the process of producing. Through the Lab, Fellows develop a strategy and action plan to bring their current projects to fruition. The Lab also helps to further the careers of the Producing Fellows by introducing them to film professionals who can advise them on both the craft and business of independent producing.

This year's Creative Advisors and guest speakers include: Karin Chien (*Circumstance*), Heather Rae (*Tallulah*) and Daniel Wagner (*Miles Ahead*). Guest

speakers include Charles Howard, Tri-Star Pictures President Hannah Minghella CAA Agents Maren Olson and Tristen Tuckfield, and Jason Berman (*The Birth of a Nation, Mediterranea*).

On October 21, 2016 at the annual Film Independent Forum, Film Independent awarded the 10th annual Sloan Producers Grant to the feature film project *Afronauts* written and to be directed by Frances Bodomo and produced by Vincho Nchogu and Ryan Zacarias. Film Independent awarded *Afronauts* a \$30,000 production grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. In addition, Film Independent awarded the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Sloan Distribution Grant to the film *Operator* written and directed by Logan Kibens. *Operator* was supported with Sloan funding through the Film Independent Producing Lab and Fast Track Finance Market and premiered this year at SXSW. The film stars Martin Starr and Mae Whitman and will be released digitally by The Orchard on November 8, 2016. The \$50,000 distribution grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation is intended to maximize the audience outreach for the film.

For the past ten years Film Independent and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation have joined forces to increase the public understanding of science and technology and to challenge stereotypes of scientists, engineers and mathematicians through compelling artist-driven films made by new, independent voices. Past recipients of Film Independent's Alfred P. Sloan Grants include the Spirit Award nominated *Valley of Saints; The Man Who Knew Infinity* starring Jeremy Irons and Dev Patel, which premiered at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival; and Michael Almereyda's *Experimenter*, starring Peter Sarsgaard and Winona Ryder, which received Film Independent's inaugural Alfred P. Sloan Distribution Grant.

"We are delighted to continue our successful partnership with Film Independent in honoring Francis Bodomo's *Afronauts*, a wildly original film about the 1960s Zambian Space Academy that offers a quirky, developing world counter-narrative to *Hidden Figures*, an upcoming motion picture based on the Sloan-supported book about African-American female mathematicians involved in the Apollo moon landing" said Doron Weber, Vice President of Programs at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. "And we are very pleased to continue our support of Logan Kibens' finely-observed, digital-age, romantic comedy *Operator* with a Distribution Grant."

"We are thrilled to welcome this dynamic group of producers to the Lab. These seven projects exhibit uniquely personal and global perspectives. We look forward to shepherding them forward," said Jennifer Kushner, Director Artist Development at Film Independent.

Filmmakers were chosen based on the strength of their submitted script, business plan and creative vision. The Producing Lab is provided free to accepted producers and upon completion, the producers become Film

Independent Fellows, receiving year-round support, including access to Film Independent's annual film educational offerings and the LA Film Festival.

Recent projects developed through the Producing Lab include Chloé Zhao's Spirit Award Nominated *Songs My Brothers Taught Me* produced by Angela C. Lee and Mollye Asher; Clay Liford's *Slash* produced by Brock Williams which premiered at the 2016 South by Southwest Film Festival; Joseph Wladyka's Spirit Award nominated *Manos Sucias* produced by Elena Greenlee and Márcia Nunes and Sian Heder's *Tallulah* produced by David Newsom, which premiered at Sundance this year and is currently streaming on Netflix.

The 2016 Producing Lab filmmakers and projects are:

**Title:** *Afronauts*

**Producers:** Vincho Nchogu and Ryan Zacarias

**Logline:** In the early 1960s—just after Zambian Independence, and at the height of "moon fever"—a disgraced schoolteacher, Edward Makuka Nkoloso, took a few teenagers out into the desert to set up an unofficial astronaut-training program.

**Title:** *Cantering*

**Producer:** Peter Maestrey

**Logline:** When Yuma, a naïve paraplegic comic book artist chooses to animate in the adult comic book world, she discovers a new purpose in life and embarks on a romance with a mysterious wheelchair taxi driver.

**Title:** *Chickenshit*

**Producer:** Jon Coplon

**Logline:** With the help of a rag-tag group of boys, 11-year old Phoenix sets out on a dangerous mission to save her Detroit neighborhood from arsonists and to prove herself to her father.

**Title:** *Followers*

**Producer:** Christina Radburn

**Logline:** A lonely woman who has lost all faith in God, becomes obsessed with her aqua-aerobics instructor after seeing the face of Jesus on his swimming shorts.

**Title:** *Girl With Child*

**Producer:** Luz Agudelo Gipson

**Logline:** A lonely teenage girl in Ecuador travels with her toddler to visit her ill, troubled mother and searches for a new home and family to belong to along the way.

**Title:** *The Burning Season*

**Producer:** Kate Sharp

**Writer/Producer:** Jenny Halper

**Logline:** A primatologist brings her teenage daughter to a remote region of Madagascar, where her determination to save endangered lemurs puts their relationship -- and safety -- at risk.

**Title:** *The Wall at the End of the Road*

**Producer:** Caroline Oliveira

**Logline:** A young man is forced to come to terms with his estranged father during a mysterious outbreak that puts his rural town into quarantine.

### **About Film Independent**

Film Independent is a nonprofit arts organization that champions creative independence in visual storytelling and supports a community of artists who embody diversity, innovation and uniqueness of vision. Film Independent helps filmmakers make their movies, builds an audience for their projects, and works to diversify the film industry. Film Independent's Board of Directors, filmmakers, staff and constituents is comprised of an inclusive community of individuals across ability, age, ethnicity, gender, race and sexual orientation. Anyone passionate about film can become a Member, whether you are a filmmaker, industry professional or a film lover.

In addition to producing the Spirit Awards, Film Independent produces the LA Film Festival and Film Independent at LACMA Film Series, a year-round, weekly program that offers unique cinematic experiences for the Los Angeles creative community and the general public.

With over 250 annual screenings and events, Film Independent provides access to a network of like-minded artists who are driving creativity in the film industry. Film Independent's Artist Development program offers free Labs for selected writers, directors, producers and documentary filmmakers and presents year-round networking opportunities. Project Involve is Film Independent's signature program dedicated to fostering the careers of talented filmmakers from communities traditionally underrepresented in the film industry.

For more information or to become a Member, visit [filmIndependent.org](http://filmIndependent.org).

### **About The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation**

The New York based Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, founded in 1934, makes grants in science, technology, and economic performance. Sloan's program in Public Understanding of Science, Technology & Economics, directed by Doron Weber, supports books, radio, film, television, theater and new media to reach a wide, non-specialized audience.

Sloan's Film Program encourages filmmakers to create more realistic and compelling stories about science and technology and to challenge existing

stereotypes about scientists and engineers in the popular imagination. Over the past 15 years, Sloan has partnered with some of the top film schools in the country - including AFI, Carnegie Mellon, Columbia, NYU, UCLA and USC - and established annual awards in screenwriting and film production, along with an annual best-of-the best Student Grand Jury Prize administered by the Tribeca Film Institute. The Foundation also supports screenplay development programs with the Sundance Institute, Tribeca Film Institute, the San Francisco Film Society, the Black List, and Film Independent's Producing Lab and Fast Track program and has helped develop such film projects as Morten Tyldum's *The Imitation Game*, Mathew Brown's *The Man Who Knew Infinity*, Michael Almereyda's *Experimenter*, Rob Meyer's *A Birder's Guide to Everything*, Musa Syeed's *Valley of Saints*, and Andrew Bujalski's *Computer Chess*.

The Foundation also has an active theater program and commissions about twenty science plays each year from the Ensemble Studio Theater and Manhattan Theatre Club as well as supporting select productions across the country. Recent grants have supported Nick Payne's *Incognito*, Frank Basloe's *Please Continue*, Deborah Zoe Laufer's *Informed Consent*, Lucas Hnath's *Isaac's Eye*, and Anna Ziegler's *Photograph 51*, recently on London's West End. The Foundation's book program includes support for *Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race*, adapted into a major motion picture premiering January 2017.

For more information about the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, visit [www.sloan.org](http://www.sloan.org)

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