

VOL. 1 | SEPTEMBER 2020

# IN THE LOOP

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



Stony Brook University  
Manhattan

## MFA IN FILM

IN ASSOCIATION WITH KILLER FILMS



### Fall Semester Off To A Great Start!

The Stony Brook University Manhattan Center for Creative Writing and Film has many exciting happenings this fall. In our fifth year, 2020, the program has thrived in difficult circumstances, has set milestones for scholarship support, and has watched students and alumni earn accolades at festivals and beyond.

First, our programs have successfully pivoted to online and hybrid courses, starting in early spring, and continuing into the Fall 2020 semester. This has allowed us to have a greater range of guest speakers, and brought in an uptick of 2020 applications and quality applicants. We have added a supplemental "lab" that meets once a week for 45 additional minutes of optional class time where directing students are given a difficult supplemental assignment drawn directly from the industry.



Students in the Directing I Class

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Welcome to the first edition of IN THE LOOP, our official Stony Brook MFA in Film and Television Newsletter! We are proud to bring you the most exciting news directly from the students in our program.

"We are thrilled to have so many successes this fall from our incredibly talented students. Our program, by design, is built to thrive in all circumstances, and the pandemic is testing and proving that. We remain dedicated to high-quality independent filmmaking, screenwriting and TV Writing." - Magdalene Brandeis, MFA in Film Director

## Expansion of Scholarships

For the first time, our MFA students in Film and TV have been offered three full ride and two partial ride scholarships. In Fall 2020, we were able to secure two full ride, Dr. W. Burghardt Turner Fellowships for underrepresented scholars, one full ride Graduate Council Fellowship, and two partial ride GA/TA awards. This scholarship support is in addition to already affordable state tuition, which is significantly less than equivalent private programs.

## Students Sweeping the Competition!

Equally important, our list of students' accolades keeps growing. Chris Arnold, a thesis student, won Best Student Script at the 2020 Los Angeles Film & Script Festival for his script, *Cornerstone*. *Cornerstone* has also become a finalist at Script Summit, a semi-finalist at both the Create World Awards and Los Angeles International Screenplay Awards Winter, and a quarterfinalist at the ScreenCraft True Story & Public Domain Competition. Chris Arnold developed this feature length script while in our program.

Two TV Writing students, Kate Levitt and Jared Szafman, have advanced to the final round of the Page International Screenwriting Awards for Best Pilot. They are two of ten finalists out of 1,400 submissions. Ada Lee Halofsky's micro-short screenplay, *Going Out of Business*, just won Best Romantic Comedy Screenplay at the Women's Comedy Film Festival. Notably, Halofsky scripted it as an exercise in her TV Writing class. Finally, third-year film student John H. Kim's first-year film, *Cupcake Dad*, is going to be featured in the Shorts program at the 43rd Annual Asian American International Film Festival on October 1st in the Shorts Made in NY selection.

## Alumni Also Sweeping the Competition!

Our alumni are also experiencing major successes in the industry. Since graduating in 2018, James Sharpe has produced three feature-length films and was recruited into the newly formed film department at Jacksonville State University. In his final year of studies, he co-produced *Big Fork*, which is scheduled to have its world premiere at the Breckenridge Film Festival this Fall. James went on to single-handedly produce *Tom of Your Life*, which Richard Roeper calls "One of the best movies of 2020." The film has been picked up for worldwide distribution and is screening at Dances With Films, Cinequest and the Burbank International Film Festival, where it's been nominated for Best Picture. Incredibly, *Tom of Your Life* recently won Best Narrative Feature Film at the Albuquerque Film Festival.

Additionally, Yasmin Gomez, a 2020 graduate, was the production manager of Beyonce's *Black is King*. TV Writing thesis student Sam Nosration has landed the showrunner's assistant job for Tom Fontana and is working with the writing team on Showtime's *City of a Hill* which stars Kevin Bacon.

## Stony Brook Film Fest Has Begun

In other news from the main campus, the Stony Brook Film Festival, presented by Island Federal — which annually features top independent films from across the globe — will be held virtually this year thanks to a partnership with IndieFlix. The festival will pair 24 new films, one feature and one short, over 12 weeks from September 10 through December 15. For more information about the Stony Brook Film Festival, visit <https://festivals.indieflix.com/pages/stony-brook-film-festival/d/event-schedule>.



### Connect With Us!



Thank you for reading the first edition of our newsletter!

Want to see more of what's happening in our program? Follow us on our social media pages:

**Instagram:** @sbufilm

**Twitter:** @sbufilm

**Facebook:** @sbufilmmaking

For links and more information about our MFA in Film and TV Writing, please visit

<https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/mfa-film-tv/> or our Facebook page,

<https://www.facebook.com/SBKFilmmaking>.

To apply to our MFA programs, please visit <https://stonybrook.edu/film> or <https://stonybrook.edu/tv/>.

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