

FILM INDEPENDENT

Film Makers. Film Leaders. Film Lovers.

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FILM INDEPENDENT ANNOUNCES FILMMAKERS SELECTED IN 2009 FAST TRACK

- Recipients of HBO Documentary Film Fellowship
Announced -
- FIND Talent Guide to be published June 21 on
FilmIndependent.org -

LOS ANGELES (June 19, 2009) – Today Film Independent, the non-profit arts organization that produces the Spirit Awards and the Los Angeles Film Festival, announced the filmmakers and film projects selected for its 7th annual Fast Track program, sponsored by Eastman Kodak Company. Taking place during the Los Angeles Film Festival, which runs from June 18-28, 2009 in Westwood Village, Fast Track is an intensive, three-day film-financing market. During programmed one-on-one meetings, participants are connected with established financiers, production companies, agents, managers, and other film industry professionals who can move their current projects forward.

Industry participants include representatives from Paramount, Sony, Lionsgate, The Weinstein Company, Participant Productions, Roadside Attractions, Yari Film Group, The Film Department, River Road, Groundswell Productions, Mandalay, Film Colony, Volume One Entertainment, Camelot, Cherry Road Films, Bona Fide, Artina, Fortis Films and Contra Films, as well as agents from CAA, ICM, UTA, and The Gersh Agency.

Film Independent also announced that Kelly Duane de la Vega and Katie Galloway, co-directors of *Better This World*, are the recipients of the second annual HBO Documentary Films Fellowship for a documentary project in Fast Track. *Better This World* follows the intriguing journey of two childhood friends from Midland, Texas, who set out to prove their manhood to themselves and to Brandon Darby, a revolutionary activist turned FBI informant. The HBO Documentary Films Fellowship combines HBO's funding with Film Independent's year-round support services to give documentary

filmmakers the necessary tools to develop their craft.

"The range of Fast Track projects from both emerging and established artists and the industry's appetite to meet these filmmakers is remarkable," said Josh Welsh, Director of Talent Development for Film Independent. "HBO Documentary Films' support to open Fast Track to the documentary community has resulted in amazing new projects over the past two years."

"By supporting filmmakers like Kelly and Katie, we encourage artists, from all disciplines, to explore telling their stories through non-fiction filmmaking," said Dawn Hudson, Executive Director of Film Independent. "Fast Track has been a highly successful program for us during the Festival in that it cultivates and sustains the careers of independent filmmakers in a real-world setting, and also allows top industry executives to discover new talent."

Fast Track is free to accepted filmmakers, and upon completion, participants become Film Independent Fellows, and receive year-round support, including access to Film Independent's annual film educational offerings, on-staff Filmmaker Advisor, and the Los Angeles Film Festival.

Recent projects developed through Fast Track include Cherien Dabis' *Amreeka*, which recently won the FIPRESCI award at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival; Courtney Hunt's Academy Award and Spirit Award-nominated *Frozen River*; Jennifer Westfeldt's *Ira and Abby*, which had its world premiere at the 2006 Los Angeles Film Festival; Jessica Sanders' award-winning documentary *After Innocence*; and Scott Prendergast's feature *Kabluey*, which had its world premiere at the 2007 Los Angeles Film Festival.

Film Independent will also release its annual New Talent Guide on its website starting Sunday, June 21 at www.FilmIndependent.org/talentguide and at the Los Angeles Film Festival. The Guide profiles 85 Film Independent Fellows accepted into its talent development program over the last year.

The 2009 Fast Track filmmakers and their projects are:

1. ***Better This World (Documentary)*** - *Better This World* follows the dramatic journey of two childhood friends from Midland, Texas who set out to prove their manhood to themselves and a revolutionary activist -- turned FBI informant. The result: eight homemade bombs, multiple domestic terrorism charges, and a controversial entrapment defense.

Kelly Duane de la Vega, Director/Producer - Duane de la Vega is an award-winning documentary filmmaker. Her feature

documentaries have been shown in hundreds of film festivals around the world and broadcast on PBS stations and on the Documentary Channel. Her most recent film, *Monumental: David Brower's Fight for Wild America*, was nominated for a 2009 Emmy award, opened theatrically nationwide and was selected by the New York Film Society to screen at Lincoln Center. Called "stylish and substantial" by *Variety* and "engrossing" by *LA Weekly*, the film is part of the environmental studies curriculum in more than 50 universities including Yale, Harvard, UC Berkeley, and Stanford. She is currently producing *Uploaded*, a television series for IFC that focuses on emerging culture, and is scheduled to air in 2009.

Katie Galloway, Director/Producer - Galloway has produced, directed and reported more than 15 hours of documentary television. Her work has received numerous awards and honors, including the Society of Professional Journalist's best documentary prize and two Emmy nominations. Most recently, Galloway directed and produced the feature documentary *Prison Town, USA* - a look at the impact of prison expansion on rural America. Called "documentary making at it's best" by *The San Francisco Chronicle* and "intriguing" by *The New York Times*, the film aired on the national series P.O.V. in 2007 and won Air America's best documentary prize. She taught documentary production at the Columbia University School of Journalism and now teaches in the Media Studies department at U.C. Berkeley.

2. Day Dream (Narrative) - *Day Dream* is a feature-length drama that follows the jazz composer Billy Strayhorn as he travels to New Orleans to investigate the myths and legends surrounding Buddy Bolden, the forefather of modern jazz who spent the last 24 years of his life in a mental institution.

Rodney Evans, Writer/Director - Evans is the recipient of IFP's Gordon Parks Award for Screenwriting for his screenplay, *Brother To Brother*. He also received funding from ITVS, The Jerome Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation and The National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC) towards the writing and production of that project. *Brother To Brother* premiered at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival where it won the Special Jury Prize in Drama. The film was nominated for 4 Spirit Awards including Best First Film and Best First Screenplay. It aired nationally on the PBS Series, *Independent Lens* in June 2005. His autobiographical film, *Close To Home*, has been shown at over 30 film festivals throughout the world. The script for *Day Dream* is the first-place winner of the 2008 Newfest Screenplay competition. Evans is a Creative Capital Grantee and a Guggenheim Fellow for 2008-2009.

Shelby Stone, Producer - Stone is an award-winning producer whose works include HBO's Emmy, Golden Globe, and Image Award winning

Lackawanna Blues, which premiered at Sundance 2005 and the critically acclaimed films *Boycott*, *The Middle Passage*, and *Lumumba*. Stone began her career as an independent film executive working in marketing, acquisitions, and finally production before launching her own production company with *Drop Squad*, a Spike Lee/40 Acres and a Mule production. Currently she is the Senior Vice President of Development and Production at Foxx/King Entertainment, a newly formed company led by Jamie Foxx, Jaime King, and Marcus King. *Life Support*, Stone's latest film, was produced in conjunction with Foxx/King Entertainment with Nelson George as writer and director. Starring Queen Latifah, *Life Support* premiered at Sundance 2007 and was the closing night presentation. Stone is the 2007 recipient of the Black Women Film Preservation's Trail Blazer Award.

3. *La Muñeca Fea (The Ugly Doll)* (Documentary) - A group of elderly sex workers in Mexico City seek peace and find community behind the walls of Casa Xochiquetzal, a refuge established by one of their former colleagues.

George Reyes, Director - Reyes has produced and directed numerous award-winning short films that have been exhibited throughout the United States and internationally. He was awarded the Stride Rite and Echoing Green Public Service Fellowships for his work as director of the Teen Media Program at the Cambridge Community Art Center and while there, founded the Do it Your Damn Self Inner City Film Festival with his students. He later became director of International Programs at the New York Film Academy, and then became a tenured professor in the Communications Department at the Tecnologico de Monterrey in Mexico City. Reyes later worked for the Sundance Film Festival, Outfest, and Sundance Institute in their International Feature Film Program. Most recently, George has been working with children with autism and other learning disabilities while co-directing his first feature documentary, *La Muñeca Fea (The Ugly Doll)* with Claudia Lopez.

Nekisa Cooper, Producer - Cooper, an accomplished marketer and emerging producing talent is an inaugural Sundance Creative Producing Initiative Fellow and a 2009 Film Independent Project Involve producing fellow. She has produced short films, including the award-winning short *Pariah*, which screened at over 40 festivals, including the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, and won over 25 film festival awards, including the Audience Award at the 2007 Los Angeles Film Festival. Most recently, Cooper was selected as one of two producers to represent IFP at the 2009 Rotterdam Producing Lab. In 2005, she produced the short, *Orange Bow*, which screened at the 2006 Tribeca Film Festival and aired on BET-Jazz. Cooper is also partnered with award-winning writer/director Dee Rees in producing the Sundance Documentary Fund-supported feature *Eventual Salvation*, which she represented

at the 2007 Sundance Institute's Producers' Conference and will air on the Sundance Channel in Fall/Winter 2009.

4. *Learning Uncle Vernon* (Narrative) - An orphaned thirteen-year-old boy is forced to face the unpleasant truth about his only father figure during one harrowing day on the mean streets of Baltimore.

Sheldon Candis, Director - Candis is a Baltimore native and a graduate of the USC School of Cinematic Arts. His short film *Sonny Listening*, a coming-of-age boxing drama, has played at over 20 film festivals worldwide and is being distributed by Russell Simmons through his Simmons Lathan Media Group. With his writing partner Justin Wilson, Candis wrote the screenplay *Golden Boy*, which chronicles Olympic great Jesse Owens and his triumphant rise from a poverty-stricken childhood to symbolically defeating Adolph Hitler at the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. Candis' first documentary *The Dwelling* is being distributed domestically by Scion and Asian pop-culture magazine *Giant Robot*.

Jason Berman, Producer - Berman is the co-founder of FilmForward Independent, LLC. Along with his partner Michael Jenson, FilmForward Independent's objective is to create a direct outlet for young and emerging filmmakers from the USC School of Cinematic Arts. FilmForward Independent is the first company to hold this unique partnership with the USC School of Cinematic Arts and currently is developing a slate of 20 projects scheduled for production or sale within the next 6 months.

Berman recently wrapped production on his first feature film entitled *The Dry Land*, which he co-produced along with Heather Rae (*Frozen River*), and Mark Mathis (*Brick*). The film was written and directed by Ryan Piers Williams, whose USC thesis film Jason also produced. *The Dry Land* stars America Ferrera, Melissa Leo, Wilmer Valderrama, and Ryan O'Nan. The film was financed and will be distributed by Maya Entertainment in the Fall of 2009.

5. *Neither the Veil Nor the Four Walls* (Narrative)

In a post 9/11 Pakistan, a young mother goes on an extraordinary and dangerous journey to save her eight year old daughter from an arranged marriage.

Afia Nathaniel, Director - Nathaniel is the Founder of Zambeel Films in Pakistan, a production company for independent feature films. She has won several awards for her screenplay *Neither the Veil nor the Four Walls*, including the Ezra Litwak Distinction in Screenwriting, IFP Market Emerging Narrative award. The screenplay was chosen by the 2007 Nicholl Fellowship as one of the top 100 screenplays from around the world. Nathaniel's directorial debut, the short film *Nadah*, premiered in Rotterdam

in 2003 and was nominated for the Golden Reel Award in Los Angeles. Her writing debut *Butterfly* won several awards including Audience Choice Award at Asia-Expo, France, Best International Short in Napa Valley, and Best Graduate Film at the Ivy Film Festival. Nathaniel's thesis short film, *Long After*, was a recipient of the prestigious HBO Development Award, Milos Forman Finishing Fund and a post-production grant from The Caucus For Television Producers, Writers & Directors Foundation. The film premiered at the Montreal Film Festival and is being distributed by Ouat Media. Nathaniel graduated from Columbia University with an MFA in Film Directing & Screenwriting.

René Bastian, Producer - Bastian is the founder of Belladonna Productions Inc. In 1995 he partnered with producer Linda Moran, and in the last 12 years, they have produced or co-produced a large number of acclaimed feature films such as *Sue, LIE, Transamerica, A Guide to Recognizing Your Saints* and the recent *Funny Games*. Bastian has also produced countless commercials and music videos for clients such as American Express, T-Mobile, DHL, Qantas Airlines, Mercedes Benz and Panasonic. For his accomplishments in film production, he was awarded the Motorola Producer of the Year award at the 2001 Spirit Awards and was named amongst the "10 Producers to Watch" by *Variety* in 2005. He was born and raised in Hamburg, Germany and graduated Magna Cum Laude from New York University with a degree in Political Science and Journalism.

6. On the Ice (Narrative) - On the snow-covered Arctic tundra, at the top of the world in Barrow, Alaska, two Inuit teenagers try to get away with murder.

Andrew MacLean, Writer/director - MacLean is an Upiag filmmaker born and raised in Alaska. In 2008, he was named one of 25 New Faces of Independent Film by *Filmmaker Magazine*. His most recent film, *Sikumi (On the Ice)* premiered at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival where it won the Jury Prize in Short Filmmaking, and went on to many other awards at festivals around the world. Other films include *Natchiliagniaqtuguk Aapagalu (Seal Hunting With Dad)*, which premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival; *Kinnaq Nigaqtuqtuaq (The Snaring Madman)*, which won best short film at the 2006 American Indian Film Festival, *Such A Perfect Day*, and *When The Season Is Good: Artists Of Arctic Alaska*, a full-length documentary which was a featured screening at the 2007 Arctic Summer Series at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. and was acquired for broadcast by ARTE, European Public Television. MacLean is a recipient of a 2008 United States Artists Rasmuson Fellowship, the John H. Johnson Film Award, a 2004 Princess Grace Foundation Graduate Film Fellowship, the 2003-2004 Martin E. Segal prize, the 2007-2008 Clive Davis Award

for Excellence in Music In Film, and the 2007-2008 Riese Award. He holds his MFA in film directing from New York University.

Cara Marcous, Producer - Marcous produced the short narrative film *Sikumi (On the Ice)*, which has won numerous awards including the Jury Prize in Short Filmmaking at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival and the BAFTA/LA Award for Excellence, and has screened at over 50 festivals around the world. In 2005, she produced the documentary feature *When the Season is Good: Artists of Arctic Alaska*, which premiered at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian and was acquired by ARTE for multi-broadcast in 34 European countries. She worked for several years in development with acclaimed independent producer Ben Barenholtz and has produced several plays including the premiere of her own full-length piece *Lapse* at Walkerspace in New York City. Marcous is the recipient of the Sheila Johnson Fellowship for the 2009 Sundance Institute's Feature Film Creative Producing Initiative. She is the co-founder of The Hub Project, a development initiative for emerging film and theater artists from New York and Sydney, Australia, and holds a bachelor's degree from Brown University in Theater Arts.

7. Sarah N_12 (Narrative)

Obsessed with finding her boyfriend's murderer, Sarah takes her investigation into the virtual world when she discovers his online doppelganger was murdered just two days before his real life murder.

Sasie Sealie, Writer/Director - Sealy, a native of North Carolina, started making films while still an undergrad at Yale, where her sketch comedy training and study under photographer Gregory Crewdson birthed the Super 8 film *Big Head* and a life-long addiction to filmmaking. Her short film *The Elephant Garden* won the Student Visionary Award at this year's Tribeca Film Festival, making her a two-time Tribeca winner. Her previous short *Dance Mania Fantastic* won at Tribeca in 2005 and returned in 2006 as part of the +5 "Best of" Retrospective. *Dance Mania Fantastic* has also been included as part of the IFP Buzz Cuts series, been broadcast by the Australian SBS network, and has screened at numerous festivals around the world. Sealy co-directed the feature documentary *When The Season Is Good* with fellow filmmaker Andrew MacLean. She is an alumna of the NYU graduate film program, where she was a recipient of the New York Women in Film and Television Scholarship and the Steven J. Ross Fellowship. Her first feature *SarahN_12* won a Sloan Foundation Feature Film Grant with an award of \$100,000 towards the production of the film.

Krista Parris, Producer - Parris is a New York-based film producer with a varied slate of projects in development,

including: an adaptation of Ally Kennen's acclaimed debut novel *Beast*, produced with Polly Mallinson (*The Manchurian Candidate*); a narrative film about Jonestown, which she's producing with Kisha Cameron (*Sometimes In April*) and filmmaker Stanley Nelson (*Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple*); and *Sarah N_12*. She's also an associate producer on *Indestructible*, an ensemble comedy by writer/director Elliot Thomson, which Susan Stover (*High Art*) is producing. Parris began her film career at Jonathan Demme and Ed Saxon's company Clinica Estetico. She worked closely for Saxon for nearly five years, eventually running his development department - during which time she worked on *Adaptation* from development through release, and had the fortune of developing material with Robert Schenkkan, Doug Wright and Neil LaBute, among others. A graduate of Princeton University, Parris has also worked in development with producer Jane Startz and with the Tribeca Film Festival in a range of roles, including Panels Producer, Industry Manager, Shorts Screener, and an Advisor for the Tribeca All-Access program.

8. See You On the Dark Side - Romantic Comedy (Lesbian Vampire) (Narrative)

A lonely young actress thinks she's gotten her big break in a vampire movie but when she arrives on the set in Romania, she slowly discovers that the director and hipster stars have become real vampires and they want her to become one too! Abby falls in love with the alluring leader of the vampire clique and must decide between doing what she knows is right or becoming a famous member of the undead.

Alexandra Kondracke, Director - Kondracke attended Dartmouth College and NYU's graduate film school. At NYU she studied both directing and cinematography. Her first short narrative film, *Ice Fishing*, won a jury prize award at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival, while her cinematography reel landed her a job shooting for Academy Award-nominated producer, Jonathon Stack (*The Farm*). Upon graduating from NYU, Alex began shooting and directing documentaries for Discovery, TLC, BBC, VH-1 and most recently, National Geographic. In 2002, Kondracke's script, *Sunset Park*, won the ABC/Disney New Talent Grant, and in 2004, Alex was chosen as an ABC/Disney directing fellow. After her fellowship, Kondracke sold 2 feature pitches with co-writer Angela Robinson (*DEBS*). In 2005, Alex joined the *L Word* writing staff. *See You On the Dark Side* will be her directorial debut.

Monica Chuo, Producer - Former Vice President of Worldwide Acquisitions and Co-Productions for Paramount Pictures, Chuo has spent the last decade of her career identifying talented filmmakers, writers and producers to work with. She has acquired projects ranging from art-house to big budget commercial films for distribution in the global marketplace. Chuo is well versed

with theatrical market trends and growth opportunities around the world and possesses a profound appreciation for diverse storytelling stemming from different cultural perspectives. Though having worked predominantly as a studio executive (Paramount, Artisan Entertainment, Samuel Goldwyn Films, MGM), Chuo has moonlighted as a new media strategist, baseball consultant and publishing editor.

9. *Summerteeth* (Narrative) - An idyllic summer love triangle for a group of tree planters is turned upside down when the young woman is grabbed, first by a trio of redneck hunters, then by a huge bush-monster.

Matt Bissonnette, Writer/director - Bissonnette was born and raised in Montreal, where he studied English and Film at Concordia University. He then read law at Queen's University, was called to the Ontario bar, but retired two weeks later to write and work in movies. He has written and directed two feature films, *Looking for Leonard* (2002) and *Who Loves the Sun* (2006). His third feature, *Passenger Side*, is premiering at the 2009 Los Angeles Film Festival. His debut novel, *Smash Your Head On The Punk Rock*, was published in the spring of 2008. Bissonnette currently lives in Los Angeles.

Corey Marr, Producer - Marr is a former creative advertising and marketing executive turned producer, now fronting Corey Marr Productions, a Toronto-based film and television production company. Recent productions include the Genie-nominated film *Who Loves the Sun*, directed by Matt Bissonnette and starring Lukas Haas, Molly Parker and Adam Scott. The film played over 30 festivals worldwide including London, AFI FEST, SXSW and Whistler before being released theatrically in Canada and selling internationally. Premiering in the Narrative Competition at the 2009 Los Angeles Film Festival is Matt Bissonnette's *Passenger Side*, starring Adam Scott, Joel Bissonnette, and Robin Tunney. Corey is currently in development on several projects including the Poe-inspired thriller *Voices*, the screen adaptation of the award-winning novel *Clara's War*, and Matt Bissonnette's adventure comedy *Summerteeth*, and road movie *Typical Girls*.

10. *Why We Pull the Trigger* (Narrative) - *Why We Pull The Trigger* is a dark drama about three desperate friends who find a way out of their dead end lives by selling human remains on the black market.

Eric Lin, Writer/Director - Lin is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts Graduate Film Program. *Music Palace*, his Student Academy Award-nominated short documentary, has screened at film festivals worldwide including the prestigious New Directors/New Films Festival in New York, the Telluride Film

Festival, the Clermont Ferrand Short Film Festival, and is now airing on the Independent Film Channel. His latest narrative short film, *What Remains*, was awarded the Caucus Foundation Student Production Grant as well as the Warner Bros. Pictures Film Production Award. The film received a Craft Award for Screenwriting from First Run Film Festival and has gone on to screen at many festivals. In 2003, he won the Asian American International Screenplay Competition for his script, *Kilgore*. His work has received support from the C.V. Starr Institute, the Oppenheimer New Filmmakers Grant, and New York State Council for the Arts. He is currently developing his feature film, *Why We Pull The Trigger*.

Mynette Louie, Producer – Louie, a New York-based independent film producer, produced Tze Chun's *Children of Invention*, which premiered at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, and won Grand Jury Prizes at the Independent Film Festival of Boston and Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, and Special Jury Prizes at the Sarasota, Nashville, and San Francisco International Asian American Film Festivals. She also co-produced Andrew Bujalski's *Mutual Appreciation*, and was selected by IFP as one of two emerging American independent producers to participate in Rotterdam Lab 2008. Louie previously worked at the Hawaii Film Office, where she authored the state's production tax credit and developed programs to foster local independent filmmaking. She also worked in business development and marketing at SportsIllustrated.com, Jupiter Research, and *Time*. Louie received a bachelor's degree in East Asian Studies from Harvard University. She is currently in post-production on P. Benoit's untitled Haiti film, a Sundance Lab project, and developing several narrative features.

ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT'S TALENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Film Independent's Talent Development Program was established in 2000 to develop and train the next generation of talented independent filmmakers by cultivating the careers of directors, producers, and screenwriters. Each year, Film Independent selects approximately 80 filmmakers – from a competitive pool of over 1,500 applicants – who become Film Independent Fellows. Fellows show promise in his or her chosen discipline, and over 70% are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in the film industry. Tracks within the Talent Development Program include the Fast Track at the Los Angeles Film Festival, Grant Winners at the Spirit Awards, signature diversity program Project:Involve, the Directors Lab, Producers Lab, and Screenwriters Lab. Annually, Film Independent invests nearly \$1,500,000 in its Talent Development Program, allowing the program to be offered free to selected filmmakers.

ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT

Film Independent is a non-profit arts organization that champions independent film and supports a community of artists who embody diversity, innovation, and uniqueness of vision. Film Independent helps filmmakers make their movies, builds an audience for their projects, and works to diversify the film industry. Film Independent's Board of Directors, filmmakers, staff, and constituents, is comprised of an inclusive community of individuals across ability, age, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation. Anyone passionate about film can become a member, whether you are a filmmaker, industry leader, or a film lover.

With over 250 annual screenings and events, Film Independent provides access to a network of like-minded artists who are driving creativity in the film industry. Film Independent offers free Filmmaker Labs for selected writers, directors, and producers; provides cut-rate services for filmmakers; and presents year-round networking opportunities. Film Independent's mentorship and job placement program, Project:Involve, pairs emerging culturally diverse filmmakers with film industry professionals.

Film Independent produces the Los Angeles Film Festival, celebrating the best of American and international cinema and the Spirit Awards, a celebration honoring films and filmmakers that embody independence and dare to challenge the status quo.

For more information or to become a member, visit FilmIndependent.org.

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