Sundance Institute Announces 2018 Episodic Lab Fellows

Fifth Year of Program Introduces 12 Fellows and 9 New Television Pilots Selected for Lab and Customized Year-Round Support

Los Angeles — Sundance Institute has selected nine original television pilots for support at its fifth annual Episodic Lab, which runs from September 27 to October 2 at the Sundance Mountain Resort in Utah. With topics and formats ranging from half-hour comedies about friendships put to the test to historical dramas about the struggle for Native American land sovereignty, the broad scope of this year’s projects – and the diverse backgrounds of their creators – speak to the Institute’s long-term support of the episodic format. The Episodic Lab is the centerpiece of the Institute’s year-round continuum of support for emerging television writers.

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

“Identifying and championing emerging independent voices has always been the Institute’s focus, and we are thrilled to continue the expansion of our support for artists working in this space,” said Satter. “The episodic format lends itself to telling richly creative and multifaceted stories, and this Lab enables these visionary writers to continue developing their craft and connect to the industry.”

“As we head into our fifth installment of the Episodic Lab, we are seeing many of our past Fellows staffed on new shows and selling their pilots, which is hugely exciting in this moment of ‘peak TV’ and a testament to the work we’re aiming to accomplish,” Goyne Blake added.

Creative Advisors for the Lab include Corinne Brinkerhoff (Creator/Showrunner, No Tomorrow), Kat Candler (EP/Showrunner/Director, Queen Sugar), Daniel Chun (Executive Producer, Speechless), Charles Eglee (Writer/Producer), Lee Eisenberg (Writer/Creator, Little America), Stephen Falk (Creator/Showrunner, You’re the Worst), Ali LeRoi (Executive Producer and Director, CBS Productions), Marti Noxon (Showrunner, Sharp Objects), Erica Rivinoja (Co-Executive Producer, The Last Man on Earth), Vera Santamaria (Writer/Co-Executive Producer, Orange Is The New Black) and Graham Yost (Showrunner, Justified).

Industry Mentors include: Deniese Davis (Partner/Producer, ColorCreative/Issa Rae Productions), Dante Di Loreto (President of Scripted Entertainment, Fremantle North America), Susie Fitzgerald (Executive Vice President of Scripted Programming, AMC TV & Sundance), Peter Friedlander (Vice President of Original Series,
Netflix), **Kira Innes** (Director, Creative Affairs, Fox21 Television Studios), **Gina Kwon** (Co-Head of Comedy/Half-Hour TV, Amazon Studios), **Rose Catherine Pinkney** (Senior Consultant Scripted Original Programming, BET Networks), **Jacob Robinson** (Director of Original Programming, TBS), and **Sarah Timberman** (Partner, Timberman/Beverly Productions).

The 2018 Episodic Lab projects and fellows are:

**Anadarko**  
Written by Nathan Pesina

The lives of a young Comanche girl and a former Texas Ranger collide when a conflict over land rights threatens to upend the fragile state of a newly formed Oklahoma reservation.

**Nathan Pesina** is a writer from Texas, currently based in Los Angeles. He earned his MFA in Screenwriting at the University of Texas at Austin and was the winner of the 2017 ATX Television Festival Pitch Competition. He was a writers’ assistant on the AMC original series *Silent History* and co-hosts the podcast *Film Court*.

**Blood & Dust**  
Written by Hilary Bettis

Stormy Proctor has one shot at becoming the first woman bull rider on the professional rodeo circuit, but she’ll have to face rough bulls, hard cowboys, and her personal demons along the way.

**Hilary Bettis** is an award-winning playwright based in Brooklyn. After graduating from The Juilliard School’s playwriting program in 2015, she wrote on the Emmy-nominated series *The Americans* for the final two seasons and was nominated for the 2018 WGA Award. She has developed and sold multiple original TV shows and is currently adapting the Colombian hit-series *La Niña* for the US with FX and Propagate producing. Her other life passion is riding horses, which she’s been doing since she was three.

**Rock the Boat**  
Written by Josh Kirby and Jonathan Veles

Two best friends, one gay, one straight, live the high life as cruise ship performers, but their bromance is put to the test when a new, uptight lead singer joins their cast.

**Josh Kirby** received a BFA in acting from Florida State University. He then pursued a career in musical theater, performing as a cruise ship singer for a year. There, he met his writing partner Jon, another performer on the ship. Once arriving in Los Angeles, he attended the Groundlings and quickly decided to pursue a career in writing. He and his partner Jon worked on ABC’s *The Real O’Neals* and are currently working on ABC’s *Fresh Off the Boat*. 
Jonathan Veles is a Hawaii native who moved to LA after studying creative writing, drama, and musical theatre at UH. Following a short stint as a professional dancer on a cruise ship, he set his sights back on his true passion, writing. Since then, Jonathan and his writing partner Josh have worked on ABC’s *The Real O’Neals* and are currently working on ABC's *Fresh Off the Boat*.

**Sugar Land**
Written by Tanuj Chopra and Meera Menon

Two Indian-American teenage girls, one rich, one poor, become romantically entangled with a wealthy young man prone to self-destruction. Based on the classic Indian novel *Devdas*.

**Tanuj Chopra**'s first feature film, *Punching at the Sun*, about South Asian teenagers coming of age in post-9/11 Queens, premiered at the 2006 Sundance and Tribeca Film Festivals and won the Grand Jury Prize at the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival. He went on to direct the award-winning feature films *Grass* and *Chee and T*, and was selected for both the Fox and Sony Directors’ Labs. He is a graduate of Brown University and Columbia Film School.

**Meera Menon** is a Jersey-born, LA-based filmmaker whose directing credits include the feature films *Equity* (2016 Sundance Film Festival) and *Farah Goes Bang* (Nora Ephron Prize winner, 2013 Tribeca Film Festival), as well as the television shows *Glow, Halt and Catch Fire, The Magicians, Man in the High Castle*, and *Snowfall.* She is a graduate of Columbia University and USC’s School of Cinematic Arts, and was a 2014 fellow of the Fox Global Directors Initiative.

**Faux Ever**
Written by Elena Crevello

*Faux Ever* is a half-hour dramedy about Daniela, a fiercely feminist writer, who agrees to a green-card marriage with Logan, a recently-widowed Irish man, in order to get her traditional Mexican family off her back.

**Elena Crevello** is a writer and performer originally from Santa Cruz, CA, currently based in Los Angeles. She graduated from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts with a B.F.A. in Drama and studied improv extensively at both U.C.B. and Groundlings. In 2012, Elena co-created and starred in the viral video "Shit People Say in L.A." and has since developed scripts with ABC Studios, NBC, U.C.P., and Warner Brothers. She is currently writing on the second season of the Starz show *Vida*.

**The Hollows**
Written by Wei Ling Chang

After going bankrupt and losing her home, an ex–beauty queen and single mother of three reinvents herself by starting a local pageant school that threatens to tear her family apart.
Wei Ling Chang is a New York-brewed, Los Angeles-based swim addict, sleep enthusiast, and writer/director. Her feature directorial debut, *The Unlikely Girl*, was acquired by Netflix for worldwide distribution. She has been a fellow of Tribeca All Access, PGA Diversity Program, NYC MOME Lab, and the Kyoto Filmmakers Lab. Before going narrative, she produced, wrote, and directed unscripted TV shows.

*Jonesin’*
Written by Mel Jones and Nick Jones Jr.

*Jonesin’* is a half hour comedy about Nick and Mel, two newly-single parents, whose budding relationship is put to the test by the daily grind of life in LA with children and co-parents in tow.

Mel Jones is a multi-talented producer and director. A Howard University alum, she holds a Bachelor of Science in Radio, Television and Film and earned her Master of Fine Arts in Producing at the American Film Institute. Jones has worked in development at Participant Media and is currently President of Production for Stephanie Allain's Homegrown Pictures. She served as a producer on two breakout Sundance Film Festival hits, Justin Simien’s *Dear White People* and Gerard McMurray's *Burning Sands*. She also produced the indie favorite *French Dirty* and upcoming projects like Clark Johnson’s *Juanita*, starring Alfre Woodard and Blair Underwood; Stella Meghie's *The Weekend*, starring Sasheer Zamata and Y'Ilan Noel; and Angel Kristi Williams’ *Really Love*, starring Kofi Siriboe. Jones made her directorial debut at Sundance with *Leimert Park*, a MACRO digital series.

Nick Jones Jr. served 12 years in the United States Marine Corps where a chance mentorship with President Barack Obama led him to the film industry. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Filmmaking from the New York Film Academy, where he wrote and directed the award-winning short film *Cold Choices,* starring Neil Brown Jr. Nick later wrote on season 4 of the critically-acclaimed and Golden Globe-nominated Hulu series *Casual* and, most recently, signed an exclusive blind deal at Paramount Players. He is currently prepping his feature directorial debut, *Impressions*, starring Andre Holland and Navid Negahban.

*Papi*
Written by Mary Angélica Molina

A half-hour comedy about a Colombian-born woman who reluctantly invites her estranged, homeless father into the apartment she shares with her wife and son.

Mary Angélica Molina is a Colombian-born, Brooklyn-based writer and director who creates dark, funny, queer, intersectional stories about Latinxs. Her most recent short, “Valentina,” played sold-out screenings along the festival circuit and is available worldwide via HBO. Earlier this year, she wrote, directed, and produced the web series *Dichos*, featuring an impressive selection of NYC’s female-identified comedy talents.
**Stubs**
Written by Lindsay Golder

*Stubs* is a half-hour comedy about a raunchy, foul-mouthed amputee who cons his way through his new job coaching a girls’ high school softball team.

**Lindsay Golder** grew up in Texas and received a MFA in Screenwriting from the American Film Institute. She currently writes on the CW’s *In the Dark*. She previously wrote on *The Mick, School of Rock*, and for the popular YouTube channel *Wisecrack*. The Script Lab named her one of the Top 25 Emerging Screenwriters of 2017.

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 Networks, Metro Goldwyn Mayer, Netflix, and Turner/TBS.

**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 *Mudbound, Get Out, The Big Sick, Strong Island, Blackfish, Top of the Lake, Winter's Bone, The Wolfpack, Dear White People, Trapped, Brooklyn, Little Miss Sunshine, 20 Feet From Stardom, Beasts of the Southern Wild, Fruitvale Station, I'm Poppy, America to Me, Leimert Park, Spring Awakening, A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder* and *Fun Home*. Join Sundance Institute on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

###