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Sundance Institute Names 2017 Episodic Lab Fellows

Fourth Year of Program Yields 2600 Submissions; 11 Fellows, 10 New Television Pilots Selected for Lab and Customized Year-Round Support

Los Angeles, CA — Sundance Institute has selected 10 original independent pilots for holistic support at its fourth annual Episodic Lab. With topics ranging from awkward family dynamics to the rippling-effect of crime on a community, the scope of this year’s projects, and the diverse backgrounds of their creators, speaks to the Institute’s broad and visionary support of the episodic format; the Episodic Lab is the centerpiece of the Institute’s year-round support program for emerging television writers.

Beginning with the Lab, Fellows will benefit from customized, ongoing support from Feature Film Program staff, Creative Advisors and Industry Mentors, led by Founding Director of the Sundance Institute Feature Film Program, Michelle Satter, and Senior Manager of the Episodic Program, Jennifer Goyne Blake. As the Lab convenes, the 11 selected Fellows will develop their series and pilot scripts with a dynamic and rigorous slate of individual and group creative meetings, writers’ rooms, case study screenings, and pitch sessions, with guidance from accomplished showrunners, producers and industry executives.

"With the recent and ongoing growth of the episodic format, there are immense opportunities for emerging storytellers," said Satter. "With this program, we identify new and diverse voices, offering them unparalleled and sustained access to customized creative and industry support." Goyne Blake further noted, "We are seeing a growing number of our Fellows staffed on new shows and their pilots developed for series."

The Sundance Institute Episodic Program is made possible by Founding Supporters Lyn and Norman Lear, and Cindy Harrell Horn and Alan Horn. Leadership Supporters are 21st Century Fox; Amazon Studios; AMC and SundanceTV; BET; Netflix; RT Features; Time Warner, Inc., Turner, HBO, and Warner Bros.

Creative Advisors for the Lab include: Jenny Bicks (EP/Showrunner, Divorce), Corinne Brinkerhoff (Creator/Showrunner, No Tomorrow and American Gothic), Daniel Chun (Executive Producer, Speechless), Charles Eglee (Writer/Producer), Lee Eisenberg, (Writer/Co-EP, The Office), Tom Fontana (Creator, Oz), Ali LeRoi (Executive Producer and Director, Survivor’s Remorse), Amy Lippman (Executive Producer, Masters of Sex), Erica Rivinoja (Co-Executive Producer, The Last Man on Earth), Lena Waithe (Actress/Writer, Master of None) and Graham Yost (Showrunner, Justified).

Industry Mentors include: Betsy Beers (Partner, Shondaland), Layne Eskridge (Manager, Netflix Original Series), Lindsay Donohue (Director, Development, FX Networks), Dante Di Loreto (President of Scripted Entertainment, Fremantle North America), David Levine (Co-Head, EVP Drama Programming, HBO), Joe Lewis (Head of Comedy, Drama and VR, Amazon Studios), Allie Moore (Director of Scripted Programming for AMC and SundanceTV), Rose Catherine Pinkney (Senior Consultant Scripted Original Programming, BET Networks) Sarah
Timberman (Executive Producer, Seal Team, Elementary), and David W. Zucker (President of Television, Scott Free).

Artists and projects selected for the 2017 Sundance Institute Episodic Story Lab:

**Big Water**  
Written by Jaquén Castellanos

*Big Water* is a dramedy about a strong-willed Jamaican woman’s struggle to make a better life for herself and her family in Miami’, but when her estranged father is released from prison, his criminal legacy threatens to undermine everything they’ve built.

Jaquén Castellanos is a writer and actor from Miami, currently based in Los Angeles. Since graduating from Columbia University, she has worked as an NBC Page for *Saturday Night Live*, Robert De Niro’s assistant, and script coordinator for Showtime’s *The Affair*. She recently joined the writing staff of the television series *Sweetbitter*, currently in development at Starz.

**The Grown Ups**  
Written by Anna Kerrigan

When her grandmother passes away, 22-year-old Meredith Wayne learns that her family’s anticipated inheritance is nonexistent. Her Broadway dreams are put on hold and she’s forced to be the adult in the room as her eccentric parents navigate a messy divorce and cope with their new reality.

Los Angeles-based filmmaker Anna Kerrigan wrote and directed the short *Hot Seat* (2017 Sundance Film Festival), the Gotham-nominated digital series *The Impossibilities* and directed the digital series *The Chances* (2017 Sundance Film Festival). She was selected for the 2016 Fox Global Directors Initiative for episodic directing, and is a Film Independent and Sundance Institute Fellow.

**Harmony**  
Written by Jacob Chase

In this musical murder mystery, a repressed detective sets out to catch the serial killer who murdered his family. To do so, he’s forced to return to his hometown of Harmony, NY, whose residents have the world’s oddest dialect: they sing their emotions.

Jacob Chase grew up as an actor in musical theater and is currently a
screenwriter in Los Angeles. He has written films for The Jim Henson Company, Amazon Studios, Bazelevs, Cirque du Soleil, and more. Jacob directed the feature film The Four-faced Liar and won the 2016 Crash the Super Bowl contest with his commercial “Doritos Dogs”.

**Hope, AR**  
*Written by Aric Avelino*

When three gruesome deaths over a twenty-four hour period rock the small town of Hope, Arkansas, an ill-equipped deputy’s investigation forces the community to confront long-held resentments and suspicions in a place where everyone has something to hide.

Aric Avelino is an award-winning filmmaker whose production work includes television commercials, motion pictures, and music videos. His feature film directorial debut, *American Gun* was featured at SXSW and Toronto Film Festivals and was nominated for three Film Independent Spirit Awards including Best Feature Film.”

**Legacy**  
*Written by Brian Shin*

*Legacy* follows an ex-NBA superstar who is suddenly thrust into the position of head coach of his former team and must navigate a maelstrom of blackmail, gambling addiction, public hatred, and disgruntled players. After his estranged son gets promoted to his team, they struggle to come to terms with their fragmented relationship while enduring a tumultuous losing season.

Brian Shin is a writer and professional poker player from Ann Arbor, MI. Since graduating from the University of Michigan, he's worked as a writer’s assistant for Grandfathered, reported for the Los Angeles Sports Journal, and written for Koream, a pop culture magazine for Asian Americans. He’s a proud alumnus of the CBS Diversity Showcase and CAPE New Writers Program, and is currently developing an animated feature for Oriental Dreamworks.
The Prince of Hyde Park
Written by Sachin Dharwadker

When Chicago high-school basketball sensation Ezra Jones II mysteriously disappears during the winter of 1994, the resulting investigation and unrelenting media scrutiny sweep his friends and family into a vortex of emotional upheaval that changes their community forever.

Sachin Dharwadker is a screenwriter, director, and editor from Madison, Wisconsin currently based in New York City. He graduated from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts in 2016 with a B.F.A. in Film & Television, and now creates video content for Broadway.com while writing scripts and freelancing as a director in his spare time. His short films have screened at festivals around the world.

Screwed
Written by Rose Surnow

Screwed is a half-hour comedy about Sloan Greene, a romantically-challenged, struggling writer who becomes a sex columnist in order to get over her fears of intimacy.

Rose Surnow got her MFA in Screenwriting at USC where she won awards and scholarships for her TV comedy pilot Real Mature. Since graduating in 2015, she was selected for the Screenwriter's Colony at the Nantucket Film Festival, staffed on a TruTV show, and wrote and directed countless digital comedy videos for BuzzFeed.

Shasta
Created by Russell Friedenberg & Heather Rae, Written by Russell Friedenberg

Shasta is a one hour crime drama about a TRIBAL POLICE OFFICER who teams with a transplanted LAPD DETECTIVE to investigate the mysterious reappearance of a MURDERED GIRL on the Shasta Indian reservation.

Writer/Director Russell Friedenberg has written and directed three feature films including Among Ravens, Ibid, which debuted at SXSW and Munich International, where it was nominated for the prestigious Cinevision Award. Friedenberg’s writing and producing credits include the award-winning documentary Trudell, which premiered at Sundance and played more than 100 festivals worldwide, ESPN's Out of the Blue: a Film about Life and Football, and Showtime's, First Circle, a feature documentary about the foster care system in America.
Heather Rae has produced such films as Academy Award-nominated Frozen River, Netflix Originals Tallulah and Dude, festival darling, I Believe in Unicorns and the award-winning The Dry Land. Rae directed and produced feature documentary Trudell about late Native American activist John Trudell and First Circle, a Showtime Premiere documentary about the foster care system. As an artist Rae is working with both her settler and indigenous heritage toward a deeper dialogue in the Americas.

**Tilting**  
*Written by April Shih*

A high school math teacher with a troubled past escapes to Las Vegas where she reinvents herself as a poker player and finds a tribe of supportive degenerates. This half-hour dramedy follows people who have nothing left to lose, only to discover the unlikely optimism that comes from being at rock bottom.

April Shih is a screenwriter from Los Angeles. After attending film school at NYU Tisch School of the Arts, April wrote, directed, and produced the indie feature You, Only Better and produced several plays including the Ovation Award-winning revival of Kiss of the Spiderwoman: The Musical. April spent two years playing poker in Las Vegas before pursuing a degree in playwriting at Cal State Northridge. April is the winner of the TV Academy Foundation comedy writing internship and was most recently a 2017 recipient of the CAPE New Writers Fellowship.

**The Wasteland Survival Handbook**  
*Written by Alan J. Van Dyke*

In this animated comedy set five generations after the apocalypse, a scheming high school teacher from a fallout shelter and a battle-hardened cannibal queen decide their best chances for survival lie with each other.

Alan J. Van Dyke is a native of North Carolina and graduate of the UNC School of the Arts. He was selected for the Nickelodeon Writing Program in 2014 and has written projects for Nick Movies and MarVista Entertainment, as well as several episodes of Nickelodeon’s The Loud House.

**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 *Boyhood, Swiss Army Man, Manchester By the Sea, Brooklyn, Little Miss Sunshine, Life, Animated, Sonita, 20 Feet From Stardom, Beasts of the Southern Wild, Fruitvale Station, Sin Nombre, 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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