

# SUNDANCE INSTITUTE

- FILM FESTIVAL
- FEATURE FILM
- DOCUMENTARY
- FILM MUSIC
- THEATRE

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## **SUNDANCE INSTITUTE TO HOST A WEEK OF INDEPENDENT FILM PRODUCING INITIATIVES**

*Leaders in Independent Film Discuss State of the Industry at Creative Producing Summit*

*Nine Projects Selected for Creative Producing Labs and Fellowships*

**Los Angeles, CA** — Sundance Institute today announced the participants for its annual Creative Producing Labs and Creative Producing Summit, both held in the same week at the Sundance Resort in Sundance, Utah.

Nine projects have been selected to participate in the Labs (July 18-22) and receive ongoing creative and strategic support throughout the year, as well as direct granting to further development and production. The Fellows represent five projects from the Feature Film Program and four from the Documentary Film Program.

Immediately following the Labs, leaders in independent film and a wider group of Sundance Institute-supported projects will join the Fellows for the Creative Producing Summit (July 22-24).

“The Sundance Institute Creative Producing initiatives are a unique combination of intensive focus on the producers’ individual projects and larger discussions with industry leaders about the state of the independent film community and where it’s headed,” said Keri Putnam, Executive Director of Sundance Institute. “These initiatives are an opportunity for producers to explore and develop their projects in a forward-thinking, supportive community. We thank the many experts that will participate.”

### **FEATURE FILM CREATIVE PRODUCING LAB**

The Feature Film Creative Producing Lab is a five-day Lab where narrative feature film producers work with an accomplished group of Creative Advisors to develop their creative instincts, communication and problem-solving skills in all stages of film production. This year’s Creative Advisors include producers Paul Mezey (*Cold Souls*), Jay Van Hoy (*Beginners*), Alix Madigan (*Winter’s Bone*) and Amy Kaufman (*Sin Nombre*).

The Fellows and projects selected for the Feature Film Creative Producing Fellowship are:

#### ***Ad Inexplorata***

**Producing Fellow: Danielle DiGiacomo**

Captain William D. Stanaforth is a NASA pilot alone on a one-way mission toward the unknown. (Writer/Director Mark Elijah Rosenberg)

In the past decade, Danielle DiGiacomo has worked as the Community Manager at IFP and Head of Documentary Acquisitions at IndiePix Films, produced the first two Cinema Eye Honors for Nonfiction Film, and associate produced Jennifer Venditti’s *Billy the Kid* (Best Documentary Feature, Los Angeles Film Festival 2007 & SXSW 2007) and Samantha Buck’s *21 Below*. In 2010, she produced three short films (two premiered at the 2011

Cannes' Short Film Corner) and Associate Produced one feature, Andrew Semans' *Nancy Please*. She is currently producing Chris Kelly's documentary *The Cause of Progress* and Samantha Buck's *Best Kept Secret*. (Mark Silverman Honoree)

### ***Ain't Them Bodies Saints***

#### **Producing Fellows: James M. Johnston & Toby Halbrooks**

*Ain't Them Bodies Saints* tells the story of an outlaw who, in the 1970s, escapes from prison and sets out across the Texas countryside to reunite with his wife and the daughter he never met. Along the way, however, his past starts to catch up with him. (Writer/Director: David Lowery)

James M. Johnston and Toby Halbrooks, collectively known as Sailor Bear, produced the award winning and critically acclaimed short film *Pioneer*. Johnston also produced the feature films *St. Nick* and *Carried Away*, operates two successful vegan restaurants with his wife, and has directed and produced several short films of his own. Halbrooks came to film after touring the world for six years as a member of the rock group The Polyphonic Spree. He has been working in Dallas as a commercial producer/director for the last 6 years.

### ***The Maglev Story***

#### **Producing Fellow: Melissa Lee**

Actions speak louder than words in this offbeat romance set in Shanghai between a reclusive Japanese hikikomori ("shut-in") boy and a broken-hearted Chinese girl. Well, at least this unlikely couple hopes so. (Writer/Director Anthony Ng)

Melissa Lee graduated magna cum laude with a BA in Literature from Harvard University and received her MFA in Producing from USC. She has produced two feature films: *Dear Lemon Lima*, co-starring Academy Award winner, Melissa Leo, which was released theatrically earlier this year; and *Circumstance*, which premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, received the U.S. Dramatic Audience Award, and is being released theatrically in August 2011. A Hong Kong native, Melissa splits her time between Los Angeles and China. (Steve Bing Fellow)

### ***One & Two***

#### **Producing Fellow: Kim Sherman**

Set at an isolated farmhouse, *One & Two* is a look at the bond between siblings in an abusive and neglectful home, told through a sci-fi lens. (Director Andrew Droz Palermo, Co-Writers Andrew Droz Palermo & Neima Shahdadi)

Kim Sherman is a Missouri-based filmmaker and musician. Most recently, Sherman produced the feature *A Horrible Way To Die* from director Adam Wingard and *Sun Don't Shine* from Amy Seimetz. Sherman has won numerous advertising awards for her directorial commercial work and produced a handful of daring and groundbreaking narrative shorts, including the experimental drama, *A Face Fixed*, by director Andrew Droz Palermo. Sherman serves as one half of the psych-folk duo, Jerusalem and the Starbaskets. Their latest full-length album, *Dost*, is out now on De Stijl Records.

### ***Sadie***

#### **Producing Fellow: Lacey Leavitt**

A young girl living in a trailer park with her mother while her father serves repeated tours overseas resorts to inappropriate measures to preserve her family when a handsome and mysterious stranger threatens to tear it apart. (Writer/Director Megan Griffiths)

Lacey Leavitt is a Seattle-based producer whose first two narrative features, *The Off Hours* (director Megan Griffiths) and *The Catechism Cataclysm* (director Todd Rohal), premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival. She also produced and co-directed the roller derby documentary *Blood on the Flat Track* (Strand Releasing) and produced Dan Brown's award-winning short film *Your Lucky Day*, starring Rider Strong. She recently co-produced *Safety Not Guaranteed*, executive produced by Mark and Jay Duplass, and is in pre-production on *Hayden Lake*, the new feature directed by Ryan Page and Christopher Pomeroy (*Blood Into Wine*), which she is line producing. (Sheila C. Johnson Fellow)

## DOCUMENTARY FILM CREATIVE PRODUCING LAB

Participants for the five-day Documentary Film Creative Producing Lab are selected from a pool of Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program grantees and invited to participate in one-on-one consultations, and presentations aimed at honing the craft of producing documentaries.

Producers Bonni Cohen (Producer, *The Island President*) Ellen Schneider (Founder, Active Voice), Joslyn Barnes (Producer, *Black Power Mixtape*) and publicist Nancy Willen will serve as Creative Advisors at the Lab.

The Fellows and projects selected for the Documentary Film Creative Producing Lab are:

### ***Ai Wei Wei: Never Sorry***

#### **Producing Fellow: Alison Klayman**

*Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* follows three tumultuous years in the life of Ai Weiwei, when he became a superstar of the art world, a "dissident" in the headlines, a first-time father, and an online god to tens of thousands of Chinese netizens. But can an artist change China?

Alison Klayman is a freelance journalist and documentary filmmaker. Living in China from 2006 to 2010, Klayman shot and produced radio and television feature stories for programs. *Ai Wei Wei: Never Sorry* is her first feature documentary. Klayman speaks Mandarin Chinese and graduated from Brown University in 2006.

### ***Betting the Farm***

#### **Producing Fellows: Cecily Pingree and Jason Mann**

In a desperate attempt to save their farms, a group of Maine farmers launch a new, organic milk company. Will their gamble rescue them – and with them an entire way of life – or will it leave them worse off than when they started?

Cecily Pingree is an independent filmmaker who began her film work with Big Mouth Productions in New York. She has worked on stories ranging from the controversy surrounding media consolidation to rural health in Africa to fishing and farming issues in Maine.

Jason Mann has worked as a cinematographer and editor on numerous documentary projects. Most recently, he collaborated with Cecily Pingree on *Meet Your Farmer*, a series of eight short films about Maine farmers.

### ***Cesar's Last Fast***

#### **Producing Fellow: Lisa Remington**

*Cesar's Last Fast* is a multi-platform feature documentary film about the private sacrifice behind Cesar E. Chavez's struggle for the humane treatment of farm workers, and the impact Chavez's inspirational and complex legacy has on new generation of organizers fighting today.

Lisa Remington is an independent documentary producer who recently teamed with Lawrence Bender (producer) and Lucy Walker (director) on Participant Media's chilling nuclear weapons documentary *Countdown to Zero*. Lisa regularly consults with emerging and established filmmakers in early stage fundraising strategies to create actionable production plans and lives in Los Angeles.

### ***JR: Inside Out***

#### **Producing Fellow: Alastair Siddons**

The French artist JR wins the TED Prize 2011. He gives his wish, and in turn, his art back to the people, and creates a global participatory art project called 'Inside Out'. He becomes the 'printer' and invites people to stand up for what they care about through the power of their own image. From Tunisia to the Bronx, Lisbon to Iran, the film follows individuals and communities pasting their portraits in the streets. Now they don't just see the art, they make it.

Alastair Siddons is a London based film maker who has worked across a range of formats including documentary, drama and music video. His first feature was the large scale documentary *Turn It Loose*. The film followed six b-

boys from very different corners of the globe preparing to battle in the world championships held in Soweto, South Africa. The film was produced by Partizan Films and picked up for international distribution by MK2.

### ***My Good Name is Stalin***

#### **Producing Fellow: Kavita Pillay**

*My Good Name Is Stalin* is the story of two young men named Stalin and Lenin in Kerala, India – home to the world's first democratically elected communist government – as they struggle to reconcile their shifting notions about communism and capitalism in the Age of Migration.

Kavita Pillay is a Boston-based media consultant and film producer. *My Good Name Is Stalin* is her first feature-length documentary.

## **CREATIVE PRODUCING SUMMIT**

The Creative Producing Summit is a three-day, invitation-only gathering that connects 40 independent filmmakers with 30 top independent film professionals including producers, agents, distributors, and other executives to build a dialogue on film producing and the state of independent film. Programmed events include case study sessions, panels, roundtable discussions, one-on-one meetings and pitching sessions. Panelists include Josh Braun (Submarine Entertainment), Victoria Cook (Frankfurt Kurnit Klein & Selz), Liesl Copland (William Morris Endeavor), Eric d'Arbeloff (Roadside Attractions), Marian Koltai-Levine (PMK\*BNC), Alex Kruglov (Hulu.com), Tim League (Alamo Drafthouse), Susan Margolin (New Video), Celine Rattray (Maven Pictures), John Sloss (Cinetic Media), Dan Steinman (Creative Artists Agency), Ricky Strauss (Participant Media) and Nancy Utley (Fox Searchlight). For a full list of panelists visit <http://www.sundance.org/programs/creative-producing-summit/>.

Sundance Institute receives major support for its Creative Producing Initiatives from B.Co., Cinereach Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The Charles Engelhard Foundation, the Ford Foundation, The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, Sheila C. Johnson, the Open Society Institute, SAGindie, the Skoll Foundation, and Sundial Pictures, LLC.

### **Sundance Institute Feature Film Program**

Since 1981, the Sundance Institute Feature Film Program (FFP) has supported more than 450 independent filmmakers whose distinctive, singular work has engaged audiences worldwide. The program's approach to the discovery and development of independent artists has become a model for creative development programs internationally. Program staff fully embrace the unique vision of each filmmaker, encouraging a rigorous creative process with a focus on original and deeply personal storytelling. Each year, up to 25 emerging filmmakers from the U.S. and around the world participate in a year-round continuum of support which can include the Screenwriters and Directors Labs, Creative Producing Fellowship and Lab, Composers Lab, Creative Producing Summit, ongoing creative and strategic advice, significant production and postproduction resources, a Rough-Cut Screening Initiative, a Screenplay Reading Series, and direct financial support through project-specific grants and artist fellowships. In many cases, the Institute has helped the Program's fellows attach producers and talent, secure financing, and assemble other significant resources to move their projects toward production and presentation. In addition, the FFP is providing strategic resources to completed Lab films in distribution and marketing across all platforms to support and expand their connection to audiences worldwide.

Over its 30 year history, the Sundance Institute Feature Film Program has supported an extensive list of award-winning and groundbreaking independent films. Four FFP films – Liza Johnson's *Return*, Alejandro Landes' *Porfirio*, Hagar Ben-Asher's *The Slut*, and Sean Durkin's *Martha Marcy May Marlene* – screened at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. Other notable films supported over the program's history include Dee Rees' *Pariah*, Maryam Keshavarz's *Circumstance*, Eric Mendelsohn's *3 Backyards*, Shirin Neshat's *Women Without Men*, Cherien Dabis' *Amreeka*, Cary Fukunaga's *Sin Nombre*, Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer*, Fernando Eimbcke's *Lake Tahoe*, Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden's *Half Nelson*, Andrea Arnold's *Red Road*, Miranda July's *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, Hany Abu-Assad's *Paradise Now*, Debra Granik's *Down to the Bone*, Ira Sachs' *Forty Shades of Blue*, Josh Marston's *Maria Full of Grace*, Lisa Cholodenko's *Laurel Canyon*, Peter Sollett's *Raising Victor Vargas*, John Cameron Mitchell's *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, Darren Aronofsky's *Requiem for a Dream*,

Kimberly Peirce's *Boys Don't Cry*, Tony Bui's *Three Seasons*, Walter Salles' *Central Station*, Chris Eyre and Sherman Alexie's *Smoke Signals*, Allison Anders' *Mi Vida Loca*, Paul Thomas Anderson's *Hard Eight*, Tamara Jenkins' *Slums of Beverly Hills*, and Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*. [www.sundance.org/featurefilm](http://www.sundance.org/featurefilm)

### **Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program**

The Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program provides year-round support to nonfiction filmmakers worldwide. The program advances innovative nonfiction storytelling about a broad range of contemporary social issues, and promotes the exhibition of documentary films to audiences. Through the Sundance Documentary Fund, the Documentary Edit and Story Laboratory, Composers + Documentary Laboratory, Creative Producing Lab, as well as the Sundance Film Festival, the Sundance Creative Producing Summit and a variety of partnerships and international initiatives, the program provides a unique, global resource for contemporary independent documentary film. [www.sundance.org/documentary](http://www.sundance.org/documentary)

### **Sundance Institute**

Sundance Institute is a global nonprofit organization founded by Robert Redford in 1981. Through its artistic development programs for directors, screenwriters, producers, composers and playwrights, the Institute seeks to discover and support independent film and theatre artists from the United States and around the world, and to introduce audiences to their new work. The Institute promotes independent storytelling to inform, inspire, and unite diverse populations around the globe. Internationally recognized for its annual Sundance Film Festival, Sundance Institute has nurtured such projects as *Born into Brothels*, *Trouble the Water*, *Son of Babylon*, *Amreeka*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Spring Awakening*, *I Am My Own Wife*, *Light in the Piazza* and *Angels in America*. [www.sundance.org](http://www.sundance.org)

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