

# IN THE LOOP

A Message from Stony Brook University's MFA Film and TV Writing Programs



## MFA in FILM & TV

IN ASSOCIATION WITH KILLER FILMS

### Welcome Back!

Welcome back faculty, staff, and students! We hope you had a safe winter break, didn't get buried in too much snow, and are enjoying the spring semester. In this issue of In The Loop, we are showcasing our MFA alumni and all of their accomplishments. We are also hosting an information session for folks who want to learn more about our MFA programs in Film and TV Writing. See below for details.

### Alumni News

We have so many people to be proud of both in our programs and in those who have graduated. 2018 alumni **James Sharpe** has produced three feature-length films. In his final year of studies, he co-produced *Big Fork* with fellow classmate **Helen Waters**, which had its world premiere at the Breckenridge Film Festival. *Big Fork* was written and directed by fellow alumni **Bentley Heyman**. James went on to single-handedly produce *Tom of Your Life*, which Richard Roeper calls, "One of the best movies of 2020." The film also won Best Narrative Feature Film at the Albuquerque Film Festival. James also produced and starred in thesis student **David Schultz's** *The Girl in The Straw Hat*, and has recently been recruited into the newly formed film department at Jacksonville State University.

Other notable highlights from our alumni include: **Yasmin Gomez**, a 2020 graduate, was the production manager of Beyonce's *Black is King*. Former 2020 student **Michelle Ngo** served as an editor on *PBS American Portrait*, the new PBS docu-series, out now. **Jamie DiNicola**, former MFA student, produced a documentary pilot, *Trans in Trumpland*, which was just picked up as a series by Netflix.

Our TV Writing alumni are also having huge success. **Sam Nosratian** is the showrunner's assistant for Tom Fontana, and works with the writing team on Showtime's *City on a Hill*, which stars Kevin Bacon. **Kate Levitt**, won First Place at the Nantucket Film Festival for her one-hour pilot, *Living*. She also shared first prize for the best TV Pilot from Stony Brook's NOFOTVFest and was a finalist at the Atlanta TV Pilot competition. She also wrote *Beach Boy*, which she co-produced with MFA in Film thesis student **Doug Forrester**, who directed. **Nathalie Perus** is a writer on *Beautiful Game*, a six-part limited series about the FIFA scandal from Alef One.



David Schultz and James Sharpe

Also of note, MFA Film student **David Schultz** became our first student to finish a feature-length film during the COVID-19 pandemic (*The Girl in the Straw Hat*), and second year MFA Film student **Lisa Thomas** also finished her first year short film after her shoot was shut down last March.

Finally, our Alumni have started an organization for all Stony Brook MFA graduates. Kate Levitt and Helen Waters started it. They told us, "We hope for the alumni association to be a combination of incubator for new works and a resource to support ongoing works. We're fortunate that our creative community features a diverse range of skills -- everything from writers, to directors to producers -- and part of our mission is to foster collaboration. We hope to hold periodic gatherings, either on Zoom or (someday) in person which will act as introductions, and possibly feature guest speakers. We would love for everyone to get involved, and absolutely welcome suggestions for events! We can be reached at [film\\_tvalumni@stonybrook.edu](mailto:film_tvalumni@stonybrook.edu)."

Thesis student **Jared Szafman** won first place for Best Pilot at the Page International Screenwriting Awards. He entered the MFA in Film program in 2015 as part of the first film cohort where he studied screenwriting and directing. With the introduction of Alan Kingsberg's TV Writing curriculum, Jared took a deep dive into TV Writing and wrote a spec script and three pilots. His latest pilot *RX* won first place in the TV Drama Category at the PAGE International Screenwriting Awards which had over 8,000 script submissions from 87 countries.



Jared Szafman and David Schultz

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### Quote of the Month

"A filmmaker's most important tool is humanity. You want to be able to capture humanity in your stories and bring out humanity in your characters."

-Ryan Coogler



Still From Bentley Heyman's Big Fork

### March Info Session

Calling all folks interested in learning more about earning an MFA with us in Film or Television Writing! Please join us on March 19 from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST for a virtual Information Session. If you have questions like: What courses do you offer? Who are the professors? What kinds of film equipment do you have? How many students are accepted each year? Come hang out with us on Zoom.

RSVP to [MFAManhattan@stonybrook.edu](mailto:MFAManhattan@stonybrook.edu)

### New Website

With the new year, our programs have launched our new, easy to use website. Feel free to visit our new pages at [www.stonybrook.edu/film-tv-writing](http://www.stonybrook.edu/film-tv-writing). We love the look and intuitiveness of the site, and we think you will, too.

### Connect With Us!

Thank you for reading the latest edition of our newsletter! Want to see more of what's happening in our program? Follow us on our social media pages:

- Instagram: [@sbufilmtv](https://www.instagram.com/sbufilmtv)
- Twitter: [@sbufilmtv](https://twitter.com/sbufilmtv)
- Facebook: [@sbufilmtv](https://www.facebook.com/sbufilmtv)



To apply to our Film or TV Writing MFA programs or for more information, please visit <http://stonybrook.edu/film-tv-writing>

