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Sundance Institute Selects Eight First-Time Filmmakers for Directors Lab, May 30-June 23

Filmmakers Head to Mountains of Utah for Month of Hands-On Project Development; Advisors, Actors and Crew Include Robert Redford, Catherine Hardwicke, Kasi Lemmons, Ira Sachs

Frances Bodomo | Annie Silverstein | César Cervantes | Kibwe Tavares | Eva Vives | Sandhya Suri | Pippa Bianco | Boots Riley

Los Angeles, CA — Sundance Institute has selected eight first-time filmmakers for its signature Directors Lab, which helped launch the careers of award-winning filmmakers Cary Fukunaga, Dee Rees, Marielle Heller, Benh Zeitlin and Quentin Tarantino. Taking place May 30-June 23 in the mountains of Sundance Resort in Utah, the annual Lab supports the next wave of independent filmmakers exploring new ideas and shaping the future of storytelling.

At the Directors Lab, under the leadership of Sundance Institute Feature Film Program Founding Director Michelle Satter, Labs Director Ilyse McKimmie and the artistic direction of Gyula Gazdag, the Fellows will work with an accomplished group of creative advisors, professional actors and production crews to shoot and edit key scenes from their screenplays. Through this concentrated, hands-on process, the Fellows workshop and make key discoveries about their scripts, collaborate with actors and find a visual storytelling language for their films.

Michelle Satter, Founding Director of the Sundance Institute Feature Film Program, said, “Our Directors Lab and other programs play a critical role in discovering diverse artists and launching their careers, and this year’s filmmakers are our most diverse group ever in terms of their backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. We are thrilled to work with each of them to further develop the most distinctive, singular and timely stories that might otherwise go untold.”

Creative advisors include Sundance Institute President & Founder Robert Redford, Glenn Close, Joan Darling, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Gyula Gazdag, Stephen Goldblatt, Keith Gordon, David Gordon Green, Randa Haines, Catherine Hardwicke, Azazel Jacobs, Richard Jenkins, So Yong Kim, Kasi Lemmons, Joshua Marston, Lee Percy, Rodrigo Prieto, Nancy Richardson, Ira Sachs, Peter Sollett, Joan Tewkesbury, Dylan Tichenor, Barbara Tulliver, and Bradford Young.
Several films supported by the Feature Film Program premiered earlier this year at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, including Grand Jury Prize and Audience Award-winner *The Birth of a Nation*, written and directed by Nate Parker, and winner of the Directing Prize, *Swiss Army Man*, co-written and co-directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, collectively known as DANIELS. Since 1981, the Feature Film Program has supported an extensive list of leading-edge independent films, including Marielle Heller’s *Diary of a Teenage Girl*, Jonas Carpignano’s *Mediterranea*, Damien Chazelle’s *Whiplash*, Ritesh Batra’s *The Lunchbox*, Ryan Coogler’s *Fruitvale Station*, Haifaa Al Mansour’s *Wadjda*, Lucy Alibar and Benh Zeitlin’s *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, Dee Rees’ *Pariah*, and Miranda July’s *Me and You and Everyone We Know*.

Meet the 2016 Directors Lab filmmakers and their projects:

**Frances Bodomo / Afronauts** (Zambia/U.S.A.): Just after Zambian Independence in 1964, an ingenious group of villagers build a homemade rocket in a wild bid to join the Space Race. 17-year-old astronaut Matha Mwambwa must decide if blasting off in the precarious rocket vindicates her past or just makes her a glorified human sacrifice. Inspired by true events.

Ghanian writer/director Frances Bodomo grew up in Ghana, Norway, and Hong Kong, before moving to New York City to study film at Columbia University (BA) and NYU's Tisch School of the Arts (MFA). Her short films *Boneshaker* and *Afronauts* both premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, and went on to play various festivals including the Berlinale, Telluride, and New Directors/New Films. She recently directed the short segment *Everybody Dies!* for the omnibus feature *Collective: Unconscious*, which premiered at the 2016 SXSW Film Festival. Bodomo is a Sundance Institute | Alfred P. Sloan Fellow.

**Annie Silverstein / Bull** (U.S.A.): In a near-abandoned subdivision west of Houston, a wayward teen runs headlong into her equally willful and unforgiving neighbor—an aging bullfighter who’s seen his best days in the arena. It’s a collision that will change them both.

Annie Silverstein is an award-winning filmmaker and youth worker based in Austin, Texas. Her fiction and documentary films have screened at international festivals including Cannes, SXSW, Silverdocs and on PBS Independent Lens. Most recently she wrote and directed *Skunk*, which won the jury award at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival–Cinéfondation. Silverstein is a recipient of the San Francisco Film Society/Kenneth Rainin Foundation Grant for developing her first fiction feature.

**César Cervantes / Hot Clip** (U.S.A.): In the aftermath of their best friend’s fatal confrontation with a cop, three Southeast Los Angeles skaters spend 24 hours chasing dreams, making trouble and trying to survive in a community on the verge of exploding.

César Cervantes is a first-generation Chicano filmmaker from Maywood, California. His skateboarding do-it-yourself background and whatever-it-takes approach to filmmaking got him into the Emerging Filmmakers Showcase at the Cannes Film Festival, led him to create an after-school film program for inner-city youth with the help of CAA, and put him on tour with the Grammy-winning band La Santa Cecilia as their lead videographer. A Vassar College graduate, Cervantes will make his feature debut with *Hot Clip*. Cervantes is the first recipient of the Feature Film Program Latino Fellowship.

**Kibwe Tavares / The Kitchen** (United Kingdom): Raised in London’s first favela housed in an abandoned Council high-rise, known as the Kitchen, Es commits smash-and-grab thefts as a way of redistributing the wealth to the community who took him in. When the inhabitants are threatened with eviction by the police,
Es is tasked with a high-stakes heist that pits him against the Kitchen’s leader and irrevocably alters his definition of family.

Kibwe Tavares graduated from the Bartlett School of Architecture with a thesis called *Robots of Brixton*, a short film that won the Special Jury Award for Animation at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival. With the backing of Film4, he directed his second short film *Jonah*, which won both the Special Jury prize and Best Short Film at the Commercial Film Producers of Europe and Shots Young Directors Awards. More recently, Tavares has been awarded a TED fellowship, named as one of the top 20 young global directors at the Saatchi & Saatchi New Directors Showcase and has recently finished directing his third short *Robot and Scarecrow*.

**Eva Vives / Nina** (U.S.A.): Just as Nina Geld’s brilliant and angry stand up kicks her career into high gear, her romantic life gets complicated, forcing her to reckon with what it means to be creative, authentic and a woman in today’s culture.

Eva Vives is a graduate of NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts. In 2000, she won the Best Short Prize at the Sundance Film Festival and Cannes Film Festival with *Five Feet High and Rising*, a short she cast, edited and produced. She followed that up with the feature *Raising Victor Vargas*, which she co-wrote. Vives has been writing numerous projects, including *Chrome & Paint*, a film she co-wrote with Ice Cube. Vives was one of four writers in the Disney Writers Program from 2010-2012. Most recently, she wrote and directed the short film *Join the Club*, which premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. She was also a finalist for the 2016 Atlanta Film Festival’s Filmmaker to Watch award.

**Sandhya Suri / Santosh** (India/United Kingdom): In the corrupt hinterlands of Northern India, a young widow, Santosh, inherits her husband’s job as police constable. When a girl’s body is found in a well, she is forced to confront the brutality around her and the violence within.

Sandhya Suri is a British-Indian writer/director based in London. A graduate in pure mathematics, she received a scholarship to study documentary at The National Film and Television School. Her feature documentary *I for India* premiered in the World Competition section of the Sundance Film Festival, screened at over 20 international festivals and garnered several awards before being released theatrically to critical acclaim in the UK and the U.S. Suri also participated in the 2015 Drishyam | Sundance Screenwriters Lab.

**Pippa Bianco / Share** (U.S.A.): In this cyber thriller, a disturbing video—leaked from a local high school—throws a Long Island community into chaos and the national spotlight as they try to unravel the story behind it.

Pippa Bianco studied at Yale University, where she received the Lamar Film Studies Prize and Pearson American Studies Prize before moving to New York to make films. In 2015, her short film *Share* screened at the Telluride Film Festival, won a jury prize at SXSW 2015, and won Cinéfondation’s First Prize at the Cannes Film Festival. Her recent work also includes a commission for LACMA scored by Nico Jaar, and a writing credit on *Bleed for This*, a forthcoming boxing biopic starring Miles Teller, produced by Bruce Cohen and executive produced by Martin Scorsese.

**Boots Riley / Sorry to Bother You** (U.S.A.): A black telemarketer with self-esteem issues discovers a magical key to business success, propelling him to the upper echelons of the hierarchy just as his activist comrades are rising up against unjust labor practices. When he uncovers the macabre secret of his corporate overlords, he must decide whether to stand up or sell out.
Boots Riley studied film at San Francisco State University before ending his studies in favor of a major label recording deal for his band, The Coup. He directed a music video for The Coup's "Me And Jesus The Pimp In A '79 Granada Last Night," upon which the novel Too Beautiful For Words was based. He has never won an award for artistic achievement, but has decided that being the only musical artist whose surveillance was uncovered via Wikileaks is just as good as an Oscar or a GRAMMY.

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Sundance Institute
Founded in 1981 by Robert Redford, Sundance Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides and preserves the space for artists in film, theatre, and new media to create and thrive. The Institute's signature Labs, granting, and mentorship programs, dedicated to developing new work, take place throughout the year in the U.S. and internationally. The Sundance Film Festival and other public programs connect audiences to artists in igniting new ideas, discovering original voices, and building a community dedicated to independent storytelling. Sundance Institute has supported such projects as Beasts of the Southern Wild, Fruitvale Station, Sin Nombre, The Invisible War, The Square, Dirty Wars, Spring Awakening, A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder and Fun Home. Join Sundance Institute on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

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