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FILM INDEPENDENT ANNOUNCES 2025 FICTION AND NONFICTION PRODUCING LAB FELLOWS

**\$30,000 Alfred P. Sloan Producers Grant Awarded to David Rafailedes
and \$10,000 MPAC Hollywood Bureau Fellowship Awarded to Khaula Malik**

LOS ANGELES, CA (September 30, 2025) — Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization behind the Film Independent Spirit Awards, has announced the filmmakers selected for two of its 2025 Artist Development Labs: seven producers for the **Fiction Producing Lab** and six producers for the **Documentary Producing Lab**.

Celebrating its 25th year, the Fiction Producing Lab, taking place October 6-17, and the second annual Documentary Producing Lab, which concluded September 19, are intensive programs designed to strengthen the craft and careers of independent producers. Fellows in both labs work closely with industry professionals and advisors to refine their projects and gain practical insights into the art and business of producing. Lab participants receive mentorship, resources and strategic guidance, while joining Film Independent's year-round community of Fellows with access to grants, awards and ongoing support.

The 2025 Fiction Producing Lab Fellows are Ashim Ahuja, Gabrielle Cordero, Ebony Elaine Hardin, Betty Hu, Adam Kopp, David Rafailedes and Rui Xu. The 2025 Documentary Producing Lab Fellows are: Jacob Fertig, Beth Levison, Hansen Lin, Khaula Malik, DaManuel Richardson and Bryn Silverman.

"The 2025 Film Independent Producing Lab Fellows are building resilience and refining the craft needed to sustain long careers in both fiction and nonfiction," said Daniel Cardone, Senior Manager of Nonfiction Programs & Fiscal Sponsorship. "As producing independent films becomes more of an uphill climb in today's marketplace, we're proud to provide a space for Fellows to further develop their bold and innovative projects and

create a community that will continue to support them for many years to come,” added Dea Vazquez, Associate Director of Fiction Programs.

Film Independent will present the Alfred P. Sloan Producers Grant to David Rafealedes for *Satoshi*. The Sloan Producers Grant recognizes an outstanding project that incorporates science or technology themes into a dramatic narrative. The grant is part of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation’s nationwide initiative to advance public understanding of science and technology through film.

Additionally, the MPAC Hollywood Bureau Fellowship, a \$10,000 grant awarded to a filmmaker who identifies as American Muslim, will go to Documentary Producing Lab Fellow Khaula Malik for *Dear You*.

With support from The Harnisch Foundation, all Producing Lab Fellows will receive professional coaching from Renee Freedman & Company, enhancing their professional growth and positioning them for long-term success.

Producing Lab Fellows will also receive support from Film Independent’s recently launched Artist Sustainability Fund, providing sustainability grants in recognition of the time and talent of the participating filmmakers, alongside essential program support.

Advisors and Guest Speakers for the Fiction Producing Lab include Tyler Boehm, Jon Coplon, Fanshen Cox, Sheila Hanahan Taylor, Daniel Tantalean, Chris Kaye, Ben LeClair, Amanda Marshall, Alexandria Martin, Lauren Mann, Khaliah Neal, Ryan Paine, Anne-Elisa Schaffer, Lauren Shelton, Annalisa Shoemaker, Lena Vurma, Monique Walton and Zoë Worth. Fellows will also receive complimentary access to Rightscenter, a premier database and concierge research service for film and television literary rights.

Lead Producing Advisors for the Documentary Producing Lab included Ina Fichman, Diane Becker, Alys Nahmias, Trevite Willis, Megan Gilbride and Danielle Varga. Guest Speakers included Sarba Das, Amit Dey, Steven Berger, Orly Ravid and Annalisa Shoemaker.

COMPLETE LIST OF 2025 FICTION AND DOCUMENTARY PROJECTS

The 2025 Fiction Producing Lab Fellows and their projects are:

Altrove

Producer: Gabrielle Cordero

Logline: After the family breaks apart, an Italian immigrant, an Afro-Latina American woman and their 7-year-old son struggle to find a sense of home. A revealing exploration of each of their lives uncovers the depths of their regrets, fears and sorrows, as well as their journey towards acceptance.

Challenger: An American Dream

Producer: Adam Kopp

Logline: A seventeen-year-old student, who is in love with her favorite teacher, Mrs. McAuliffe, strums the right chord on her Stratocaster and enters a wormhole that takes her back in time to the night of the Challenger explosion, beginning her fantastical journey to save her teacher and prevent the disaster.

Satoshi*

Co-writer/Producer: David Rafailides

Logline: After her family loses everything in the 2008 financial crisis, a teenage anime-obsessed hacktivist realizes money isn't fair, so she sets out to reinvent it with a new currency called Bitcoin.

*2025 Film Independent Alfred P. Sloan Producers Grant Recipient

Trashy People

Producer: Ebony Elaine Hardin

Logline: Stripped of her future by a lost scholarship, a brilliant teen infiltrates the college system from the inside—working at the recycling center by day and crashing lectures by night—all in a desperate quest to revolutionize plastic recycling and prove she belongs.

Uncle Hiep's Casino

Producers: Betty Hu, Rui Xu

Logline: Somewhere between his mother's house and his uncle's illegal casino, an ex-prisoner finds a new life.

With Your Permission

Producer: Ashim Ahuja

Logline: A dark comedy about three Iranian-American Muslim sisters navigating their relationship to intimacy when they discover their widowed mother is getting remarried, forcing them to re-examine everything they thought they knew about love, family and forgiveness.

The 2025 Documentary Producing Lab Fellows and their projects are:**Abstract**

Producer: Jacob Fertig

Logline: Two searches are underway in the deserts of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands—the most surveilled border region in the world. One seeks the dead, the other stalks the living. Each pursues the migrant body beyond recognition. What is lost – ethically, emotionally, and politically – when we fail to see beyond systems of control?

Artificial Horizon

Producers: DaManuel Richardson

Logline: *Artificial Horizon* explores the social and natural histories of former plantation land in Alabama, an origin point for the filmmaker's family, whose members live on either side of (and sometimes cross) the "color line." The film examines how boundaries are inscribed and looks to plants as models for subverting systems of control.

Dear You*

Producer: Khaula Malik

Logline: After escaping an abusive marriage and fleeing to the US, Grace James finds herself trapped in the US asylum system for 10 years. In this poetic portrait of a woman in limbo, haunting memories begin to resurface of Grace's past life and her disappearing homeland—the island nation of Kiribati.

*2025 MPAC Hollywood Bureau Fellowship Grant Recipient

Postmortem

Producer: Beth Levison

Logline: *Postmortem*, a cross-platform project, is a boundary-pushing, family crime drama about an abused girl who didn't tell her childhood secret and the woman she becomes, who does.

Pinball

Producer: Bryn Silverman

Logline: A feature documentary that follows 19-year-old Yosef in suburban Louisville, Kentucky as he dives into the memories of his journey from Iraq to America and what it ultimately means for him to chase his dreams in the shadow of a war that displaced his family from their Iraqi homeland.

Queens Ballroom

Producer: Hansen Lin

Logline: In a New York ballroom, Asian American immigrants are transported through dance, revisiting worlds they left behind and lives created anew.

The Fiction Producing Lab is supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, The Harnisch Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Documentary Producing Lab is also supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Film Independent Producing Labs have supported acclaimed films including *In the Summers* (Sundance Grand Jury Prize), *The Inspection* (TIFF, NYFF, released by A24), *Joyland* (Cannes Un Certain Regard, Spirit Award winner), *All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt* (Spirit Award nominee), and *Songs My Brothers Taught Me* (Spirit Award nominee), as well as *Natchez* (Tribeca Best Documentary), *Ascension* (Academy Award nominee), *Minding the Gap* (Academy Award nominee, Spirit Award winner) and *United Skates* (Emmy Award nominee), among others.

These Labs are part of Film Independent's Artist Development Programs, the slate of which includes many other opportunities for storytellers: the Screenwriting Lab, Episodic Lab, Episodic Directing Intensive, Documentary Story Lab, Fast Track finance market, Fiscal Sponsorship and of course, signature program Project Involve. For more information on any of the Labs or the projects that have been supported by Film Independent Artist Development, please contact Dea Vazquez, Associate Director of Fiction Programs, at dvazquez@filmindependent.org or Daniel Cardone, Senior Manager of Nonfiction Programs & Fiscal Sponsorship, at dcardone@filmindependent.org.

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 *Twisters*, *Oppenheimer*, *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. [Global Media Makers](#), a cultural exchange program produced in partnership with the U.S. Department of State, provides career-building opportunities for international film professionals. 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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