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Sundance Institute Announces New 'FilmTwo' Initiative to Support Second-Time Feature Filmmakers

Created with Support from Founding Partner NBCUniversal

**Expansion of Signature Programs Addresses Unique Challenges
and Barriers to Sustainable Filmmaking Careers**

13 Filmmakers Selected for Inaugural FilmTwo Fellowship



Andrew Ahn | Shaz Bennett | Bernardo Britto | Steven Caple Jr. | Jonas Carpignano | Marta Cunningham | Alistair Banks Griffin
Siân Heder | Marielle Heller | Anna Rose Holmer | Crystal Moselle | Felix Thompson | Yared Zeleke

Los Angeles, CA — Sundance Institute today announced a significant expansion of its signature artist development programs to include targeted support for second-time feature filmmakers, addressing a growing need in the field of independent storytelling, especially for women and filmmakers of color. The new **FilmTwo Initiative**, led by the Institute's renowned Feature Film Program, with generous support from Founding Partner NBCUniversal, will offer selected directors specialized creative and tactical guidance in navigating the unique challenges of making their second feature films. The Initiative's inaugural Fellows announced today participated in a Screenwriters Intensive in March and continue to receive customized creative and tactical support and participate in select FFP activities.

The FilmTwo Initiative was created to provide support to a diverse group of independent filmmakers in response to the specific challenges they face in developing and completing their second feature film, often the greatest barrier to a sustainable career as a filmmaker. These include identifying and/or writing their second project, defining their distinctive voice, scaling up and creating more ambitious projects in terms of budget and scope and a dearth of development financing. Second-time filmmakers are also faced with the challenge of having a shorter timeline to



capitalize on the first feature while they take on prolonged distribution activities related to that film. Navigating the film industry and working successfully with new collaborators contribute to these challenges, which are often compounded for women and people of color.

Keri Putnam, Executive Director of Sundance Institute, said, “Our FilmTwo Initiative is a holistic response to challenges filmmakers have expressed to us. It builds on our existing work to ensure that the most exciting and diverse filmmakers have the support they need to overcome the hurdles of getting their films made and seen.”

Michelle Satter, Founding Director of the Sundance Institute Feature Film Program, said, “As the filmmaking industry changes, our programs continue to evolve by addressing the needs of the community. With our FilmTwo Initiative, we are extending our focus from starting a filmmaker’s career to growing that career and continuing to provide a creative and tactical support system for the films they want to make.”

Donna Langley, Universal Pictures Chairman, said, “Universal is committed to telling stories that resonate with audiences around the world, and growing the field of diverse filmmakers is a key factor in fulfilling that commitment. By partnering with Sundance Institute on the FilmTwo Initiative, we hope to help advance the careers of exciting new voices.” Through the FilmTwo program, four Fellows will be designated as NBCUniversal Fellows and receive development granting and meetings with key Universal Pictures executives.

Speaking about her own experience, filmmaker **Gina Prince-Bythewood** (*Love and Basketball*, *The Secret Life of Bees*, *Beyond the Lights*) said, “I was so fortunate to have the support of Sundance Institute’s Screenwriters and Directors Labs for my first film *Love and Basketball*, which was released in 2000. Making a good first film says you have potential. Making a good second film says you are the real deal, but getting that second film made is often just as difficult as the first. I’m excited that Sundance has responded to the unique challenges second-time filmmakers face with the creation of the FilmTwo Initiative. It will be an incredible leg up to filmmakers looking to clear that hurdle.”

The inaugural FilmTwo Fellows are **Andrew Ahn** (*Spa Night*), **Shaz Bennett** (*Alaska is a Drag*), **Bernardo Britto** (*Jacqueline (Argentine)*), **Steven Caple Jr.** (*The Land*), **Jonas Carpignano** (*Mediterranea*), **Marta Cunningham** (*Valentine Road*), **Alistair Banks Griffin** (*Two Gates of Sleep*), **Siân Heder** (*Tallulah*), **Marielle Heller** (*The Diary of a Teenage Girl*), **Anna Rose Holmer** (*The Fits*), **Crystal Moselle** (*The Wolfpack*), **Felix Thompson** (*King Jack*) and **Yared Zeleke** (*Lamb*).

Fellows participated in a day-long Screenwriters Intensive and Industry round-tables, building a support community of second-time filmmakers. Additionally, filmmakers will receive advice in navigating the industry and have access to customized year-long creative and tactical support. They will also be considered for participation in various FFP Labs, the Feature Film Program Fund and activities on an individualized basis.

Industry and Creative Advisors for the inaugural FilmTwo Intensive included: **Stephanie Allain** (Producer, *Hustle and Flow*), **Stefanie Azpiazu** (Head of Production and Development, Likely Story), **Eyde Belasco** (Casting Director, *Transparent*), **Melissa Breaux** (Manager, Washington Square Films), **Ian Bricke** (Director, Content Acquisition, Netflix), **Gyula Gazdag** (Filmmaker, Artistic Director, Sundance Directors Lab), **Lynette Howell Taylor** (Producer, *Captain Fantastic*), **Charles King** (Founder and CEO, MACRO), **Jeremy Kleiner** (Co-President, Plan B Entertainment), **Gina Kwon** (Development Executive - Half-Hour TV, Amazon Studios), **Meg LeFauve** (Screenwriter, *Inside Out*), **David Lonner** (Principal, Oasis Media Group), **Julie Lynn** (Principal, Mockingbird Pictures), **Andrea Sperling** (Executive Producer, *Transparent*), **Priya Swaminathan** (Head of Development, Annapurna Pictures) and **Joan Tewkesbury** (Screenwriter, *Nashville*).



The Institute's signature programs for independent filmmakers over the past 35 years include Labs, year-round Mentoring and Artist Granting from the Feature Film Program Fund. Through these programs, the Institute has supported the early careers of many award-winning and leading-edge filmmakers including Marielle Heller, Nate Parker, Ryan Coogler, Damien Chazelle, Cary Fukunaga, Quentin Tarantino, Benh Zeitlin, Miranda July, Lisa Cholodenko, Paul Thomas Anderson, Debra Granik, Darren Aronofsky, Ryan Fleck & Anna Boden, Andrea Arnold, Alfonso Cuarón, Kimberly Peirce and Dee Rees.

At the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, Feature Film Program-supported projects included Nate Parker's *Birth of a Nation* (Winner of the Grand Jury Prize and Audience Award, U.S. Dramatic), Daniels' *Swiss Army Man* (Winner of the Directing Award, U.S. Dramatic) and Andrew Ahn's *Spa Night* (Joe Seo/Winner of the Special Jury Award for Breakthrough Performance, U.S. Dramatic).

Fellows selected to participate in the FilmTwo initiative are:

Andrew Ahn

Andrew Ahn is a Korean-American filmmaker born and raised in Los Angeles. His first feature film *Spa Night* premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival in the US Dramatic Competition. The film received a Special Jury Award for Breakthrough Performance for lead actor Joe Seo. Ahn is an alum of the Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab and Los Angeles Screenwriters Intensive.

Shaz Bennett

Shaz Bennett is a writer, director and storyteller. She recently wrote and directed her debut feature film, *Alaska is a Drag* and was a writer on episodes of *The Glades* and *UnREAL*. She is a graduate of the American Film Institute's Directing Workshop for Women and FOX's inaugural Top 20 Directing Program.

Bernardo Britto

Bernardo Britto was born in Rio de Janeiro, grew up in South Florida, and graduated from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. He wrote and directed the award-winning animated short films *The Places Where We Lived* and *Yearbook*. At the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, he premiered a new animated short called *Glove* as well as his first feature film *Jacqueline (Argentine)*. Britto is an alum of the Sundance Catalyst Initiative.

Steven Caple Jr.

Raised in Cleveland, Ohio, Steven Caple Jr. is an award-winning storyteller and filmmaker. In 2013, HBO bought and aired his USC short film *A Different Tree*, which won the Jury Prize for the Director's Guild of America, the Short Film Competition at the American Black Film Festival and the Audience Choice Award at NBC's Shortcuts. Since then, Caple was selected by HBO to direct a one-act stage comedy in New York during the inaugural HBO Character and Scene Studio. Caple's first feature film *The Land* premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival.

Jonas Carpignano

Jonas Carpignano is a filmmaker who grew up in Italy and the U.S. His work as a director has been shown around the world and has won awards at prestigious festivals including Cannes, Venice and Sundance. His first feature film *Mediterranea* premiered at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, earned him the Bingham Ray Breakthrough Director Award at the Gotham Independent Film Awards and was named the best directorial debut of 2015 by the National Board of Review. Carpignano is a Sundance Institute Global Filmmaking Award winner and an alum of the Sundance Institute Screenwriters and Directors Labs as well as the Catalyst Initiative.



Marta Cunningham

Marta Cunningham is an accomplished filmmaker and producer. Her feature length documentary *Valentine Road* played in the U.S. Documentary Competition at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival, premiered on HBO in October 2013, was nominated for two News and Documentary Emmy Awards and was part of the Institute's 2014 Film Forward Program. Cunningham was a Sundance Institute Women Filmmakers Initiative fellow. She is currently directing episodes for television and digital platforms, including Refinery29, and her production companies, Off The Wall Productions and Sugar Sky Pictures, are currently in pre-production on several features and documentaries.

Alistair Banks Griffin

Alistair Banks Griffin's first feature film *Two Gates of Sleep* premiered in Directors Fortnight at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival and was produced by Borderline Films and Andrew F. Renzi with support from Cinereach. In 2013, he participated in the second annual Berlin Film Festival Residency and was the winner of the 2013 San Francisco Film Society/Hearst Screenwriting Grant and KRF prize; he was also awarded the Aide Aux Cinemas du Monde from the French CNC. Griffin is a graduate of RISD and lives and works in New York City. He is currently in development on his second feature film *The Wolf Hour*, which participated in the 2016 Sundance Screenwriters Lab.

Siân Heder

Siân Heder writes and produces on the acclaimed Netflix series *Orange is the New Black*. Her short film *Mother* received top honors at the Cannes Film Festival, Florida Film Festival and Seattle International Film Festival. Her debut feature film *Tallulah*, which she wrote and directed, stars Ellen Page and Allison Janney and premiered in competition at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival.

Marielle Heller

Marielle Heller's debut film *The Diary of a Teenage Girl* premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival, where it won a special jury prize and went on to win the Grand Prix of the Generation 14plus at the Berlin International Film Festival before it was released in theaters in August 2015. She received a DGA nomination for outstanding directorial achievement of a first-time feature film director, three Gotham Award nominations, won the Best Actress Award for Bel Powley and won the Independent Spirit Award for Best First Feature. Heller is an alum of the Sundance Institute Screenwriters and Directors Labs and the recipient of the Women at Sundance Fellowship and the Sundance Institute Vanguard Award.

Anna Rose Holmer

Anna Rose Holmer was named one of *Filmmaker Magazine's* "25 New Faces of Independent Film" in 2015. Her narrative directorial debut *The Fits*, which screened at the 2015 Venice International Film Festival and the 2016 Sundance Film Festival in the NEXT category, is a selection of the Venice Biennale College-Cinema 2014/2015 and the Sundance Institute Editing Intensive Fellowship. She recently produced Jody Lee Lipes' *Ballet 422*, which premiered at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival and was acquired by Magnolia Pictures and Mike Plunkett's *Salero* (2015 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam).

Crystal Moselle

Crystal Moselle is a New York-based director best known for her 2015 Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize-winning documentary *The Wolfpack*. In the last decade she has worked with short-form storytelling for publications such as *Vice*, *Nowness* and *The New York Times*. She has profiled different artists including Pharrell Williams, Shepard Fairey and a pack of 14-year-old ballerinas running through New York City.

Felix Thompson



Winner of the 2016 Kiehl's 'Someone To Watch' Independent Spirit award, Felix Thompson is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. His previous short films have been in competition at film festivals such as SXSW, Tribeca and the London Film Festival. His first feature film *King Jack* was selected for Sundance Institute's Creative Producing Initiative and won the Audience Award for Best Narrative Feature at the 2015 Tribeca Film Festival. Thompson received his MA in Screenwriting from the Royal Holloway University of London and currently lives in Los Angeles.

Yared Zeleke

Yared Zeleke has a BA in International Development from Clark University and an MFA in Film Directing from New York University. His first feature film *Lamb* screened in the Un Certain Regard section at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival. It was the first Ethiopian film to be included in the Official Selection.

The Sundance Institute FilmTwo Initiative is made possible by founding support from NBCUniversal.

The Sundance Institute Feature Film Program is supported by The Annenberg Foundation; Alfred P. Sloan Foundation; YouTube; RT Features; Time Warner Foundation; Amazon Studios; Jeanne Donovan Fisher; Hollywood Foreign Press Association; National Endowment for the Arts; NHK Enterprises, Inc.; Manish Mundra; The Ammon Foundation; Firestone / von Winterfeldt Family Fund; Technicolor; the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; SAGindie; The Ray and Dagmar Dolby Family Fund; Grazka Taylor; and A3 Foundation.

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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