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Contact: Seanna Hore, Ginsberg/Libby
Seanna.Hore@ginsberglibby.com

Gladys Santos, Ginsberg/Libby
Gladys.Santos@ginsberglibby.com

FILM INDEPENDENT ANNOUNCES EPISODIC LAB PARTICIPANTS

Netflix Returns as Founding Sponsor Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Awards \$20,000 Grant

LOS ANGELES (August 8, 2025) Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization that produces the Spirit Awards, announced the six writers selected for the 2025 Episodic Lab. Bryce Cracknell, Spencer Jamison, Rom Lotan, Lilian T. Mehrel, Leah Sarbib and Ida Yazdi were chosen for the intensive program that runs August 11 - 22 and is designed to provide individualized story and career development for writers with original pilots for television.

This year's Episodic Lab is a two-week in-person program that helps further the careers of its Fellows by introducing them to industry veterans who offer guidance on both the craft and business of writing episodic content. Through personalized feedback from experienced showrunners, creative producers and executives, Fellows will gain the tools to revise and refine their pilots and navigate a changing industry landscape. A final networking and pitch event will offer Fellows the opportunity to introduce themselves and their work to studio and network executives.

"Amidst the changing landscape for television writers, we're honored to have the opportunity to uplift such bold and innovative voices in the Episodic Lab," said Dea Vazquez, Associate Director of Fiction Programs. "We're thrilled to work with these writers in the program where we will nurture the development of their projects and careers and cannot wait to continue to support them as they progress forward in the television industry."

The Episodic Lab Creative Advisors and Guest Speakers include Christian Alvarez, KJ Booze, Wendy Calhoun, Sera Gamble, Emmeline Yang Hankins, Eric Heisserer, Anil Kurian, Marvin Lemus, Kyle Lau, Felischa Marye, Dani Melia, Caroline Mak, Marc Mounier, Adriana Nassar, Van B. Nguyen, Robbie Pickering, Erica Rosbe, Jasmine Russ, Eddie Quintana, Loretta Ramos, Gina Reyes, Beth Schacter and Ellen Shanman.

As Founding Sponsor, Netflix is deeply committed to supporting each year's selected Fellows, providing them with opportunities to learn from showrunners helming Netflix shows. This unique access to a premier entertainment company like Netflix is a crucial step in helping the Fellows move forward in their careers.

Film Independent is excited to award this year's Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Grant to Lilian T. Mehrel, who will receive a \$20,000 grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to support the development of their pilot, *Baddies*, through the Episodic Lab. Awarded to outstanding writers whose screenplays integrate science or technology

themes and characters into dramatic stories, the Sloan Episodic Lab Grant is part of the Foundation's nationwide film program to advance public understanding of science and technology.

Past Episodic Lab Fellows include April Shih, who has written on FX's *Fargo*, *Dave*, *Mrs. America*, *You're the Worst*, and struck an overall deal at FX Productions; Kimi Lee, who wrote on Amazon's *Expats*, Apple's *The Morning Show*, and sold her show *\$ugar* in a four-way bidding war to Hulu; Henry "Hank" Jones, who has written on ABC's *Will Trent* and Apple's *Truth Be Told*; KD Dávila, who has written on CBS' *Salvation* and Freeform's *Motherland: Fort Salem*; Stephanie Adams-Santos, who has written on The CW's *Two Sentence Horror Stories*; Van B. Nguyen, who is a writer on CBS' *Blue Bloods*, and Eddie Quintana, who has written on Fox's *Duncanville*, ABC's *Not Dead Yet* and NBC's *Lopez vs Lopez*.

Film Independent Artist Development programs promote unique independent voices by helping filmmakers create and advance new work through Project Involve, Documentary Producing Lab, Documentary Story Lab, Episodic Lab, Episodic Directing Intensive, Screenwriting Lab, Producing Lab, Fast Track finance market and Fiscal Sponsorship, as well as through grants and awards that provide over one million dollars annually to visual storytellers. For more information on any of the Labs, or the projects that have been developed in them, please contact artistdevelopment@filmindependent.org. Additional information can be found at filmindependent.org.

The Film Independent Episodic Lab is supported by Netflix and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

The Episodic Lab participants and their projects are:

Baddies

Writers: Lilian T. Mehrel

Logline: A (romantic) comedy series about the team who works at Baddies — a dating app using behavioral science to undo their bad rap, beat the competition, oh and help people find love. If they can figure it out for themselves first.

Cycle Four

Writers: Leah Sarbib

Logline: In The Domain, where nobody dies or gives birth, Miriam's visions prove to be memories of an erased past that can no longer be ignored.

Golden

Writers: Ida Yazdi

Logline: A rebellious, young Iranian immigrant shakes off family traditions and becomes a sugar baby to the wealthy women of Tehrangeles. In a whirlwind of wealth, desire, and eccentric clients, he carves out his own path to the American Dream.

Lacuna

Writers: Bryce Cracknell

Logline: A haunted soldier is conscripted into a secret mission inside the Lacuna, a surreal, perilous realm where myths are real, time is unstable, and his past awaits.

Subpar

Writers: Spencer Jamison

Logline: After a public meltdown, a disgraced LPGA golfer returns home, where coaching her half-sister's struggling golf team may be her only shot at redemption.

Zero Trust

Writers: Rom Lotan

Logline: When high-powered companies are hacked and every second costs millions, elite cybersecurity expert Amelia Hayes and her response team are called in to contain the breach. However, the most dangerous vulnerabilities aren't in the code- they're in people's blind spots.

ABOUT THE ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation is a New York based, philanthropic, not-for-profit institution that makes grants for research in science, technology and economics; quality and diversity of scientific institutions; and public engagement with science. Sloan's program in Public Understanding of Science and Technology, directed by Doron Weber, supports Books, Radio & Podcasts, Film, Television, Theater, YouTube & TikTok, and New Media to reach a wide, non-specialized audience and to bridge the two cultures of science and the humanities.

Sloan's Film Program encourages filmmakers to create more realistic and compelling stories about science and technology and to challenge existing stereotypes about scientists and engineers in the popular imagination. Over the past two decades, Sloan has partnered with a dozen leading film schools and established annual awards in screenwriting and film production. The Foundation also supports screenplay development programs with the Sundance Institute, SFFILM, Film Independent, The Black List, the Athena Film Festival and Toronto International Film Festival. The Sloan Film Program has supported over 850 film projects and has helped develop over 30 feature films, including *Tesla*, *Radium Girls*, *Adventures of a Mathematician*, *One Man Dies a Million Times*, *The Sound of Silence*, *To Dust*, *Operator*, *The Imitation Game* and *The Man Who Knew Infinity*. The Foundation has supported feature documentaries such as Werner Herzog's *Theater of Thought*, David France's *How to Survive a Pandemic*, *Picture a Scientist*, *Coded Bias*, *In Silico*, *Oliver Sacks: His Own Life*, *The Bit Player*, *Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story*, *Particle Fever* and Jacques Perrin's *Oceans*. It has also given early award recognition to stand out films such as *Don't Look Up*, *After Yang*, *Linoleum*, *Son of Monarchs*, *Ammonite*, *The Aeronauts*, *Searching*, *The Martian*, *First Man* and *Hidden Figures*.

The Foundation's book program includes early support for *Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race*, the best-selling book that became the highest grossing Oscar®-nominated film of 2017, and Kai Bird & Martin Sherwin's Pulitzer Prize-winning *American Prometheus*, adapted for the screen in Christopher Nolan's hit film *Oppenheimer*.

For more information visit sloan.org or follow @SloanPublic on X, Instagram or Facebook.

ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT

For over 40 years, Film Independent has helped filmmakers get their projects made and seen. The nonprofit organization's core mission is to champion creative independence in visual storytelling in all its forms, and to foster a culture of inclusion. We support a global community of artists and audiences who embody diversity, innovation, curiosity and uniqueness of vision.

In addition to producing the [Film Independent Spirit Awards](#), the organization supports creative professionals with [Artist Development](#) programs, grants and labs. Signature mentorship program [Project Involve](#) fosters the careers of talented filmmakers from underrepresented communities. Education events and workshops equip filmmakers of all ages and experience levels with tools and resources. International programs provide cultural exchanges and career-building opportunities for film professionals around the world. And year-round screening series [Film Independent Presents](#) offers a robust program of unique cinematic experiences, including screenings, conversations, Live Reads and Bring the Noise musical events.

For more information or to become a Member, visit filmindependent.org.

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