FILM INDEPENDENT SELECTS 14 PROJECTS AND 35 FILMMAKERS FOR THE 24TH FAST TRACK FILM FINANCE MARKET

Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and MPAC® Hollywood Bureau Award $30,000 to Selected Filmmakers

LOS ANGELES (November 17, 2026) — Film Independent, the nonprofit behind the Spirit Awards, announced the 14 projects and 35 filmmakers selected for its 24th annual Fast Track Film Finance Market, taking place in person November 16–18, 2026. Designed as a catalyst for bold new voices, The three-day market connects the participants with established financiers, production companies, agents, managers and other key industry professionals who can propel their current projects forward.

Film Independent is awarding $30,000 in grants through two Fast Track fellowships.

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation is awarding $20,000 to Zach Bandler, Victor Mazzone and Lou Wang-Holborn for their project *Altered*. The fellowship recognizes outstanding projects that explore science and technology through their themes or characters in engaging and innovative ways.

The MPAC® Hollywood Bureau is awarding $10,000 to Aqsa Altaf for their project *Mirage*. The fellowship supports a filmmaker who identifies as American Muslim.

“This year’s Fast Track lineup is a vibrant mix of fiction and nonfiction projects that showcase the imagination, originality and remarkable range of voices shaping independent cinema,” said Dea Vazquez, Associate Director of Fiction Programs.

“At a time when the path to getting independent films made is more challenging than ever, Fast Track creates a vital space for discovery, collaboration and new possibilities. We’re excited to introduce these exceptional filmmakers to industry leaders who can champion their work, spark meaningful partnerships and help propel their projects forward,” said Daniel Cardone, Senior Manager of Nonfiction Programs and Fiscal Sponsorship.

Previous Fast Track projects include Adam Meeks’ *Union County*, produced by Brad Becker-Parton and Faye Tsakas, which premiered at the 2026 Sundance Film Festival and was released this summer by Oscilloscope; Jing Ai Ng’s *Forge,* produced by Liz Daering-Glass, which premiered at the 2025 SXSW Film Festival and was released this spring by Utopia; Shih-

Ching Tsou's *Left-Handed Girl*, co-written, edited and produced by Sean Baker which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival and was acquired by Netflix.

Other notable projects include the Academy Award-nominated *Minding the Gap*; *Holding Liat* , winner of the 2025 Berlinale Documentary Award, directed by Brandon Kramer and produced by Lance Kramer; Raven Jackson's *All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt,* produced by Maria Altamirano, which was released by A24; Saim Sadiq's Cannes Un Certain Regard Jury Prize Winner *Joyland,* produced by Apoorva Charan. Other notable filmmakers who have participated in the program include Ana Lily Amirpour, James Ponsoldt, Tina Mabry, Lana Wilson and Chloé Zhao.

Industry participants include A24, ABL Casting / Independent, Anonymous Content, Apple TV, Artists Equity, Bankside Films, Berlinale Generation, Big Beach, Bleecker Street, CAA, Cinema Inutile, Cinephil, Cinetic Media, Closer Media, Dirty Films / Proof of Concept, Duplass Brothers, Entertainment 360, Ethos Film Labs, FilmNation Entertainment, Fruit Tree, FVV media, Giant Pictures, Drafthouse Films, Hulu / The Walt Disney Company, Impact Partners, Independent Artist Group, Jigsaw Productions, Kinema, Kino Lorber Media Group, Ley Line Entertainment, Lit Entertainment Group, MACRO, Magnolia Pictures, National Geographic, Netflix, Orange Entertainment, Oscilloscope Laboratories, Oxbelly, Perspective Fund, Pinky Promise, Pressman Film, Radiant Films International, Rich Spirit, Roadside Attractions, Saturnia, Searchlight Pictures, SFFILM, Sony Pictures Classics, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Sundance Institute, The Film Collaborative, The Film Sales Company, The Gotham, Tinygiant, Toronto International Film Festival, Tribeca Films, Tribeca Studios, Unanimous Media, Unapologetic Projects, Verve Literary & Talent Agency, Visit Films, Winter Coat Films and WME.

Film Independent Creative Development and Production programs promote unique independent voices by helping filmmakers create and advance new work through Project Involve, the Documentary Producing Lab, Documentary Story Lab, Episodic Lab, Screenwriting Lab, Producing Labs, Fast Track Film 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 2026 Fast Track Film Finance Market is supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, MPAC® Hollywood Bureau and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The following filmmakers and their projects were selected to participate in Film Independent's 2026 Fast Track program:

FICTION TRACK

A Good Commotion
Writer/Director: Serville Poblete
Producers: Neil Champagne, Nicole Dane
Logline: Jeremy is 25, unemployed, living at home—which is already embarrassing enough. Then his 89-year-old grandmother with dementia moves into his bedroom: a woman who never raised him and barely remembers him. As he fumbles into caregiving, both of them are figuring out who they are.

Altered*
Writer/Director: Zach Bandler
Producers: Victor Mazzone, Lou Wang-Holborn

Logline: In 1989, a disillusioned neurologist reluctantly joins a tenacious legal assistant to defend a mother convicted of murder, risking his career to prove that the monster everyone sees is a woman whose own brain has betrayed her.
*2026 Film Independent Alfred P. Sloan Fast Track Grant Recipient

Bad at Sex
Writer/Director: Honora Talbott
Producer: Chloe Sabin
Logline: A struggling documentarian spirals when she discovers she's not her boyfriend's best sex. To save her career and ego—she makes a documentary interviewing everyone she's ever slept with.

Call Cutters
Writer/Director: Peter Edlund
Producer: Megan Leonard
Logline: An underdog sports comedy about a motley crew of night shift employees who band together to overthrow the call center where they work.

Digital Dolls
Writer/Director: Julia Ponce Díaz
Producer: Gia Rigoli
Logline: A teenage girl in rural Spain clings to her online friendship with a distant soulmate, only to discover that the truth behind the screen is more fragile, painful, and real than she ever imagined.

Eggplant
Writer/Director: Yung Chang
Producer: Julian Geneen
Logline: A young con woman in rural China plans one last marriage scam to buy her freedom, but when a former lover resurfaces unexpectedly, he threatens to expose her operation and forces her to choose between survival and self-determination.

Mirage*
Writers/Directors: Aqsa Altaf, John X. Carey
Producer: Séverine Tibi
Logline: In the shadow of Dubai's glittering skyline, a desperate migrant worker sets out to reclaim his confiscated passport, determined to return home to Pakistan before time—and his sense of self—slip away.
**2026 MPAC® Hollywood Bureau Fellowship Recipient

Real Friends
Writers/Directors: Andrew Gerstenblatt, Arthur Goldbart
Producer: Ben Ephraim
Logline: An anxious young man is thrown head-first into the perils and hilarities of adulthood when his imaginary British best friend miraculously comes to life.

Succor
Writer/Director: Hannah Cheesman
Producers: Jen Goyne Blake, Mike MacMillan
Logline: Coaxed back into dating by her wealthy best friend, a vulnerable artist falls for a digital lover, unaware he is secretly performed by the very woman she trusts the most.

DOCUMENTARY TRACK

Flyover
Director/Producer: Brian White
Producers: Nicole Jordan-Webber, Martha Gregory
Logline: Through a hybrid blend of documentary and fiction, *Flyover* follows nine residents of rural Missouri, whose working lives reveal a community negotiating what it means to stay, leave, and belong.

My First Phone
Directors/Producers: Mishka Kornai and Zach Wechter
Producer: Zak Piper
Logline: *My First Phone* is a longitudinal documentary following four kids across the United States before, during, and after they receive their first smartphones.

Sentinels
Director: Julia Klein
Producer: Paloma Iturriaga
Logline: When glacial collapse threatens his town, a Peruvian farmer and mountain guide sues a European energy giant in a decade-long lawsuit, while teaching his daughter the meaning of home.

The Snake Rescuer's Son
Director/Producer: Melissa Lesh
Producer: Mridu Chandra
Logline: In the snakebite capital of the world, a rebellious young snake rescuer longs to reconnect with his legendary father as he takes up the dangerous family trade.

You Deserve to Die
Director: Jo Honig
Producer: Carol Klein
Logline: *You Deserve to Die* is the bizarre true story of how a group of enraged “gamers” wrote the playbook for weaponizing social media, as told by those they relentlessly targeted.

ABOUT THE ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION
The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation is a New York based, philanthropic, not-for-profit institution that makes grants in three areas: 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 & Podcast, Film, Television, Theater, New Media, and YouTube & TikTok 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, and the Toronto International Film Festival. The 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 *Love Apptually, John Lily and the Earth Coincidence Control Office, The White House Effect,* Ken Burns’ *Leonardo da Vinci,*

Vishniac, Join or Die, 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 *Project Hail Mary, Frankenstein Twisters, Oppenheimer, BlackBerry, Don't Look Up, After Yang, 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 Instagram or X.

ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT
For over 40 years, Film Independent has championed creative independence and helped filmmakers get their projects made and seen. The nonprofit organization supports a global community of artists and audiences united by a love of film, a spirit of discovery and a belief in the power of storytelling to connect us. With inclusion at its core, Film Independent celebrates bold voices, original perspectives and the exchange of ideas across disciplines and cultures.

Through artist development programs, grants, labs and its signature mentorship program Project Involve, Film Independent gives filmmakers the resources and community to build sustainable creative lives. Educational programs equip storytellers of all experience levels with practical tools, while international initiatives foster cultural exchange and collaboration. The Film Independent Spirit Awards celebrate exceptional achievement in independent film, television, and new media. Year-round programming brings artists and audiences together through screenings, conversations, Live Reads®, and other shared cultural experiences.

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

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