Film Independent Selects 15 Projects for the 17th Fast Track Film Finance Market

$60,000 in grants awarded by Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

LOS ANGELES (November 5, 2019) – Film Independent announced today that 32 filmmakers and 15 projects were selected for the 17th Fast Track Film Finance Market taking place in Los Angeles at The LINE LA November 4 - 6, 2019. The program is an intensive, three-day film-financing market in which participants are connected with established financiers, production companies, agents, managers and other film industry professionals who can move their current projects forward.

At the annual Film Independent Fellows and Alfred P. Sloan Reception on November 6, 2019 Film Independent will present three Sloan Foundation supported grants totaling $60,000 to film and television projects that explore science and technology themes or that depict scientists, engineers and mathematicians in engaging and innovative ways. The 10th annual Alfred P. Sloan Fast Track Grant, a $20,000 production grant, will be awarded to producer Guneet Monga and producer Rahul Chittella for their fiction feature film Kalpana; the 13th annual Alfred P. Sloan Producers Grant, a $30,000 development grant, will be awarded to producer Camila Zavala for her fiction feature Malpelo; and the third annual Alfred P. Sloan Episodic Lab Grant, a $10,000 development grant, will be awarded to Justin S. Lee for his pilot Welcome to the Scene.

“Fast Track provides an invaluable opportunity for filmmakers to expand their networks and forge strategic partnerships with high level executives working in both fiction and non-fiction,” said Jennifer Kushner, Director of Artist Development at Film Independent. “The projects and talent we’ve curated for Fast Track present an exciting range of bold, innovative and authentic stories that we are thrilled to introduce to the participating industry.”
“We are thrilled to continue our partnership with Film Independent in awarding our Sloan Fast Track grant to Guneet Monga and Rahul Chittella’s *Kalpana*, an inspirational, true-life tale about the first Indian-American woman in space and the cultural and technological adversities she overcame,” said Doron Weber, Vice President and Program Director at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. “*Kalpana* joins this year’s Sloan Producers Grant winner *Malepo*, about a scientist investigating the disappearance of hammerhead sharks, and Sloan Episodic Grant winner *Welcome to the Scene*, about a high school student who turns to cybercrime to pay off his family’s debts, as exciting projects in our nationwide pipeline of new scripts that dramatize the challenges and rewards of the scientific and technological enterprise.”

In addition, *Kalpana* producers Guneet Monga and Rahul Chittella will receive a Global Media Makers Fellowship, making their travel from India and participation in Fast Track possible. Global Media Makers is a cultural exchange program designed to foster relationships between American and international film professionals. The program is supported through a partnership between Film Independent and the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Recent Fast Track projects completed include Bing Liu’s 2019 Oscar nominated documentary *Minding the Gap*; Hikari’s 2019 Berlinale jury prize and audience award winning debut *37 Seconds*; Kirill Mikhanovsky’s *Give Me Liberty* which premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival and Directors’ Fortnight at Cannes; Christina Choe’s 2018 Sundance Jury prize winning fiction feature *Nancy*; Nijla Mumin’s 2018 SXSW jury prize winning fiction feature *JINN*; Dyana Winkler and Tina Brown’s 2018 Tribeca Film Festival Audience Award winning documentary *United Skates* and Lana Wilson’s 2018 Spirit Award nominated documentary *The Departure*. Additional projects supported through Fast Track include Chloé Zhao’s Spirit Award nominated debut *Songs My Brothers Taught Me*, David Osit and Malika Zouhali-Worrall’s Emmy award winning documentary *Thank You For Playing*, Robbie Pickering’s Spirit Award-nominated *Natural Selection*; and Courtney Hunt’s Academy Award and Spirit Award-nominated *Frozen River*.

A select list of Industry participants include: A24, Be A Kindred Spirit, Big Beach, Big Swing Productions, Blumhouse, Cold Iron Pictures, Fox Searchlight, Hulu, K Period Media, LA Media Fund, Lagralane, MACRO, Neon, Participant Media, PASTEL, Roadside Attractions, Sight Unseen Pictures, Tango Entertainment, Tremolo and YOMYOMF.

The following filmmakers have been selected to participate in Film Independent’s 2019 Fast Track program:

**FICTION PROJECTS**

**Title: Arezou**  
**Producer:** Liz Cardenas  
**Writer/Director:** Sophia Kiapos  
**Logline:** *Arezou* is a Persian tale set in post revolution Iran about a 12 year old girl who discovers the secret world of an illegal, underground ballet group and rewrites her destiny.

**Title: Dealing With Dad**  
**Producer:** Tanner Kling  
**Writer/Director:** Tom Huang
Logline: *Dealing With Dad* follows the story of Margaret Chang, who reluctantly goes back to her hometown with her brothers to deal with the sudden depression of their dad. The thing is, everybody hates him and he’s actually nicer depressed than well.

**Title: Downtown Owl**  
Co-Director/Producer: Lily Rabe  
Producer: Bettina Barrow  
Logline: Julia, a teacher, arrives in Owl, North Dakota seeking clarity and a respite from her husband. Her presence causes a ripple effect on Mitch, a mediocre football player who plots the downfall of his philandering coach, and Horace a soon-to-be widower and staple of Owl. Their stories converge months before the blizzard that will change their lives forever.

**Title: Fire.w*rks**  
Producer: Moira Griffin  
Writer/Director: Faren Humes  
Logline: Dreams of a memorial + fleeting home are dredged up on the eve of Loggy’s last night at Liberty Square.

**Title: Kalpana**  
Producer: Rahul Chittella  
Producer: Guneet Monga  
Logline: The true story of Kalpana Chawla, who immigrated to Texas in 1982 and became the first Indian-American in space.

**Title: Late Bloomers**  
Producer: Alexandra Barreto  
Producer: Taylor Feltner  
Director: Lisa Steen  
Logline: A selfie obsessed millennial lands in physical therapy. Her new BFF, an 80-year-old Polish woman, helps her get a grip on life and come to terms with her mother’s Alzheimer’s.

**Title: Malpelo**  
Producer: Camila Zavala  
Writer/Director: Victoria Rivera  
Logline: Mia, a solitary free-diver, makes the treacherous journey to Malpelo Island to investigate the disappearance of hammerhead sharks, trapped on a boat with an all-male crew who prove to be just as dangerous as the predators she’s studying.

**Title: Puff**  
Producer: Samantha Jennings  
Director: Del Kathryn Barton  
Logline: After accidentally witnessing a woman being brutally raped, a 12 year-old girl is left catatonic with shock and struggles to make sense of what she saw, until she discovers renewal in the inestimable world of her own imagination.

**Title: The Inspection**  
Producer: Chester Algernal Gordon  
Producer: Valerie Steinberg  
Writer/Director: Elegance Bratton
Logline: A homeless young man joins the Marine Corps to change his life but must conceal his attraction to his drill instructor in order to survive boot camp during Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

Title: *Washing Elena*
Producer: Vanessa Perez
Writer/Director: Maria Ponce
Logline: Upon her best friend's death, Indalia sets out to uncover the mystery surrounding it, making her confront her own biases and lingering guilt about her friend's conversion to Islam.

**DOCUMENTARY PROJECTS**

Title: *Ady*
Director: Nicholas Bruckman
Producer: Amanda Roddy
Logline: A young father diagnosed with ALS uses his story as a tool to fight for health care, launching the most unlikely political movement in a generation.

Title: *Duty Free*
Director: Sian-Pierre Regis
Producer: Meredith Chin
Logline: After a 75 year-old immigrant mother gets fired from her job, her son takes her on a bucket-list adventure to reclaim her life. As she struggles to find work, he documents a journey that uncovers the betrayals plaguing her past and the economic insecurity shaping not only her future, but that of an entire generation.

Title: *Socks on Fire*
Director: Bo McGuire
Producer: Tatiana Bears
Logline: A poet composes a cinematic love letter to his grandmother as his homophobic aunt and drag queen uncle wage war over her estate in Hokes Bluff, Alabama.

Title: *Squeegee*
Director: Clarke Lyons
Director: Gabe Dinsmoor
Logline: In a world that views them as aggressive and up to no good, inner-city Baltimore kids pick up squeegee sticks and spray bottles to help make ends meet while trying to find themselves as they enter adulthood.

Title: *Sweetheart Deal*
Director: Elise Levine
Producer: Peggy Case
Logline: On Aurora Avenue, Seattle's infamous prostitution track, four women befriend a quirky self-proclaimed healer offering to nurse them through the horrors of heroin withdrawal inside his warm and welcoming motorhome.
ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT
Film Independent is the 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 Film Independent Presents, a year-round screening series for its members that offers unique cinematic experiences for the Los Angeles creative community and the general public.

Through 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.

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 and Technology, 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 two decades, Sloan has partnered with some of the top film schools in the country—including AFI, Carnegie Mellon, Columbia, NYU, UCLA and USC plus six new film schools this year—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, SFFILM, the Black List, the Athena Film Festival, the North Fork TV Festival, and Film Independent’s Producing Lab and Fast Track program and has helped develop over 25 feature films such as Jessica Oreck’s One Man Dies a Million Times, Michael Tyburski’s The Sound of Silence, Shawn Snyder’s To Dust, Ben Lewin’s The Catcher Was a Spy, Melissa Finell’s Sensitivity Training, Logan Kibens and Sharon Greene’s Operator, Mathew Brown’s The Man Who Knew Infinity, Michael Almereyda’s Experimenter, Morten Tyldum’s The Imitation Game, Marni Zelnick’s Druid Peak, Musa Syeed’s Valley of Saints, and Andrew Bujalski’s Computer Chess. The Foundation’s book program includes support for Margot Lee Shetterly’s Hidden Figures, adapted into an Oscar-nominated box office hit in 2017.
For more information about the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, visit sloan.org or follow the Foundation at @SloanPublic on Twitter and Facebook.

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