



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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

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

FILM INDEPENDENT ANNOUNCES 2022 EPISODIC LAB PARTICIPANTS
Netflix Returns as Founding Sponsor
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Awards \$20,000 Episodic Grant
MPAC Hollywood Bureau Awards \$10,000 Writing Grant

LOS ANGELES (September 20, 2022) - Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization that produces the Film Independent Spirit Awards, announced the eight writers selected for its sixth annual Episodic Lab. Christopher Au, Erica Bardin, Terry Dawson, Ben Gonzales, GG Hawkins, Sarah Mokh, Miguel Orozco, Boris Rodriguez were chosen for this intensive program, designed to provide individualized story and career development for emerging television writers with original pilots.

This year's Episodic Lab is a two-week intensive virtual program that helps to 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.

The 2022 Episodic Lab Creative Advisors and Guest Speakers include Linda Yvette Chávez, Silka Luisa, Robbie Pickering, Rebecca Sonnenshine, Ligiah Villalobos, Patrick Magill, Stacy Rukeyser, Jessica Schulman, Marc Mounier, Eliza Wheeler, Elaine Chin, Sydney Lowe, Laura Garrison, Miura Kite, Ellen Shanman, Kelly Kulchak, and Sheila Hanahan Taylor.

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

"We're incredibly proud to partner with Film Independent on their signature program for emerging television writers," says Peter Friedlander, VP of Scripted Series, U.S. and Canada at Netflix. "We look forward to supporting these talented eight writers over the coming weeks."

Film Independent is excited to award this year's Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Grant to Christopher Au, who will receive a \$20,000 grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to support the development of his pilot, *Cloak & Data* 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.

Christopher Au writes, "I'm honored to receive this year's Alfred P. Sloan development grant. *Cloak & Data* is a tech espionage thriller that explores the underbelly of Silicon Valley during the mobile revolution of the late 2000's, when startups were moving fast and breaking things. I appreciate the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's support for this story, which seeks to underscore the importance of information security in our increasingly digital world."

Film Independent is also excited to award the MPAC Hollywood Bureau Writing Fellowship Grant to Sarah Mokh who will receive a \$10,000 grant from the MPAC Hollywood Bureau for her pilot, *Room 099*. The MPAC Hollywood Bureau works in the entertainment industry to elevate stories by and about Muslims.

"We are proud to support writers with such wit, talent, and dedication to authentic storytelling in this year's Episodic Lab and to be able to nurture their artistic voices and careers in the program," said Dea Vazquez, Associate Director of Fiction Programs.

Past Episodic Lab Fellows include April Shih, who has written on FX's *Dave*, *Mrs. America*, and *You're the Worst* and struck an overall deal at FX Productions; Kimi Lee, who sold her show *Sugar* in a four-way bidding war to Hulu; Henry "Hank" Jones, who has written on Netflix's *Family Reunion* and Peacock's *Bel-Air*; KD Dávila, who has written on CBS's *Salvation* and Freeform's *Motherland: Fort Salem*; and Stephanie Adams-Santos, who has written on The CW's *Two Sentence Horror Stories*.

Film Independent Artist Development programs promote unique independent voices by helping filmmakers create and advance new work through Project Involve, Filmmaker Labs (Directing, Documentary, Episodic, Producing and Screenwriting), Fast Track Finance Market, Fiscal Sponsorship, as well as through Grants and Awards, that provide over one million dollars annually in cash and services to visual storytellers.

The Film Independent Episodic Lab is supported by Netflix, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

For more information on the Labs or projects that have been developed in them, please contact Dea Vazquez, Associate Director of Fiction Programs, at dvazquez@filmindependent.org

Additional information and an application form can be found at filmindependent.org.

The 2022 Episodic Lab participants and their projects are:

Title: ***Cloak & Data***

Writer: **Christopher Au**

Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Fellowship Awardee

Logline: A straight arrow software engineer is unwittingly thrust into the lucrative underground world of tech espionage, setting her on a dangerous collision course with elite hackers, law enforcement, and the NSA.

Title: ***East Los Aliens***

Writer: **Miguel Orozco, Boris Rodriguez**

Logline: After a spaceship crashes in East LA, a mixed-status Latino family rescues an alien and must find the courage to defy government officials and save the alien from an evil that could spell the end of humanity.

Title: ***Makeba***

Writer: **Terry Dawson**

Logline: In 1959 Harry Belafonte discovers South African singer Miriam Makeba in a London nightclub and invites her to America with the promise to make her a huge star. He delivers and she becomes wildly popular throughout the 60s. But when she becomes romantically involved with notorious political activist and Black Panther Stokely Carmichael she finds herself blackballed from showbiz and exiled from her country.

Title: ***Murder Podcast***

Writer: **GG Hawkins**

Logline: When a climate radio reporter is forced to investigate a cold case homicide in a rural town, her aspirations for journalistic integrity are threatened by obsessive podcast listeners — true crime junkies with a thirst for vengeance. *Murder Podcast* is a horror dramedy series about our cultural fixation with true crime.

Title: ***Room 099***

Writer: **Sarah Mokh**

MPAC, Hollywood Bureau Fellowship Awardee

Logline: In a secret basement prayer room, hidden from their peers and Ivy League Administration, a group of Muslim college students struggle to find their places on campus and in America.

Title: ***The Deed***

Writer: **Ben Gonzales, Erica Bardin**

Logline: When a struggling entrepreneur receives an unexpected inheritance with unconscionable strings attached, he must comply to protect his family from sinister forces.

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 and support a community of artists who embody diversity, innovation 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. Weekly 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](#) delivers monthly, unique cinematic experiences to Members in Los Angeles and beyond.

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