

FILM PROFILES

ROSWELL SHORTS INDIE FILM FEST | 31 TITLES, SYNOPSSES, BIOS & STATEMENTS

01

A Family Matter

DIRECTOR Rylee Norman

SYNOPSIS

On her late father's birthday, Elizabeth returns home to face her manipulative mother and younger sister April. When she reveals she is secretly April's mother, tensions explode into a food fight, forcing the fractured family toward an unexpected reconciliation.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Rylee Norman is a writer, director, and producer from Albuquerque, New Mexico. She holds an MA in Film Studies from Queen Mary University of London. Her work explores themes of generational trauma, family dynamics, and the emotional legacies passed between generations.

Her directing credits include A Family Matter (2026), The Waiting Room (2024), and Here and Back (2023). In addition to directing, she has worked as a director of photography on Be Good, Stay Safe (2023) and The Handy (2025).

In 2025, she founded Negative Dirt Productions, a production company dedicated to creating independent films, hosting community screenings, and providing free educational classes that expand access to filmmaking resources.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

"A Family Matter" is a deeply personal exploration of intergenerational trauma and the often unspoken wounds that shape our families.

At its heart, the film is about grief for the illusions we grow up with, and the versions of ourselves that shatter when we discover

long-buried truths. It's also about the quiet ways love can hurt us, especially when it comes from those we trust most.

This story is especially close to me because it belongs to my mother. As a young woman, she discovered that her sister was actually her biological mother. That revelation unraveled the fabric of her world. It broke her in ways I can't fully comprehend, and yet she carried on, finding resilience amid the wreckage. Through "A Family Matter", I wanted to honor that story. Not just the shock of it, but the complicated ending of choosing to leave with someone who hurt you to escape a suffocating and manipulative household.

This film ultimately is a meditation on how we break generational cycles of abuse through reconciliation. The film is not about painting characters as picture perfect people. It is about the messy and complicated world of broken families and how one choice can change the entire fabric of a family lineage.

02

A Thousand Paper Cuts

DIRECTOR Sam Quinn

SYNOPSIS

After killing her husband, a suburban housewife's emotional shock manifests through mundane household chores, troubling reflections on her marriage, and absurd sexual fantasies.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Sam Quinn is a filmmaker and actor from New Mexico, known for his work both in-front-of and behind the camera. After earning a BFA in Acting from The Santa Fe University of Art and Design, Sam began his career in the Chicago theater scene, performing in numerous productions and writing and producing two original rock musicals. His journey in the performing arts soon led him to Hollywood, where he landed supporting roles in major films and TV shows, including Jane Got A Gun, Transcendence, Independence Day: Resurgence, and Better Call Saul.

In addition to his acting career, Sam is the founder of Broken Bicycle Films, a film collective and production company dedicated to creating cinema that blends horror, spectacle, and elements of humor. Through Broken Bicycle Films, Sam has directed several short films, music videos, and most recently, an award-winning TV pilot. His directorial work often explores the complexities of the human psyche, the fallible nature of humanity, and the darker aspects of the human experience.

Sam's films tend to mix genres, merging the intensity of psychological horror with dark comedy and spectacle, creating a distinctive narrative style that invites audiences to reflect on the more complex, sometimes contradictory nature of the human condition. Sam divides his time between New Mexico and Los Angeles, continuing to pursue both acting and directing with a commitment to telling stories that are as emotionally raw as they are visually engaging.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

A Thousand Paper Cuts is a pitch-black relationship dramedy that explores the quiet, everyday ways we hurt the people closest to us - and the stories we tell ourselves to justify our actions.

I made this film after the end of a six-year relationship, when I had to retrace my steps and really reflect on what went wrong. At first, I blamed the other person, as we often do. But after much self-reflection, I realized that I, too, played a significant role in the relationship's collapse. This film became my way of understanding how, in failing relationships, we often deceive ourselves into thinking we're the "good guy," while avoiding responsibility for the ways we contribute to the breakdown.

When watching this film, I hope the audience will relate-to, and perhaps be inspired to examine, those quiet, "paper cuts" in their own relationships - the small, seemingly insignificant moments - those thoughtless comments, dismissals, or unspoken resentments - that accumulate over time and slowly erode a relationship. I hope the audience will walk away questioning their own constructed inner narratives. Do they hold any truth? Or am I an unreliable narrator in my own life, spinning stories to protect my ego and avoid confronting reality?

The complexity of toxic relationships was my main inspiration for making this film...They are inherently chaotic and full of contradictions, and I wanted to capture that emotional rawness and absurdity. In terms of influence, the films of Noah Baumbach stood out to me in their dynamic depiction of the different stages of relationships, both the tenderness and the collapse. I also looked to the experimental editing styles of Easy Rider and French New Wave cinema. Sidney Lumet's The Pawnbroker was another integral influence for it's haunting pacing and use of fragmented narratives to evoke the complexity of memory and emotion.

This film will always be special to me because, in many ways, it feels like a page out of my own diary. Although much has been heightened and tampered with for the screen, it's still very personal and doesn't shy away from the genuine messiness of human relationships. But more than that, it's about the struggle to face ourselves - to stop running from the truth and finally confront the ways we sabotage the very things we want most. It's a reminder that the hardest thing to face is often not the person we believe has wronged us, but the person we see when we look in the mirror - and that's where the real possibility for growth begins.

03

Artichoke

DIRECTOR Amir Moini

SYNOPSIS

Held captive, Cynara discovers a phoropter that opens a portal to another world. In a terrifying cat-and-mouse chase between realities, Cynara finally comes face to face with her oppressor and must decide what she's willing to destroy in order to survive.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Amir Moini is an award-winning horror writer and director from Boston, Massachusetts, whose work is known to push boundaries within the horror genre, blending nuanced representation with stylized storytelling. After leading video editorial at Netflix for 7 years, he went on to direct the horror short film *Slashr*, which premiered at *Screamfest* in 2023 and has since been showcased at over 25 festivals across 12 countries. Amir is currently working on a feature-length rendition of his short film and a recent program participant in Ryan Murphy's *Half Initiative* directors program. He also has directed an episode of television for the show *Sub/liminal* set to premiere later this year on *Nebula*.

Beyond filmmaking, Amir has served on juries for festivals such as *FilmQuest* and *Queer Screams Film Festival*. He is also a member of the *Motion Picture & Television Fund (MPTF)* and a new board member for *Outfest*.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Artichoke is a fever dream that explores the cages we create for ourselves and others in complex human relationships. On the surface, it is about the abuse of power in relationships, but on a deeper level, it could be seen as a metaphor for a battle within one's own mind.

The power of *Artichoke* lies in its openness to interpretation, inviting viewers to project their own experiences onto the story. For some, it may reflect the realities of a toxic relationship. For others, it could be seen as a confrontation with shame, self-sabotage, addiction, or mental illness. All of these experiences and interpretations are valid. At its core, *Artichoke* uses the language of horror as a means for exploring the complexities of mental health. Cynara's journey into this other world can be seen as a form of dissociation that many use to protect themselves from a painful reality.

A long-time fan of *Giallo* cinema and executive produced by Anna Lou Castoldi, granddaughter of the legendary *Giallo* director Dario Argento, this short is our love letter to this particular style of cinema. It pays tribute to the influences that made us fall in love with horror movies that were playfully excessive and highly stylized, using bold and surreal visuals and color palettes.

All gore, crash effects, fire, and stop motion were created practically in the film and no AI was used.

04

Autonomous

DIRECTOR Jennifer Mosier

SYNOPSIS

After Drew stands Melanie up for a date, she and her friend Alyssa decide to get away for the weekend. Drew is not what he seems but, like everyone, he's just looking for love.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Jennifer Mosier (MFA;USC) is primarily a theatre producer who is having a good time in later life with experimental film. New York native, Toronto-based, three cats, one spouse.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Online dating can be scary and AI introduces new perils to our lives every day. AUTONOMOUS advantages suspense and comedy to examine both. It's rough out there!

05

CAMINOS AL CIELO (Roads to Heaven)

DIRECTOR Erik Y. Montiel

SYNOPSIS

ESPAÑOL:

André, un hombre que se mueve en los bajos mundos, decide dedicar sus últimas horas a cuidar a Agnes (una mujer sumida en el vicio y la perdición) de quien está enamorado. Sin embargo, esta decisión desafía mandatos importantes y lo lleva a enfrentar un tormento físico y emocional, poniendo en riesgo algo más grande que incluso su propia vida.

ENGLISH:

André, a man who moves through the underworld, decides to dedicate his final hours taking care of Agnes, a woman immersed in vice and ruin, of whom he is in love with. However, this decision defies important mandates and lead him to face a physical and mental torment, putting at risk something bigger than his own life.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

ERIK Y. MONTIEL (México, 1988)

ESPAÑOL:

Erik Y. Montiel (México, 1988),

Egresado de la carrera de Animación y Artes Digitales, con especialidad en Guion Cinematográfico, formación adicional en realización cinematográfica y un taller de Escritura Creativa bajo la enseñanza del reconocido guionista Guillermo Arriaga (Amores Perros, 21 Grams, Babel), debuta como guionista, productor y director con su primer cortometraje independiente, Caminos al Cielo. Además de ser actualmente el fundador y director de SIRAE®, una casa productora mexicana enfocada en impulsar nuevos talentos a través de la producción y difusión de películas que apuestan por propuestas poco convencionales dentro de la industria nacional.

ENGLISH:

Graduate in Animation and Digital Arts with a specialization in Screenwriting, he furthered his training with studies in Film Production and a Creative Writing workshop under the mentorship of acclaimed screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga (Amores Perros, 21 Grams, Babel). He made his debut as screenwriter, producer, and director with his first independent short film, Caminos al Cielo. In addition, He is currently the founder and director of SIRAE®, a Mexican production company focused on supporting emerging talent through the creation and distribution of films that embrace unconventional approaches within the national film industry.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

ESPAÑOL

Caminos al Cielo nace después de un intento fallido de crear un negocio fotográfico que serviría para financiar proyectos de cine a largo plazo, donde los clientes simplemente nunca llegaron. Un día, tirado en la cama con la frustración dentro de mí, llegó mi madre, se paró frente a mi puerta y, como si hubiera sabido siempre que ese no era mi camino, me dijo: “Ya mejor deja de hacerte tonto y ponte a escribir tu historia”. Esas palabras aligeraron mi espalda, reacomodaron mis vértebras y me dieron la confianza que necesitaba para iniciar lo que, desde un principio, era mi sueño. Ante esto, no pude más que levantarme, abrazar a mi madre y decir: ¡¡¡GRACIAS POR TODO!!!

Para ese entonces, carecía de la práctica suficiente para redactar un guion de manera impecable. Por lo que me enfoqué únicamente en tratar de hacerla entendible para los actores y para mí. De lo que sí estaba seguro era que tenía que ser una historia de aire celestial, fantástica, con imágenes poéticas y que mostrara cómo grandes eventos pueden ocurrir en los lugares más escondidos de los bajos mundos. A partir de ahí, lo que se había gestado meses antes a través de imágenes en mi cabeza, empezó a tomar forma en lo que ahora es Caminos al Cielo.

La historia trata del apego, de cómo a veces somos capaces de perder algo tan valioso de nuestra propia esencia por algo que parece hundirse cada vez más. “El Cielo” es una metáfora hacia nuestros anhelos durante esta vida, hacia lo que ambicionamos y creemos que nos hará felices; mientras que el “Camino” habla sobre la ruta que tomamos para conseguirlo: las decisiones, planes y sacrificios que decidimos hacer para llegar a nuestro objetivo. Este corto de ningún modo busca dar una lección de vida es solo un viaje de ida que nos lleva a cuestionarnos: ¿Cuánto cuesta nuestro cielo?, ¿Cuánto estamos dispuestos a pagar por él? y ¿Cuánto de nosotros se quemará por conseguirlo?

Ahora bien, hablando del “Cielo” de este proyecto, es simple: AYUDAR, no hay más. Pues todo nace de la necesidad de mostrar el trabajo de tantos artistas que están en el anonimato, de personas con sueños frustrados y de jóvenes con la ilusión de vivir de su arte y que se esfuerzan día con día por mejorar. Aquí es donde entra el cine, un medio muy noble que ofrece la oportunidad de mostrar el trabajo de todos ellos alrededor del mundo y que podría ser la puerta hacia nuevas oportunidades para ellos. Este sueño es lo que impulsa a seguir mejorando siempre para los proyectos a futuro. Pues si algo nos enseñó Caminos al Cielo es que el cine puede nacer en todas partes y que no siempre se necesitan grandes presupuestos para hacerlo, sino que a veces solo hacen falta personas con hambre de hacer las cosas. Es por esto que este proyecto no solo tenía que hacerse, sino que urgía hacerlo.

Gracias a todos los involucrados dentro de este noble proyecto. Nada hubiera sido igual sin su apoyo durante estos años. ¡ESTO ES DE USTEDES...!

ENGLISH

Caminos al Cielo was born after a failed attempt to create a business in photography that would be to fund long-term movie projects. Unfortunately, clients never came. One day, laying on my bed and filled with

frustration, my mother arrived, stood in front of my door and, as she would have always known that that was not my path, she told me: “Stop fooling around and start writing your story!” Those words lightened mi back, rearranged my vertebrae and gave me the confidence I needed to begin what was my dream from the beginning. Faced with that, I could just get up, hug my mother and say THANKS FOR EVERYTHING!

In that time, I lacked the practice to write a screenplay in an impeccable way so I focused only on trying to make it understandable for the actors and myself. The one thing I was certain was that the story had to be written with a certain celestial air, fantastic, with poetic images and showing how big events may happen in the most hidden places of the criminal underworld. From that point, the idea that had developed in my head through images began to take shape into what is now Caminos al Cielo.

The story is about attachment, about how sometimes we are capable of losing something as valuable as our own self, for something that seems sinking even more. “The Heaven” is a metaphor towards our desires during this life, to what we ambition and believe will make us happy; meanwhile, “the road” talks about the route we take to achieve our goal: the decisions, plans and sacrifices we make to reach our objective. This short movie is not trying to give life lessons in any way, it is just a one-way trip that take us to questioning what is the cost of our Heaven, how much are we willing to pay for it and how many of us will get burn for it.

Now, speaking of the “Heaven” of this project, that is simple: HELPING. That is it because it all was born from the necessity of showing the work of many artists who remain anonymous, people with shattered dreams and young ones with the hope of making a living from their art and are making an effort to improve every day. Here is where the cinema enters, a noble form of media that offers the chance of showing everybody’s work around the world and could be the door towards new opportunities for them. This dream is what drives to keep always improving for the future projects. Caminos al Cielo taught us that a movie can be born everywhere and not always big budgets are needed to make it happen. Sometimes it only takes people eager to create. Because all of that, this project not only had to be done but also was imperative to do it.

Thank you to all the people involved in this noble project. Nothing would be the same without your support during these years. THIS IS YOURS!

06

C  remony

DIRECTOR Mark Wachholz

SYNOPSIS

In a near-future where perception of minors in distress is heavily filtered, the only survivor of a city erased in an apocalyptic strike, a 12-year-old girl, is interviewed to tell the world what happened. But she holds the key to a darker truth about children in our society.

C  REMONY is a visual fable about aesthetic capture, desensitization, and the cost of protecting the world from the reality of trauma.

The film made the Top 12 finalist shortlist at the \$1,000,000 AI Film Award 2026 by 1BFS & Google Gemini, out of 30,000+ participants.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Born and raised in Berlin, Germany, Mark’s background as a writer of novels, computer games, and TV shows for over 20 years strongly informs his work as an AI filmmaker. His stories are rooted in an interest in the power of narratives, systems, and storytelling in shaping society, culture, history, and identity.

Mark is best known for his award-winning cinematic AI short films like the psychological horror film "Unblind" (2024) (i.a. winner "Best Director" at AI Artist Beijing 2024), the poetic video essay "The Cinema That Never Was" (2025) (i.a. Grand Prize Korea Content Awards 2025, Grand Prize OMNI International AI Film Festival 2025, 2nd Place Winner Reply AI Film Festival 2025, Craft Vanguard Award at 56th International Film Festival of India 2025), or the dystopian drama "C  remony" (2025) (Top 12 Finalist at the \$1,000,000 AI Film Award 2026 by 1BFS & Google Gemini).

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

THEMATIC VIBE: Youth, Dreams & New Generations; Imagining the Future, Here & Now

C  REMONY began with a contradiction I couldn't unsee: we live surrounded by images of suffering, yet our ability to feel them is increasingly mediated ... by platforms, formats, and "safety" aesthetics that promise dignity while quietly protecting the viewer.

The anime filter in the film is not a sci-fi gimmick; it's a metaphor made literal. It represents the urge to turn pain into something legible, shareable, and morally comfortable. An image that can travel without truly confronting us.

I was drawn to the tension between "privacy" and "visibility": when does protection become erasure? When does safeguarding become a way of avoiding responsibility?

I wanted the film to move like a courtroom drama colliding with a fever dream: precise dialogue interrupted by images that feel almost too beautiful to be allowed.

The girl's demand is simple: let me be real. And what she reveals is more unsettling than the event itself: the fear that even the end of the world has become just another spectacle. High production value, low signal on the inside.

C  REMONY is my attempt to make a short film that doesn't ask for empathy as a product, but as a risk.

AI TOOLS DISCLOSURE

All image, video, and audio elements were produced via AI tools as part of a hybrid workflow written, directed, curated, and edited by the filmmaker.

The film's visuals were entirely created with Google AI models - namely Imagen 4 Preview for character design, Gemini 3 Pro Image (aka Nano Banana Pro) for keyframes, and Veo 3.1 for video. Voices created with ElevenLabs V3 Alpha. Music composed with Suno V5. Upscaling via Topaz Starlight and Topaz Proteus. Colorgrading and grain via Dehancer Pro.

Google's AI content filters, which didn't allow the depiction of minors in any live-action context, significantly impacted the film's story and aesthetics. As only animation aesthetics allowed the depiction of minors in general and minors in distress specifically, the aesthetic conflict itself became a part of the story in C  REMONY.

At the same time, Google's powerful image and video tools made it possible to seamlessly blend anime aesthetics, especially anime faces, with live-action aesthetics, movements, and expressions, given the film its special look and vibe.

07

Consumer. - Shimmery (music video)

DIRECTOR Nick Rohr

SYNOPSIS

Awoken from deep sleep, a man is confronted with deciphering missing time or merely a bad dream.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Nick Rohr is the creative director of Lemon Pulp Studios, an independent traditional animation house in Chicago, IL.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

08

Corvus

DIRECTOR X New Worlds, William Greiner

SYNOPSIS

Corvus is a surreal experimental film tracing the strange, non-linear paths we take through grief, myth, technology, and ecological memory. Moving fluidly between dreamscape and documentary, the film follows the Crow as a symbolic guide - at once trickster, witness, guide and omen - through landscapes both internal and external. Its fragmented narrative resists chronology, instead unfolding like memory itself; associative, looping, and haunted. In this world, televisions transmit forgotten rituals, children commune with birds, and scenes slip between the natural and the artificial. The film considers how we navigate loss, meaning, and change in an age of collapsing boundaries - between human and non-human, signal and silence, past, present and future.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

William Greiner (born September 8, 1957) in New Orleans, Louisiana, is an American photographer and multi-media artist living in Santa Fe, NM. Suzannah James-Williams (X New Worlds) (born September 26, 1991) in Germany, is a British artist living in London, UK.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Corvus is a surreal experimental film that explores the symbolic intelligence of the corvid - a family of birds long associated with wisdom, death and transformation. Drawing from William Greiner's photographic landscapes, the film uses generative AI to reanimate still images into fluid, unstable worlds that feel suspended between reality and dream.

Algorithmic birds move through these environments like apparitions - metaphorical guides through spaces that are at once real and imagined. In bringing together photographic reality and synthetic life, Corvus dissolves the boundary between nature and machine, memory and imagination, allowing images to shift, fracture, and reform over time.

09

Eleven Days On Earth

DIRECTOR JD McWilliams

SYNOPSIS

The first question asked in "Eleven Days On Earth," another sci-fi horror short from ZenDog Films, is, Where are we?

Just relax. It doesn't hurt.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Not provided.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

10

Encounter

DIRECTOR Renee Pezzotta

SYNOPSIS

A seemingly ordinary rideshare turns into an extraordinary encounter.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Renee Pezzotta is an award-winning actor, producer, and director with over 20 years in film, television, and live performance. With nearly 100 screen credits including appearances in *Frasier*, *The Orville: New Horizons*, and *Being the Ricardos*. Her work blends sharp comedic instincts with a strong visual storytelling. As a director, she focuses on character-driven stories with dark humor and cinematic tension, bringing a performance-first approach to every project.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

I decided to move BEHIND the camera, and since moving to NM, I've been studying film production at CNM. Looking forward to making more films here in Albuquerque and the surrounding area. This is truly the land of enchantment!

11

Fear and Tremble

DIRECTOR Alci Rengifo

SYNOPSIS

El Salvador in 1964. The radical poet Roque Dalton (Oscar Torres), renowned for his wit and idealism, finds himself imprisoned by the secret police after returning from revolutionary Cuba. A CIA agent, Harold Swenson (Wayne Hodges), arrives to interrogate the reckless romantic with the hopes of turning him into an informant. Their standoff, surrounded by the bloody realities of an oppressive system, will be the ultimate test of the poet's ideals and courage at a time when fear of change rules his homeland. Based on a true story.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Alci Rengifo is a Rotten Tomatoes-approved film critic, and a filmmaker based in Los Angeles. His cultural commentary on politics, art, and literature has been published in the Los Angeles Review of Books, Riot Material and the East L.A. monthly, Brooklyn & Boyle. As a screenwriter, Alci has written numerous award-winning short films, many of them for the SMC Film Production Program. His directorial debut, "Azizam," played at film festivals around the world, including the Emerging Filmmakers Showcase at Cannes and the Gibara International Film Festival in Cuba. Additionally, he is the co-host of the film podcast Breaking the 180 and guest lectures every January at the Palm Springs International Film Festival.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Being a half-Salvadoran, half-Colombian first generation offspring born in the U.S., I discovered Roque Dalton out of a need to learn about my roots. My mother is an immigrant from El Salvador, who moved to the United States in the late 1970s, right before the civil war erupted. She returned only once, during the 1980s when the conflict was already devouring the country. The intricacies of the war and the history behind it were never discussed at home.

It was as a journalism student that I came across Roque Dalton and was immediately entranced by the work of this romantic, radical and wordsmith who could easily be ranked next to Byron, Oscar Wilde, Rimbaud or Hemingway. In school we never learn about such figures, even at university level. Instantly, there was a drive in me to tell Roque's story via cinema. Not only is his life easily cinematic, but it is the kind of Latin American life we never see depicted on film. Writers, intellectuals, revolutionaries who are not clichés tend not to register in mainstream media.

The great irony is that Roque embodies so much of our continental history considering he was the son of a U.S fortune seeker who settled in El Salvador. He was involved in the whole, intriguing storm of the Cold War that enveloped the region under the shadow of the Cuban Revolution, while writing such rich poetry and prose that doesn't age. As we depict in "Fear and Tremble," CIA agent Harold Swenson did indeed try to turn him into an informant. I proposed this project to my mentor, SMC Film Program head Salvador Carrasco, almost as a dare to myself and our great team that Roque's story can compel as drama. We hope it can also help spark renewed interest in his work and that of so many other essential figures whose work can speak beyond borders.

12

Forces From Beyond

DIRECTOR Hagen Mattingly

SYNOPSIS

When Noma Doyle brings home a mysterious crystal that gets her tried for witchcraft, her accusers discover the true force of things.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Not provided.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

13

Hide

DIRECTOR Brenden Hubbard

SYNOPSIS

From the Academy Award winning team behind "Curfew." Still reeling from an incredible loss, a father (Shakey Graves) and daughter cling to a bedtime routine keeping them safe in a town where an unfathomable horror visits its inhabitants night after night.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Brenden Hubbard, also known as BEAR, is a multifaceted talent acclaimed for his work as a filmmaker, writer, and producer. With a career spanning over a decade, Hubbard has played integral roles in managing productions and orchestrating successful festival runs for numerous films since 2012.

Among his notable projects is his collaboration with Fuzzy Logic Pictures on the Academy Award winning short film "Curfew" and its subsequent feature adaptation, "Before I Disappear" (IFC Films), which garnered widespread recognition. Over the years, Hubbard has lent his expertise to over 70 other short and feature films, including the critically acclaimed "Oh Lucy!", which clinched the prestigious Jury Award: International Fiction at the Sundance Film Festival in 2015. Additionally, his contributions extend to noteworthy selections such as "Cul-De-Sac" at the Toronto International Film Festival, and the Icelandic festival darling "Everything in the End".

Hubbard's journey into the world of storytelling and production was influenced by his educational background in audio engineering at Temple University. His creative endeavors have not been limited to the realm of film, as he has also made significant contributions to the music industry, touring internationally with renowned acts such as Paul Anka, Shakey Graves and Dr. Dog.

Adding another feather to his cap, Hubbard made his directing debut with the compelling project "The Helping Hand", showcasing his diverse talents and innovative vision.

In addition to his accomplishments in film and music, Hubbard has also ventured into the realm of podcasting, producing scripted fiction and unscripted podcasts for Criminal Content. Notable among these projects are "American Hostage", starring Jon Hamm, and "The Foxes of Hydesville", starring Carey Mulligan and McKenna Grace, which have further solidified his reputation as a visionary producer across various mediums.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

14

Hivemind Deluxe

DIRECTOR Chris Alan Evans

SYNOPSIS

A short sci-fi satire about a disillusioned woman longing for community; who must suddenly resist an alien-led hivemind that promises belonging, at the cost of her soul.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Chris Alan Evans is an independent filmmaker and a graduate of Northwestern State University. After an award-winning career in radio broadcasting, he transitioned into independent film-making. His recent short films *Caught on Tape* and *Toots* blend real-life stories with emotional drama and comedic heart. Based in Bossier Parish; Evans is an actor and writer/director creating films that entertain, while offering audiences something meaningful to reflect on.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

I made *Hivemind Deluxe* to probe how our longing to belong can be weaponized in a propaganda-rich climate. I was sparked by witnessing people I love slide into ideologies shaped by social media algorithms and partisan news outlets. Framed as an alien abduction, the film asks: when does information become indoctrination? And, does our need to belong make us vulnerable to powers eager to manage what we believe?

We shot in two locations in Northwest Louisiana: an outdoor amphitheater (our echo chamber) that amplifies misinformed messaging; and a museum that doubles as the spaceship interior. The space is cold, harsh, and eerie, mirroring the abductors' intent to brainwash their abductees.

With a two-day schedule, planning and setups had to be precise. I asked actors to underplay, no satire 'signal', so the audience decides when to laugh or tense up. Tonally, the film echoes the straight-faced bite of *Dr. Strangelove* and *Don't Look Up*, with *Fire in the Sky* as an alien-thriller touchstone. I want viewers entertained and unsettled; and leaving with a simple question, "Are my sources informing me... or managing me?"

15

Hope You Come Home Soon

DIRECTOR Xander Ray Richard

SYNOPSIS

Hope You Come Home Soon follows a teenager struggling to complete a personal project while carrying the weight of his father's absence. As constant pressures begin to overwhelm him, he repeatedly returns to an old voicemail from his dad, searching for comfort and strength to keep going. Through quiet moments of reflection and perseverance, the film explores grief, resilience, and the lasting impact of the people we love, reminding us that even when someone is gone, their voice can still guide us home.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

My name is Xander Richard and I live in Rio Rancho NM. I am a high school student working towards a lucrative career in filmmaking with a variety of genres!

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

I am very interested in the film arts and filmmaking. I also hope to help viewers of my work feel engaged and have multiple emotions felt whilst watching.

16

Klown

DIRECTOR Ahmed Jaf

SYNOPSIS

Three struggling creatives launch a meme coin for survival - and watch success turn into chaos overnight.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Not provided.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

17

Lamy - Holding The Light

DIRECTOR Max Highstein

SYNOPSIS

Lamy - Holding the Light is a heartfelt portrait of a small New Mexican village coming together to preserve its heritage. Through moving interviews with residents and members of the Our Lady of Light Historic Foundation, the film shares personal stories of faith, memory, and community tied to the beloved Our Lady of Light church.

Once the spiritual heart of Lamy, the church now stands deconsecrated, awaiting restoration as a space for gatherings and renewal. Woven with glimpses of the village's railroad history and the iconic Legal Tender restaurant, and underscored by original music, the film captures both the spirit of place and the determination of a community holding on to its light for future generations.

Lamy - Holding the Light shines on the quiet grace of adobe walls - crafted from earth and sun - standing as a testament to time and sustainability. This film whispers of a community's vow to cherish and restore what is already whole, honoring nature's gifts and the stories they hold within.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Max Highstein owns and operates the studio known as Desert Heart Multimedia. Max is a multitasking filmmaker, photographer, music composer, and author. He places a priority on creative projects that bring happiness and healing to the world.

Max Highstein's film and photography highlights the heart and soul of his subjects. His work tends to be warm, inviting, and sometimes whimsical. His recent films for the Our Lady Of Light Historical Foundation and the Santa Fe Animal Shelter have garnered glowing reviews; his latest music video won a One Earth Award, and was featured in the Santa Fe Film Festival; and a photoshoot of his was featured in the Fall 2024 issue of Detaron Mag, a fashion publication.

Max's music includes over a dozen albums, has received substantial airplay worldwide, and topped the Roots Music Report chart. His music has won Global Music Awards, Clousine International Music Awards, and New Mexico Music Awards.

In addition to his creative work, Max holds two MA Degrees in counseling, and has produced an extensive catalog of related media. His guided meditation audio recordings have sold over 100,000 copies over the years, and his book, The Healing Waterfall, 100 Guided Imagery Scripts for Counselors, Healers, & Clergy (now in both English and Spanish) is in use by thousands of influential figures around the world.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

I have lived near Lamy, New Mexico for over thirty years, often passing by the old church that seemed quietly waiting through time. When the chance arose to tell the story of its revival, I was introduced to a remarkable community of individuals, each with their own unique and compelling connection to this place. What moved me most was the genuine passion and heartfelt commitment everyone shared to restore this beautiful building and reawaken its spirit.

It was both an honor and a privilege to listen to their stories and capture their voices on film. Beyond the people, the church itself is a captivating character - an uncommon fusion of traditional adobe craftsmanship with distinctive architectural details rarely seen in small churches of this region. Being inside that space conveys a profound sense of warmth and welcome, inspiring a quiet kindness simply by stepping through its doors.

18

Let's Raid Area 51

DIRECTOR Frans Zayas

SYNOPSIS

A band of three oddball stoners journey to raid Area 51.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Not provided.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

19

María Carmen

DIRECTOR Nata Aguilar

SYNOPSIS

At night, a young man looks for his runaway girlfriend.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Not provided.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

20

MOONBOUND, An Ancestral Passage.

DIRECTOR Ika Santamaria

SYNOPSIS

In 2039, humanity is preparing to leave home once again.

Saqnikte' Canastuj, a New York - born astronaut, is selected for humanity's first permanent lunar colony. Before her departure, she returns to the Bronx; to a family descended from Guatemalan Mayan K'iche' roots,

where language is preserved, rituals endure, and daily life moves fluidly between K'iche', Spanish, and English.

Both a Mayan K'iche' priestess and a scientist, Saqnikte' stands at the intersection of ancestral memory and technological ambition. As the launch date approaches, long-suppressed tensions surface within her family, revealing the quiet costs of adaptation, silence, and survival.

Moonbound is a sci-fi drama anchored in intimacy, where space travel mirrors an older story of departure and transformation. Beneath its cosmic scope lies a meditation on cultural continuity, inherited identity, and what must be carried forward when the future demands distance from home.

As humanity reaches for the stars, Moonbound asks: When we leave Earth behind, what parts of ourselves truly make the journey?

Moonbound is available with both English and Spanish subtitles.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Ika Santamaria is a Colombian multifaceted filmmaker, director, and actor based in New York City. Her work as both performer and filmmaker has screened at major international festivals including Cannes Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, Miami International Film Festival, the New York Latino Film Festival, among others.

Trained in Dramatic Arts at the Teatro Libre Conservatory in Bogotá and in cinema at New York University, she brings a strong command of both performance and cinematic language to her storytelling.

For years she taught at the New York Film Academy, working closely with actors, filmmakers, and non-professional performers, shaping emotionally precise, character-driven storytelling. She later chose to step away from the classroom to fully dedicate herself to her artistic practice and to active community engagement.

Today, she works at a shelter for migrants in transition in New York City, supporting the integration and education of children and adults, and serves as a cultural organizer and active producer of Hispanic and Indigenous dance, theater, and film content in NYC, building bridges between artists, institutions, and communities.

As a writer-director, she develops intimate narratives exploring identity, displacement, and belonging. Her films have screened internationally and reflect a strong focus on cultural depth and human experience.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Every day I go to work at a shelter for migrants in transition in New York City: Sitting with kids doing homework, helping adults navigate a system that was not built for them, listening. And in that listening, Moonbound was born.

I came to filmmaking through my body first as an actor, trained in dramatic arts, someone who learned early that the most political thing you can do is be fully present in a room. That is still how I make films. I am not interested in spectacle. I am interested in what people carry: in gesture, in silence, in the way someone holds flowers when they don't know what else to do with their hands.

Migration is not a theme for me. It is the air I breathe in this city. I have watched people arrive with almost nothing and somehow still be full! Full of language, of ceremony, of memory that no border crossing can take away. That is the story I keep needing to tell.

Moonbound asks what happens when a woman from that world Bronx-raised, Mayan-rooted, decides the moon is next. Not as escape. As continuation, As the oldest act of survival there is: carrying your ancestors with you into the unknown.

My process is collaborative, actor-centered, and built on trust. I work with performers and community members together, because I believe lived experience is authorship.

Moonbound was supported by the New York State Council on the Arts, and I am proud that this story, rooted in Indigenous memory and migrant resilience, found that recognition.

I make films to preserve what risks being forgotten. And to ask: When we reach for the future, what ancestral voices do we bring with us?

21

Roundabout

DIRECTOR Gale Hansen

SYNOPSIS

After linking on an app, David, a former US Marine, and Laurie, a former retail worker, meet at an adorable cafe for their first date dinner.

As they begin getting to know each other with the usual chit chat, David is overcome by wartime flashbacks.

Laurie notices the symptoms as sights and sounds from David's past overtake his presence in the present moment.

The event is so alarming that David is triggered into flight mode.

Trusting her instinct, Laurie follows David out of the cafe and slowly approaches him on a back street.

Slowly but surely, she talks him out of fight or flight back into here and now.

Their meet-cute evening having come to an abrupt end, they come together by sharing the violent events that left them with complex post-traumatic stress disorder.

As the terror-inducing panic recedes, it's clear to both of them that they've got a lot in common and maybe the next move should be making good on having a successful first date.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Gale is an experienced film studio development and creative affairs executive with excellent people skills. He is a team player driven to break narrative in ways that heighten consumer engagement. Having led teams of creative executives and high caliber studio readers, Gale is known for identifying, creating and communicating, compelling, high concept commercial content with global appeal. During his time at the studio Gale provided insight on thousands of project submissions and guided creative and data driven decisions leading to investment selections resulting in per project average revenue of \$81 million domestic, \$78 million international and \$37 million home video. Memorable as the beatnik wannabe Charlie "Nuwanda" Dalton in 1989's Dead Poet's Society.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

We brought two different perspectives of PTSD, one from a military experience and the second from a civilian situation, to an everyday situation. Our cast includes a real Marine Corps veteran and a diverse woman's perspective on the project. We wanted the film to encapsulate real daily emotions and certain heightened feelings that occur only in rare life experiences. These emotions and experiences can bring us together for a mutual understanding and betterment of humanity through our trauma.

22

Shift

DIRECTOR Martin Bannon Beaudet

SYNOPSIS

When Claire reluctantly agrees to meet a blind date arranged by her friend, the experience feels both weirdly familiar, yet so, so different. "Like déjà vu with a different outfit," she tells her friend. When things turn surreal, Claire is about to bail-until something her date says strikes a deeply resonant chord. Should she give herself over to the mystery?

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Marty Beaudet is an American actor, writer, and filmmaker. He has been acting since the age of 13, and published his first novel, "By A Thread," in 2010. His second book, "Losing Addison," was adapted as a film in 2018 featuring Sherilyn Fenn, marking Marty's directorial debut. He co-authored "The Falls" with writer-director Jon Garcia, with whom he co-produced "The Falls: Covenant of Grace" and "Sex Weather." Marty is the founder of FauxMeme Productions and cofounder of Lucky Lobsters Productions, both in Portland, Oregon.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

23

Shrouded

DIRECTOR Robert Ramos

SYNOPSIS

Two experts theorize about the Origin of the Shroud of Turin.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Not provided.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

24

Strangeness Index

DIRECTOR Murray Brent Toews, Lora Van Loewen

SYNOPSIS

Guided by a hand-animated conceptual map inspired by UFO classification theory, *The Strangeness Index* retraces documented Manitoba UFO encounters through animation, practical effects, cinematic reenactments, original music, and firsthand witness testimony. Moving between investigation and imagination, the film explores how people experience, interpret, and remember encounters with the unknown, inviting audiences to engage with mystery without judgment or conclusion.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Murray Toews is a Winnipeg-based filmmaker, animator, and multidisciplinary visual artist working in hybrid documentary form. With a background in advanced drawing and media production, his practice combines hand-drawn animation, reenactment, and investigative storytelling to explore perception, memory, and cultural narrative.

His work often focuses on how individuals interpret experiences that exist at the edge of explanation. By blending analog techniques with digital media, Toews creates layered visual environments that reflect the fragmented nature of contemporary storytelling.

The Strangeness Index continues this inquiry, examining anomalous testimony through a restrained cinematic lens while collaborating with Canadian UFO researcher Chris Rutkowski to situate the film within a broader investigative context.

Recently, Toews has appeared as Researcher on the 8-part TV series *U.F.O.P.O.V.* that premieres on SuperChannel on March 5, 2026 where he lends his insight on the UFO Phenomenon.

U.F.O.P.O.V.

https://youtu.be/-NI__zsAuAs?si=NAeEfEucl4CXerby

Co-Director

Lora Van Loewen is a Winnipeg-based director, cinematographer, editor, and educator with RRC Polytech's Creative Arts Department. Her work spans independent film, promotional media, instructional content, and live event coverage. She has directed and co-produced independent shorts including *10 Years Before Happiness* (2018) and the animated film *Two Can Dine* (2021).

For *The Strangeness Index*, Van Loewen serves as co-director, cinematographer, and editor, shaping the film's grounded visual approach and measured pacing.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

The Strangeness Index examines how credible people describe events that resist simple categorization. Inspired by Dr. J. Allen Hynek's probability - strangeness framework, the film explores witness testimony while remaining grounded in ambiguity rather than spectacle.

Working in collaboration with researcher Chris Rutkowski, the project situates Manitoba accounts within a larger investigative history. The hybrid structure blends interview, restrained reenactment, and hand-drawn animation - mirrors the instability of memory and perception.

Animation allows interior states and emotional textures to surface without asserting definitive conclusions. The intention is not to prove or disprove extraordinary claims, but to create space for reflection on how we construct meaning when confronted with the unknown.

25

The Custodian

DIRECTOR Gabriel Vincent

SYNOPSIS

The Custodian has one job: Get in, clean up, get out. But, when the man who was supposed to be dead isn't, he's left with two choices - save him or finish the job.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Gabriel Vincent has been directing and writing his own original short films for 7 years now, born and raised in New Mexico, he's always had a passion for film and wants to create films that will impact and connect with people. His first award winning film ABV deeply connected and impacted people due to it's personal message.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

26

The Life of DAE-VEE Six - a seven sigma space story

DIRECTOR JD McWilliams

SYNOPSIS

In this cerebral sci-fi horror film - brought to you by GlideSpin, you could race with something else, but dont™ - a malfunctioning android stranded on a doomed planet is repeating the same 2-kilometer route while its life story is told from the human brain inside_

See it with someone you trust_

Point Zeroes not allowed in the theatre_

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Not provided.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

27

The Plane I Call Family

DIRECTOR Carson Nathan Wine

SYNOPSIS

After retiring from the U.S. Air Force, Colonel Ellis refuses to let his love of aviation fade. Instead, he embarks on a new chapter, forming a deep relationship with a piece of flying history. A relationship that keeps him in the sky and allows him to share his passion with others.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Not provided.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

28

The Storm

DIRECTOR Lauren Trujillo, Taylor Trujillo

SYNOPSIS

As a storm rages outside, two lovers must confront grief, ambition, and the fear of growing apart, before the silence between them turns into goodbye.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Lauren and Taylor Trujillo are sister filmmakers and local producers based in New Mexico. Together, they have directed and produced three short films, with several more projects in pre-production.

Both are members of IATSE Local 480, and Lauren is also a member of SAG-AFTRA. Taylor recently shadowed director Ramaa Mosley on the hit series *The Cleaning Lady*, further expanding her experience in episodic television.

While they've worked in film for the past three years, they bring nearly a decade of theater experience to their storytelling, continuing to direct stage productions such as *Hazardous Materials at The Vortex* in Albuquerque (2023).

Their work is driven by a commitment to uplifting underrepresented voices and telling stories rooted in identity, emotion, and authenticity.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

The Storm began with a simple but haunting question: What if the silence between two people becomes permanent? We set out to tell a story about the quiet unraveling of a relationship, how grief, ambition, and silence can create distance even between two people who still love each other deeply. It's a story about love, distance, and the choices we make, especially when life pulls us in different directions.

As sisters and co-directors, we're drawn to intimate, emotionally driven stories that live in the quiet spaces. The unspoken moments where relationships either shift or break. *The Storm* explores that fragile in-between, where love is still present but no longer feels certain.

Visually, we leaned into soft, natural light, warm interiors, and the storm as both a literal and emotional force. While memory and time blur together through nonlinear montage, reflecting the way we often process love and loss.

We come from a background in theatre, which continues to inform our work in film - especially our focus on performance and emotional rhythm. We're committed to telling grounded, emotionally honest stories that center human connection.

Though quiet, *The Storm* confronts a universal question that many people face: Do we drift apart, or do we fight to hold on?

- Lauren Trujillo & Taylor Trujillo

Duel Torch Productions

29

Two In The Morning

DIRECTOR A.Z. Ocoza

SYNOPSIS

After their first night together, a young couple discuss whether they're about to begin a new relationship or are just going to keep repeating the mistakes of the past.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Not provided.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Not provided.

30

Unshelved

DIRECTOR Bryan Ratliff

SYNOPSIS

A labor of love forged from wire, tinfoil, and Sculpey clay sits forgotten on a studio shelf, gathering dust as time passes and his creator grows older. But when the aging artist digitizes a photo of his long-dormant creation with a simple AI prompt - "give him a life" - the static sculpt is thrust into a vibrant, animated digital universe. Now the captain of his own destiny in an arctic world, the little hero embarks on a thrilling maritime adventure. Alongside a shipwrecked companion, he raids a monster-guarded treasure cave and battles a vengeful pirate octopus on the high seas. When all hope seems lost, salvation arrives from the most unexpected source: his creator, now a character within the very world he prompted. Blending tactile physical sculpting with advanced AI video generation, Unshelved is a heartwarming, mixed-media tribute to the enduring magic of creation and the lifelong bond between an artist and his art.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

With over 25 years of experience in multimedia design, motion graphics, and illustration, Bryan Ratliff has built a career at the intersection of traditional artistry and emerging technology. An Adobe Creative Ambassador and former adjunct instructor at the Kansas City Art Institute - where he also earned his B.F.A. in Design and Illustration - Bryan specializes in crafting highly technical, visually rich narratives. Drawing from a deep background in tactile character design and paper toy creation, his directorial work explores the convergence of handmade aesthetics and cutting-edge AI orchestration. With his latest animated short, Unshelved, Bryan leverages advanced generative video models to breathe life into physical mediums, marking a new frontier in his multidisciplinary creative practice.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Throughout my career in multimedia and character design, I have always been fascinated by the inherent potential of handmade, tactile objects. Whether sculpted from clay or folded from paper, every static character sitting on a desk or a shelf holds a quiet, unexpressed narrative. They are built for adventures they rarely get to take. Unshelved was born from a desire to finally give one of those forgotten creations a sprawling, cinematic life.

For this film, the medium truly is the message. I didn't want to simply animate a digital character; I wanted to capture the magic of imagination bringing a physical object to life. The protagonist of Unshelved did not begin as a digital file - he began on my desk as an armature of tinfoil, wire, and nails, meticulously sculpted with polymer clay and finished with acrylic paint. By orchestrating a cutting-edge pipeline of generative AI video and audio models, I was able to lift this deeply textured, physical creation off of a static wooden shelf

and drop him into a sweeping, swashbuckling arctic environment. The technology served as the creative engine, expanding a solitary desktop into an infinite ocean.

Ultimately, Unshelved is a celebration of the intersection between traditional artistry and emerging technology. It proves that no matter how advanced our digital tools become, the heart of any great story still begins with the simple, human act of creating something by hand and daring to imagine where it could go.

31

VESSEL

DIRECTOR Jacob McCaw

SYNOPSIS

A young woman is offered up as a vessel for demon possession, against her will, in order to fulfill an ancient covenant and continue her family's prosperity.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

I, Jacob McCaw, have been creating films since 2010 with a passion for telling stories that matter. I currently reside in New Mexico which is an exceptional and inspirational home to the film industry. My favorite genres of film are horror, sci-fi, comedy, and action. There is so much power in cinema to move people and bring them together and I want to participate in that experience.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

VESSEL is a short horror film about autonomy, the treatment of women, and the weight of family pressures. I believe that VESSEL has a little something to say to everyone watching, especially if you have ever been a part of a strict or ultra-religious family.
