WOMEN IN FILM, LA ANNOUNCES 32nd ANNUAL FILM FINISHING FUND RECIPIENTS

Four Filmmakers Awarded Special Grants From Stella Artois
Delta Air Lines to Provide Complimentary Airline Tickets to Grantees

Los Angeles, CA, Jan. 8, 2018….Women In Film, Los Angeles today announced the recipients of the **32nd annual Film Finishing Fund**. A total of 16 grantees were chosen from 370 feature-length narrative films, documentaries and shorts, submitted from 22 countries. Past recipients of the Fund have gone on to win Academy, Emmy, Sundance, Berlin Film Festival and Peabody Awards, among other recognitions. The Film Finishing Fund provides cash grants and in-kind production services to complete films that fit the established criteria of being by, for or about women. The works-in-progress are viewed by a special jury of women in the industry who select the winning films.

Said WIF Executive Director Kirsten Schaffer when making the announcement, “One of the ways we achieve gender parity, is by ensuring that female filmmakers have the resources they need to produce excellent work. Women In Film is enormously proud that for 31 years we have enabled talented filmmakers to complete their films and bring their remarkable stories to the world,”

**Stella Artois**, with whom Women In Film, LA began a partnership in 2017, has expanded their support of female filmmakers by investing in the Finishing Fund for the first time: providing four new $25,000 grants for fiction and documentary films by women who are using the power of film to inspire social change. A longstanding supporter of film and its community, Stella Artois hopes to celebrate up-and-coming female filmmakers who are pushing the mission for gender parity in Hollywood forward.

“Stella Artois has long supported filmmakers who are using the power of their craft to impact social change. With these grants, we hope to further underscore our commitment to women in the industry and shine a spotlight on these important/relevant causes,” said Carolyn Zwiener, Brand Director, Stella Artois. “We’re also thrilled to be honoring this year’s winners and their films at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival through dedicated events in partnership with Women In Film.”

Women In Film, LA also announced **Delta Air Lines** as the “Official Airline of Women In Film.” The airline supports WIF’s mission to achieve gender parity in the screen industries and acts on its commitment by providing flights to support WIF programs, including the Film Finishing Fund. Delta’s support of women in the workplace is also evident through its Diversity and Inclusion Council, its women’s business resource groups and its partnership with the CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion.
2017 WOMEN IN FILM FILM FINISHING FUND WINNERS

Stella Artois Grants

*Half the Picture*
Directed by Amy Adrion

*Nuns on the Bus*
Directed by Melissa Regan

*Pathways*
Directed by Florencia Krochik

*United Skates*
Directed and produced by Tina Brown & Dyana Winkler

**Narrative Feature Films**

*Aqui Y Ahora*
Directed and written by Paz Leon

*Being Impossible*
Directed by Patricia Ortega

*Jinn*
Directed and written by Nijla Mu’min

*Julia Blue*
Directed and written by Roxy Toporowych

*Nancy*
Directed and written by Christina Choe

*Rust Creek*
Directed by Jen McGowan

**Documentary Feature Films**

*Blowin’ Up*
Directed by Stephanie Wang-Breal

*Blue ID*
Directed and produced by Burcu Melekoglu & Vuslat Karan

*The Devil We Know*
Directed, written, and produced by Stephanie Soechtig

*Tiny Souls*
Directed by Dina Naser

**Short Films**

*The Egg and the Thieving Pie*
Directed and produced by Lola-Blanche Higgins

*Futbolistas 4 Life*
Directed by Jun Stinson

2017 WOMEN IN FILM FINISHING FUND WINNER DETAILS

Stella Artois Films

*Pathways*
Directed by Florencia Krochik
LOGLINE: PATHWAYS tells the stories of five undocumented families and the hurdles they face as they struggle with their immigration status. The film weaves together their captivating stories and also explores the crippling immigration policies that have led to the hardships they face.

SNAPSHOT BIO: Born in Argentina, Florencia’s experiences as an immigrant in the US influenced and shaped her passion for directing inspirational cinema. While attending USC’s School of Cinematic Arts on a full scholarship, Florencia directed the documentary short WITHOUT PAPERS -- an award-winning film which focused on the lives of undocumented youth in America. Her latest film, PATHWAYS, is the continuation of WITHOUT PAPERS. In addition to her documentary work, Florencia has directed spots for numerous brands and non-profits including the CAST LA (the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking), One Day on Earth and digital campaigns for Endeavor.

Nuns on the Bus
Directed by Melissa Regan
LOGLINE: Sister Simone Campbell and her band of feisty nuns fight for the poor and marginalized, challenge the Catholic church and US government, and wrestle with their own power and voice as they journey across an increasingly divided America.

SNAPSHOT BIO: Melissa is a Sundance award-winning filmmaker, tech entrepreneur, educator and mechanical engineer. Her 24-minute documentary No Dumb Questions -- about 3 young sisters whose Uncle Bill becomes a woman -- received an award at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival and appeared on HBO, PBS and Oprah. The film and related educational campaigns are changing hearts, minds, and policies in schools, colleges, and communities around the world.

Half the Picture
Directed by Amy Adrion
LOGLINE: Using the current EEOC investigation into Hollywood's discriminatory hiring practices as a framework, successful women directors talk about their career paths, struggles, inspirations and hopes for the future of the industry.

SNAPSHOT BIO: Amy Adrion is a director and writer whose work has premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, Austin Film Festival, and Los Angeles Film Festival, and has been broadcast on PBS and MTV. In 2010, Amy won a Directors Guild of America (DGA) Student Film Award for her thesis film SHOEGAZER, which was Executive Produced by Miranda July. Amy is a graduate of the MFA film directing program at UCLA, with an undergraduate degree in English Literature and Theology from Georgetown University. HALF THE PICTURE is Amy’s first documentary feature and will have its World Premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in 2018.

United Skates
Directed and produced by Tina Brown & Dyana Winkler

LOGLINE: When America's last standing roller rinks are threatened with closure, a community of thousands battle in a racially charged environment to save an underground subculture--one that has remained undiscovered by the mainstream for generations, yet has given rise to some of the world's greatest musical talent.

SNAPSHOT BIOS:
Tina Brown is a New York-based, Vietnamese-Australian filmmaker who co-produced the feature-length documentary ‘Dear Mandela’, which was supported by the Sundance Institute, translated into 13 languages and was nominated for an Africa Movie Academy Award. Prior to moving to New York, BROWN created PR and marketing film distribution campaigns for studios including DreamWorks, Disney, MGM, Miramax, Paramount, Pixar, Universal and Village Roadshow. She was also an Editor of an Australian magazine focused on positive media and promoting awareness of global issues. As a Producer and Production Manager, Brown’s clients include Red Bull, Puma, IBM and Gatorade, as well as the Winter Olympics, Super Bowl, Tour de France and US Open Tennis.

For nearly a decade, DYANA WINKLER worked full time supporting filmmakers at the Sundance Institute (DFP) and later the Tribeca Film Institute (TFI) where she deliberated upon thousands of grant submissions in both documentary and fiction film, and was responsible for seeking out and supporting underrepresented filmmakers in the industry. Winkler also worked as a screener for Chicken & Egg Pictures, and programmed for the Outfest Film Festival as a member of the LGBT community. Her most recent screenplay, ‘Bell’, was awarded the 2016 Sundance Sloan Commissioning grant and participated in the 2017 Sundance Screenwriter’s Lab.

Narrative Feature Films

Nancy

Directed and written by Christina Choe

LOGLINE: Blurring lines between fact and fiction, Nancy becomes increasingly convinced she was kidnapped as a child. When she meets a couple whose daughter went missing thirty years ago, reasonable doubts give way to willful belief -- and the power of emotion threatens to overcome all rationality.

SNAPSHOT BIO:
Christina Choe’s short film I AM JOHN WAYNE won the Grand Jury Prize at the Slamdance Film Festival and screened at dozens of other festivals including SXSW, Los Angeles Film Festival, Maryland Film Festival, and Rooftop Films, and was featured on VICE, Vimeo Staff Picks, and Hammer to Nail. Her previous narrative short THE QUEEN screened at the prestigious Telluride Film Festival, along with others including Outfest, Seattle International Film Festival, Frameline Film Festival, and Los Angeles Film Festival, and was nominated for the UK Film Council’s Iris Prize. Additional honors include a year-long Directing Fellowship with HBO; an artist residency at The MacDowell Colony; and a Roger and Chaz Ebert Foundation Fellowship awarded at the 2015 Independent Spirit Awards. She’s also received grant funding from the Sundance Institute and the Jerome Foundation.
**Jinn**
Directed and written by Nijla Mu’min
LOGLINE Summer is a carefree, black teenage girl whose world is turned upside down when her mother abruptly converts to Islam and becomes a different person. At first resistant to the faith, she begins to reevaluate her identity after becoming attracted to a Muslim classmate, crossing the thin line between physical desire and piety.

SNAPSHOT BIO:
Nijla Mu’min is a writer and filmmaker from the East Bay Area. Named one of 25 New Faces of Independent Film by Filmmaker Magazine in 2017, she tells stories about black girls and women who find themselves between worlds and identities. Her short films have screened at festivals and venues across the country, including Outfest, Pan African Film Festival, and BAMcinématek. Her filmmaking and screenwriting have been recognized by the Sundance Institute, IFP, Film Independent, and the Princess Grace Foundation. In 2014, she was one of 10 writers selected for the Second Annual Sundance Institute Screenwriters Intensive. She is the winner of the Grand Jury Prize for Best Screenplay at the 2014 Urbanworld Film Festival, for her script Noor. She was selected as the first-prize winner of the 2016 Islamic Scholarship Fund's Film Grant, and in 2017, Jinn was selected for IFP's Narrative Lab and as a recipient of SFFILM's Rainin Film Grant. In July, Nijla was selected to attend the 2017 Sundance Institute Sound and Music Design Lab at Skywalker Ranch.

**Rust Creek**
Directed by Jen McGowan
LOGLINE: When an overachieving college senior makes a wrong turn, her road trip becomes a life-changing fight for survival in rural Kentucky.

SNAPSHOT BIO:
Jen McGowan is a director based in Los Angeles. Her first feature, KELLY & CAL, starring Juliette Lewis, Cybill Shepherd, and Jonny Weston premiered at SXSW where she won the Gamechanger Award. The film was released by IFC Films to rave reviews. She got her start with award-winning short films CONFESSIONS OF A LATE BLOOMER and TOUCH which played at over a hundred film festivals worldwide, winning a majority. They have been distributed by PBS, NBC Universal, Shorts International and Canal Plus. TOUCH became eligible for the short film Oscar when it won the Florida Film Festival.

**Aqui Y Ahora**
Directed and written by Paz Leon
LOGLINE: Lara is a modern dancer who's insecure about her talent but lives for her craft. When she gets offered a scholarship to join a dance company in Berlin for three years, her life completely changes. Going to Berlin means to leave everything that makes her country her home. This dream for which she has worked so hard, becomes an internal conflict that forces her to reevaluate her priorities and understand herself in a way she’s never done before.
SNAPSHOT BIO:
Paz was born in San José, Costa Rica. She lived five years in Lyon, France where she studied Film Studies and Modern Literature. In 2009 she directed her first short film, En Espera, which allowed her to enter the American Film Institute in 2011. She graduated with an MFA and has directed six short films. She wrote and directed her first feature film, Aquí y Ahora which was shot in Costa Rica in February of 2017. Paz is currently working in the post production of her film and lives in Los Angeles.

Julia Blue
Directed and written by Roxy Toporowych
LOGLINE: Inspired by her experiences on Maidan, Julia pursues a degree in photojournalism and dreams about winning a coveted scholarship to Germany. She also continues her activism by volunteering at the Kyiv Military Hospital, visiting with soldiers injured in the war. At the hospital, she meets a troubled soldier, known only as English. A Russian speaker from the conflicted East, he stands out from the other young men with his mysterious persona. English is immediately attracted to Julia’s charisma, finding an escape from his war trauma through her. As romance sparks, Julia and English navigate through contemporary Kyiv; a world of students, soldiers, old soviet, and nationalists. After one intimate night together, Julia invites English to join her on a trip home to her village in the Carpathian Mountains and the more she watches English bond with her family, the more she resists telling him that she is choosing a new life outside of their homeland. A character-driven drama, featuring Ukrainian culture and current events, Julia Blue dives into the psyches of a determined twenty-something and a damaged war hero.

SNAPSHOT BIO:
Roxy is a graduate of NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts and has worked in Film and TV production for 15 years. Credits include: Captain America: Winter Soldier, The Other Guys, A Most Violent Year and SNL. She has worked for Tribeca and Sundance film festivals. Previously, Roxy directed a dance documentary Folk! In 2014, she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to Ukraine, where she researched and wrote Julia Blue, her narrative feature directing debut. She is an IFP Narrative Lab Directing Fellow 2016 and the recipient of the Calvin Klein 'Live the Dream' grant for emerging female directors 2016.

Being Impossible
Directed by Patricia Ortega
LOGLINE: A religious dressmaker loses her virginity. Penetration is a knife that rip her and makes her think that something happens to her body. Only the arrival of a woman who shake her sexuality, will make her discover the truth: she was born with ambiguous genitals and being a baby, she was submitted to several surgeries to make her a woman. This truth will challenge her to make a decision: to remain a socially accepted but oppressed woman or choose to be a free and inconvenient intersexual and face the moral judgement of the society.

SNAPSHOT BIO:
Patricia Ortega has a degree in Social Communication and graduated in the International School of Cinema and Television of San Antonio de los Baños EICTV (Cuba) in the specialty of cinema
direction. Graduated from the FILMAKADEMIE of Ludwisburg (Germany) in the specialty of documentary direction. President of the production company Mandrágora Films from the year 2009 to the present. She has performed as director, scriptwriter and executive producer the following short film and documentaries: Dreams of Hanssen (2000), The White Wedding (2001), The Other Side of the Sea (2005), Perolita (2007), Dos Soles Dos Mundos , El Niño Shuá (2006), Kataa ou-outa (2007). El Regreso, her debut film was released in 2013 in commercial cinemas in Venezuela.

**Documentary Feature Films**

*The Devil We Know*

Directed, written, and produced by Stephanie Soechtig

LOGLINE: Unraveling one of the biggest environmental scandals of our time, a group of citizens in West Virginia take on a powerful corporation after they discover it has knowingly been dumping a toxic chemical - now found in the blood of 99.7% of Americans - into the drinking water supply. Citizens in West Virginia take on a powerful corporation after they discover it has knowingly been dumping a toxic chemical into the drinking water supply.

SNAPSHOT BIO:

Stephanie Soechtig (director/producer/writer) is an award-winning documentary filmmaker whose current project, The Devil We Know, was a 2016 Sundance Institute Catalyst selection. Her previous two films, Under the Gun and FED UP, both received critical acclaim and premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. Stephanie's directorial debut, Tapped, focused on the high cost -- to both the environment and our health -- of the bottled water industry. Hailed by critics as “stunning” and “whip-smart,” Tapped swept film festivals across the country while picking up six awards for Best Documentary Feature. Stephanie produced the documentary, The Last Animals, about Africa's poaching crisis, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2017. Dubbed by Fortune Magazine as one of the "Most Innovative Women in Food and Drink," Stephanie has directed political campaign commercials, short films, and viral videos for nonprofit groups, including the Environmental Working Group and Food and Water Watch.

*Blowin’ Up*

Directed by Stephanie Wang-Breal

LOGLINE: Blowin’ Up takes us inside the walls of an experimental courtroom in Queens, New York, where the fates of women and young girls arrested for prostitution hang in the balance.

SNAPSHOT BIO:

Stephanie is an award-winning filmmaker and commercial director. She has directed 3 feature length films. The first, Wo Ai Ni Mommy (I Love You, Mommy), was nominated for an Emmy®, and was the recipient of three Grand Jury Best Documentary Awards at the AFI/ Discovery Silverdocs Film Festival, the Asian American International Film Festival and the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival, as well as a 2011 CINE special Jury Award. The film had its national television broadcast in 2010 on the award-winning PBS series POV. Stephanie’s second film, Tough Love, premiered at the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival in April 2014 and went on to screen in our nation’s Capitol for a White House Policy discussion around

Tiny Souls
Directed by Dina Naser
LOGLINE: Tiny Souls is a documentary film that portrays the lives of whole generation of children that were affected by wars by following the main character, Marwa. The documentary follows Marwa’s life from childhood to adolescence within the walls of Al Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan, reflecting its effect on her reality and how it shaped her future.

SNAPSHOT BIO:

Inspired by the stories she witnessed in the field, Dina began imagining what she wanted to capture through her own films. In 2011, she completed work on the documentary short “Shamieh”, which tells the story of an aging Palestinian woman living in Zizya refugee camp in Jordan. Thereafter, she began investigating the lives of Syrian refugee children, which materialized into the short 9 min documentary “Tiny Souls” and is currently in development into becoming her first feature documentary, which is now in post-production. “Tiny Souls” the 9 min went on to participate in several film festivals, including Euromed Audiovisual’s Made in MED film festival, where it won the audience choice award, and the Jordanian European Film Festival, where it won a Jury award for the best documentary short, among others. in 2015 she completed work on a short film entitled “One Minute” which tells the story of a woman living in Gaza when Gaza was under attack in 2014, the film was selected in many international film festivals.

Blue ID
Directed and produced by Burcu Melekoğlu & Vuslat Karan
LOGLINE: A transgender man struggles with self-realization and acceptance in traditional society of Turkey. Constrained by identification cards color-coded for gender, will he finally be considered for a Blue ID?

SNAPSHOT BIOS:

Burcu Melekoğlu is a filmmaker based in Istanbul. She received a bachelor’s degree in Systems Engineering from University of Pennsylvania, and pursued a film minor there. In Philadelphia she pursued numerous opportunities to do freelance film and video work for production houses and public TV station. She got a Master of Arts degree from UCLA School of Film and Television and she worked on documentary and narrative projects in Los Angeles. After returning home to Istanbul, she founded MOXIE, an independent production company, believing in the power of independent documentary film to change hearts and minds.

Vuslat Karan is a filmmaker based in Istanbul. She got her BFA in Film and Television from Marmara University. She directed several short films that were screened at various festivals over the years. She directed and produced a documentary-narrative hybrid short film Uprooting From the City (2006) about the urban transformation and relocation of the Romany neighborhoods in Istanbul and it was the first film about gentrification in Turkey. After working
in many creative industries of television, cinema, music and new media, Vuslat joined MOXIE, as a producer and director in the independent film and video production company.

**Short Films**

*The Egg and the Thieving Pie*

Directed and produced by Lola-Blanche Higgins

LOGLINE: The film follows SHONA, a character based on a whale displaced from her world into an urban setting. Shona is ectopic, an outsider, a Community Support Officer, lonely and missing something terribly. Like the animal she represents she has the greatest capacity for empathy of all the creatures/characters we meet. Shona has to investigate the theft of a strange and precious egg, questioning three people who live in the same building to get to the bottom of the crime. The victim, mourning her lost egg, is the embodiment of a Turtle. The first suspect is a Praying Mantis who we witness killing her husband. The second is a Magpie who turns out to be the thief. Once she has recovered the strange egg, Shona is unable to return it, instead keeping it for herself to fill the hole left by what she’s missing – the ocean itself.

**SNAPSHOT BIO:**

Whilst at Edinburgh University Lola Blanche Higgins wrote, directed and designed ‘Grout Pray’ a design driven short about escapism. The film was twice nominated for SCOTTISH BAFTA NEW TALENT AWARDS for Design and Cinematography. It was also selected for the Verona International Film Festival. In 2015 her gutsy can-do attitude led her to work as an independent filmmaker and photographer on a working cattle and bison ranch in Colorado, documenting the every day life of the cowgirls/boys. Her art work as a graduate has been commended by MoMa, ‘The List’ and Talbot Rice Gallery. As a Designer she has worked on a number of shorts including ‘LIFE IN BLACK’ starring LIAM NEESON and ‘TIDE’ starring GARY LEWIS. She has worked assisting and doing visual research for some of the UK’s most successful Designers such as Sophie Becher, Kave Quinn and Beck Rainford. Lola has written her next project ‘THE EGG AND THE THIEVING PIE’ which she aims to direct herself. THE EGG AND THE THIEVING PIE is a surreal and gently humorous film exploring the idea of animal traits.

*Futbolistas 4 Life*

Directed by Jun Stinson

LOGLINE: Futbolistas 4 Life is a film about Latino high school students in Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood, their immigrant stories, and the healing power of soccer.

**SNAPSHOT BIO:**

Jun Stinson is an Oakland based filmmaker and journalist. She produced the documentary short The 90th Minute about soccer players in the now defunct Women’s Professional Soccer league. She was also a post-producDon producer for Al Jazeera America and an assistant editor on the documentary Spark: A Burning Man Story that premiered at SXSW. In addiDon, Jun has produced and published stories for espnW, The Washington Post, The Associated Press, Current TV, KQED and SFGATE. Jun graduated from UC Berkeley’s Graduate School of Journalism, and was raised in Oakland, California, and Kobe, Japan.
HISTORY OF THE FILM FINISHING FUND

ABOUT WOMEN IN FILM
Women In Film advocates for and advances the careers of women working in the screen industries – to achieve parity and transform culture. Founded in 1973, Women In Film is a non-profit organization that focuses on advocacy and education. Programs include: ReFrame, a partnership with Sundance Institute; Trailblazing Women, a partnership with TCM; the WIF/Blacklist Episodic and Feature labs; an annual Financing Intensive; a speaker & screening series; a production training program; mentoring, scholarships, film finishing funds and the Legacy Series, preserving the history of women in entertainment. For more information, visit www.wif.org

ABOUT STELLA ARTOIS
Stella Artois® is part of a Belgian brewing tradition dating back to 1366. It is the No. 1 Belgian beer in the world and is present in over 95 countries. Stella Artois® is a bottom filtered, blonde pilsner. It is thirst quenching with a malty middle and crisp finish delivering a full flavor and a hint of bitterness. Stella Artois® is best enjoyed served between 3 and 5 degrees Celsius and should be served in the unique Stella Artois® Chalice according to the 9-Step Pouring Ritual to guarantee a perfect experience of this gold standard lager. Visit www.stellaartois.com for more information.

ABOUT DELTA AIR LINES
Delta Air Lines serves more than 180 million customers each year. In 2017, Delta was named to Fortune’s top 50 Most Admired Companies in addition to being named the most admired airline for the sixth time in seven years. Additionally, Delta has ranked No.1 in the Business Travel News Annual Airline survey for an unprecedented seven consecutive years. With an industry-leading global network, Delta and the Delta Connection carriers offer service to 314 destinations in 54 countries on six continents. Headquartered in Atlanta, Delta employs more than 80,000 employees worldwide and operates a mainline fleet of more than 800 aircraft. The airline is a founding member of the SkyTeam global alliance and participates in the industry’s leading transatlantic joint venture with Air France-KLM and Alitalia as well as a joint venture with Virgin Atlantic. Including its worldwide alliance partners, Delta offers customers more than 15,000 daily flights, with key hubs and markets including Amsterdam, Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, Los Angeles, Mexico City, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New York-JFK and LaGuardia, London-
Heathrow, Paris-Charles de Gaulle, Salt Lake City, São Paulo, Seattle, Seoul, and Tokyo-Narita. Delta has invested billions of dollars in airport facilities, global products and services, and technology to enhance the customer experience in the air and on the ground. Additional information is available on the Delta News Hub, as well as delta.com, Twitter @DeltaNewsHub, Google.com/+Delta, and Facebook.com/delta.

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