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FILM INDEPENDENT ANNOUNCES 2021 EPISODIC LAB PARTICIPANTS

Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Awards $10,000 Episodic Grant

Netflix Returns as Founding Sponsor

LOS ANGELES (August 26, 2021) - Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization that produces the Film Independent Spirit Awards, announced the six writers selected for its fifth annual Episodic Lab. Carmen Brie, Marissa Díaz, Razan Ghalayini, Steph Ouaknine, Lisa Sanaye Dring and Anna Vecellio were chosen for this intensive program, designed to provide individualized story and career development for emerging television writers with original pilots. This year’s participants are all from underrepresented communities and 100 percent are women.

This year’s Episodic Lab is a two-week virtual program that helps to further the careers of its Fellows by introducing them to industry veterans who offer guidance on both the craft and business of writing episodic content. Through personalized feedback from experienced showrunners, creative producers and executives, Fellows will gain the tools to revise and refine their pilots and navigate a changing industry landscape.

Film Independent is also excited to award this year’s Alfred P. Sloan Episodic Grant to Anna Vecellio, who will receive a $10,000 grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to support the development of her pilot, *Mary Mallon*, through the Episodic Lab. Vecellio writes, “I'm incredibly grateful to be selected for this year’s Alfred P. Sloan Episodic Lab development grant. *Mary Mallon* is a historical limited series that seeks to uncover the true story behind the infamous Typhoid Mary and, in doing so, reflect on how science literacy and mutual respect between scientists and their communities are crucial to protecting public health. The challenges the characters in this series face are the very same challenges that organizations like the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation are tirelessly working to overcome in the modern era.”

As Founding Sponsor, Netflix is deeply committed to supporting each year’s selected Fellows, pairing them with an Industry Advisor and providing shadowing opportunities in their writers' rooms. This unique access to a premier content creator like Netflix is a crucial step in helping the Fellows move forward in their careers.

“Film Independent is a tremendous advocate for artists within the TV industry and we're so proud to be part of the journey with them through this program for emerging television writers,” states Peter Friedlander, Vice President, UCAN Scripted Series at Netflix. “The participants for the fifth annual Episodic Lab bring an incredible range of talent and unique perspectives. We're looking forward to collaborating with them over the next few weeks.”

A final networking and pitch event will offer Fellows the opportunity to introduce themselves and their work to studio and network executives.

“In our first five years of the Episodic Lab, we're proud to have supported an incredibly inclusive group of writers who have gone on to find representation, staff, sell shows and set-up deals” states Angela C. Lee, Associate Director of Artist Development. “This year’s cohort continues in that tradition by being our first all women class of Fellows. We are thrilled to help nurture their careers through the program and introduce their work to the greater industry.”

Past Episodic Lab Fellows include April Shih, who recently struck an overall deal at FX Productions; Kimi Lee, who sold her show *Sugar* in a four-way bidding war to Hulu; KD Davila, who has written on Freeform’s *Motherland: Fort Salem*; Stephanie Adams-Santos, who has written on The CW’s *Two Sentence Horror Stories*; and Henry “Hank” Jones who has written on Freeform’s *Grown-ish*.

Film Independent Artist Development programs promote unique independent voices by helping filmmakers create and advance new work through Project Involve, Filmmaker Labs (Directing, Documentary, Episodic, Producing and Screenwriting), Fast Track Finance Market, Fiscal Sponsorship, as well as through Grants and Awards that provide over one million dollars annually to visual storytellers.

The Film Independent Episodic Lab is supported by Netflix, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts and Final Draft Screenwriting.

For more information on the Labs or projects that have been developed in them, please contact Angela C. Lee, Associate Director of Artist Development, at alee@filmindependent.org

Additional information and application forms can be found at filmindependent.org.
The 2021 Episodic Lab participants and their projects are:

**Title: Kintsugi**
Writer: Lisa Sanaye Dring
Logline: When their mother dies, three vastly different third-generation Japanese Americans must come together to run the family restaurant and forge a new meaning of family.

**Title: Known Associates**
Writer: Razan Ghalayini
Logline: Known Associates is a half-hour comedy that follows Dima Baconi and her family as they navigate the bizarre experience of becoming targets of an FBI investigation.

**Title: Mary Mallon**
Writer: Anna Vecellio
Logline: Based on a true story. NYC, 1906. An ambitious doctor discovers the first typhoid carrier in America, sparking a conflict that will cement the name “Typhoid Mary” in history forever.

**Title: Renaissance Girls**
Writer: Carmen Brie
Logline: At the dawn of the Harlem Renaissance, the new President of a Negro women’s college struggles to stay afloat amidst the challenging social and racial climate of a post-WWI America.

**Title: The Get**
Writer: Steph Ouaknine
Logline: The Get is a one hour drama set in the world of ultra-Orthodox Jewish divorces - and the women taking the law into their own hands.

**Title: The Real & Magical Diaries of Luna Icaza**
Writer: Marissa Díaz
Logline: Luna inherits her grandmother’s magic on the night of her quinceañera and uses her new power to tame the ancient Mexican mythological creatures that come to destroy her hometown.

**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 Alfred P. Sloan Foundation is a New York based, philanthropic, not-for-profit institution that makes grants in three areas: research in science, technology, and economics; quality and diversity of scientific institutions; and public engagement with science. 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 and to bridge the two cultures of science and the humanities.

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 top film schools in the country – including AFI, Carnegie Mellon, Columbia, NYU, UCLA, and USC plus six public film schools – and established annual awards in screenwriting and film production, along with an annual best-of-the-best Student Grand Jury Prize. 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 programs, and has helped develop over 25 feature films including: Michael Almereyda’s Tesla, Lydia Dean Pilcher and Ginny Mohler’s Radium Girls, Thor Klein’s Adventures of a Mathematician, Jessica Oreck’s One Man Dies a Million Times, Michael Tyburski’s The Sound of Silence, Shawn Snyder’s To Dust, Logan Kibens and Sharon Greene’s Operator, Morten Tyldum’s The Imitation Game and Matthew Brown’s The Man Who Knew Infinity. The Foundation has supported feature documentaries such as Father of the Cyborgs, Picture a Scientist, Coded Bias, In Silico, Oliver Sacks: His Own Life, The Bit Player, Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story, Particle Fever, and Jacque Perrin’s Oceans. The Foundation’s book program includes support for Margot Lee Shetterly’s Hidden Figures, which became the highest-grossing Oscar-nominated film of 2017, and a social and cultural milestone.

For more information about the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, please visit sloan.org or follow the Foundation at @SloanPublic on Twitter and Facebook.

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