



USC School
of Cinematic Arts
Industry Relations



FIRST
LOOK
2022



Welcome to the First Look Festival of 2022!

Thank you for joining us in celebrating the talented students whose projects appear in this year's First Look. They have created entertaining, compelling films through determination, collaboration and community-building. I know you will enjoy seeing their work.

Filmmaking is a challenging endeavor, and the continuing pandemic has made it even more so. Which is why the quality of work represented in this year's festival is so remarkable. These projects will be calling cards for the students who are launching professional careers this year. Many of them will screen at film festivals and win awards. And they will always serve as a celebration of our students' SCA journey.

Thank you to all the family and friends who have supported these students through their programs. I know you will join all of us at the School of Cinematic Arts in continuing to help them as they work towards building fulfilling professional careers.

Congratulations to all the filmmakers whose names appear in the end credits!

Enjoy the festival!

Elizabeth M. Daley

*Steven J. Ross/Time Warner Professor and Dean
USC School of Cinematic Arts*



I firmly believe that film has been the major art form of the 20th century, and will continue to have a powerful influence on our culture and society. So please enjoy this exposure to the “Learning Exercises” of some of tomorrow’s important artists. I’m proud to be a participant in this program.

Sincerely,

Marcia Lucas

Sponsorship for this program is made possible by a grant from The Ohana Foundation, a private foundation funded by Marcia Lucas.



First Look

WINNERS & NOMINEES

Industry Jury Awards

Animation

- ◆ There You Are - Winner
- ◆ Still With You - Runner-Up

Comedy

- ◆ Wish Upon A Disco Ball - Winner
- ◆ Mantis Club - Nominee
- ◆ Bathtub Boy - Nominee

Drama

- ◆ An Island Drifts - Winner
- ◆ Moose Tracks - Nominee
- ◆ Radical Joy - Nominee

Documentary

- ◆ Neurodivergent - Winner
- ◆ Waiting in the Wings - Runner-Up

Genre

- ◆ Morse Code - Winner
- ◆ Rated R - Nominee
- ◆ OST - Nominee

Faculty Awards

Directing

- ◆ Vivian Ip for An Island Drifts - Winner
- ◆ Anabel Iñigo for
Wish Upon a Disco Ball - Runner-Up

Producing

- ◆ Rachel Priebe & Reagan Shea for
Neurodivergent - Winner
- ◆ Lameng Bei & Josias Chavez for
Waiting in the Wings - Runner-Up
- ◆ Andy Yi Li & Naomi Shroff-Mehta for
Wei-Lai - Second Runner-Up

Narrative Cinematography

- ◆ Luke Sargent for Color - Winner

Documentary Cinematography

- ◆ Im-Sun Song for Healing in Color - Winner

Editing

- ◆ Julian Stern for
Wish Upon a Disco Ball - Winner
- ◆ Baptiste Leroux for
//Blinded - Runner-Up

Sound

- ◆ Lai Jiang for
Wish Upon A Disco Ball - Winner

Drama Screenwriting

- ◆ Abhichoke Chandrasen for OST - Winner
- ◆ Carly Rogers for Color - Runner-Up

Comedy Screenwriting

- ◆ Tony G. X. Shi for Wei-Lai - Winner

Production Design

- ◆ Rui Huang for There You Are - Winner

Watch *USC First Look* films at
industryrelations.usc.edu/register/

Invite Code: **FIRSTLOOK**

ANIMATION

BLINDED

7:39

Drama, Science

Aidan uncovers new information that makes him question his relationship and his reality.



ILLEGITIMATE VOICE

4:53

Documentary, Asian/Asian American

Stefie Gan moved to the United States from Malaysia as a child. In this animated documentary, she recounts her experiences with culture shock, racism, and ultimately activism.

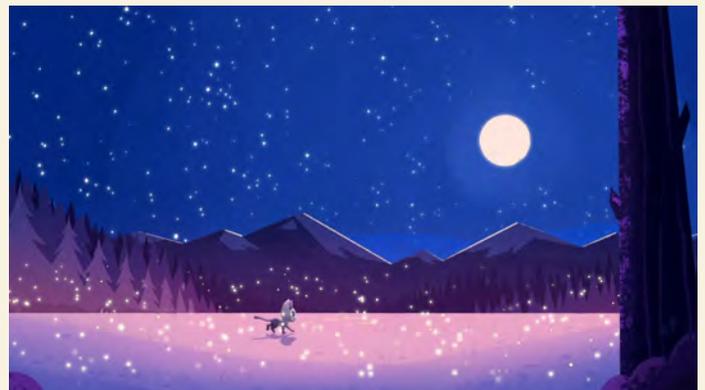


STILL WITH YOU

8:28

Family/Teen/Kid, Fantasy

After his canine best friend goes missing, Ollie the cat must journey through the Lake Tahoe wilderness to find her.



THERE YOU ARE

6:07

Educational, Family/Teen/Kid, Women

After her mother dies, a teenager, Su, feels estranged from her father who seems to have already moved on.



COMEDY



AGGIE'S SPIRITS

25:43

Thriller/Sci-Fi/Suspense/Horror, European, Fantasy, Women

When Kat and Becca learn that their late mother has bequeathed them her rundown and indebted dive bar, they must overcome their differences to save their mother's legacy from being repossessed.



BATHTUB BOY

16:39

Drama, Jewish

When a recently-graduated millennial refuses to leave his parents' bathtub, they enlist a celebrity psychologist to coax him out.



INCOMING MAIL

13:47

Drama, Fantasy, Women

When a magical mailbox zaps a Hollywood-wannabe senior and her eccentric rocker best friend 30 years into the future, they realize the key to their future might be right in front of them.



MANTIS CLUB

15:10

Drama, Fantasy, Women

In a world where females devour males during sex, a seventeen-year-old virgin Zack is asked on his first date.



THE MORE WE GET TOGETHER

12:22

Family/Teen/Kid, Women

A young woman struggling to cope with her father's COVID hospitalization is alarmed to find that her childhood therapy puppet Gracie has come to life with the intent to somehow help her.



WEI-LAI

13:39

Asian/ Asian American, Family/Teen/Kid

Tired of getting pushed and punished by his own parents, Wei-Lai, an 11-year-old Chinese American boy, decides to show up at his best friend's family and offers himself up for their adoption.



WISH UPON A DISCO BALL

17:56

Family, Black/African American, Latino, Women, Other

A disco musical about two sisters who find out what it means to grow up – and how that doesn't mean growing apart.

DOCUMENTARY

AT WHAT COST?

21:57

Social Change, Educational, Family/Teen/Kid, Other

Following the deaths of several USC students, a film student befriends the editor of the school newspaper in order to investigate potential underlying causes of these tragedies and the impact they had on the rest of the university.



BAD HOMBREWOD

23:42

Social Change, Educational, Latino

For decades, the film industry has confined minorities to stereotypical characters. Now, filmmakers fight to change the Latinx role in Hollywood.



HEALING IN COLOR

23:44

Social Change, Black/African American, Women

In a world where Black women are expected to be invulnerable to pain, five Black women confront their personal struggles and explore healing through art.



I'M THE VET

23:00

Drama, Educational, Family/Teen/Kid, Women

A story about my sister, Dr. Lindsay Eisenhour, one of the lead veterinarians at Neel Veterinary Hospital in Oklahoma City, battles the reality of her profession and of pet care.



NEURODIVERGENT

25:28

Social Change, Educational, Women, Other

When a 35-year-old film student is diagnosed with ADHD, she turns the camera on herself to question her past, her future, and why women are often under-diagnosed with this misunderstood disorder.



NOT JUST A NAME

23:06

Black/African American, Educational, LGBTQIA+

Not Just a Name explores the stigma and racial bias experienced by African-Americans with unique sounding names as well as the historical origin of these names in America.



WAITING IN THE WINGS

23:57

Family/Teen/Kid, Latino

The spirit of live theatre shines as two LA theatre companies fight to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.



DRAMA

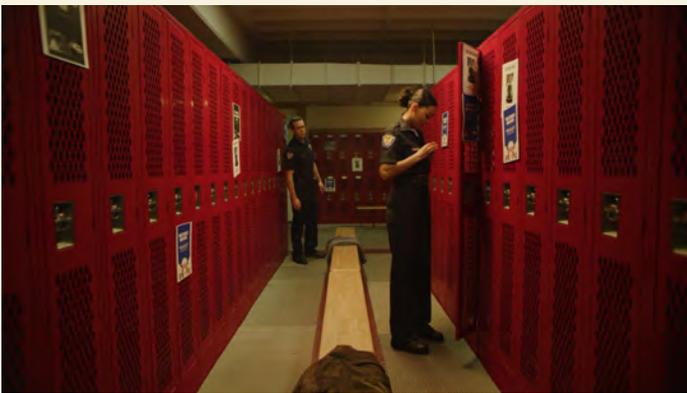


AN ISLAND DRIFTS

18:32

Social Change, Asian/Asian American

Set in Singapore, a young teacher presses for the truth from a maladjusted student, as the act leads to devastating results and they suffer the ignominy of losing everything that matters to them.



COLOR

8:26

Social Change, Black/African American, Women

A Black rookie LAPD officer is forced to make a choice when her partner corners a suspicious Black teenager.



ENTRE LOS MUROS

13:45

Social Change, Latino, Women

In this poetic drama, a teenage victim of femicide plots her escape from purgatory with the help of an older trapped soul.



MOOSE TRACKS

13:26

Family, Black/African American, Teen/Kid, Women

On the night after his wife's funeral, a newly widowed father must help his teenage daughter when she gets her first period.



MOTHER IN THE MIST

20:00

Family, Asian/ Asian American, Teen/Kid, Women

Following Wuhan's Coronavirus lockdown, a rural single mother, Zhao, embarks on a dangerous journey in search of her premie baby stranded in Wuhan City Hospital.



RADICAL JOY

12:30

Black/African American, Women

In a time of mounting social unrest, a young black woman faces a life-altering choice and ultimately finds guidance and inspiration from an unexpected source.

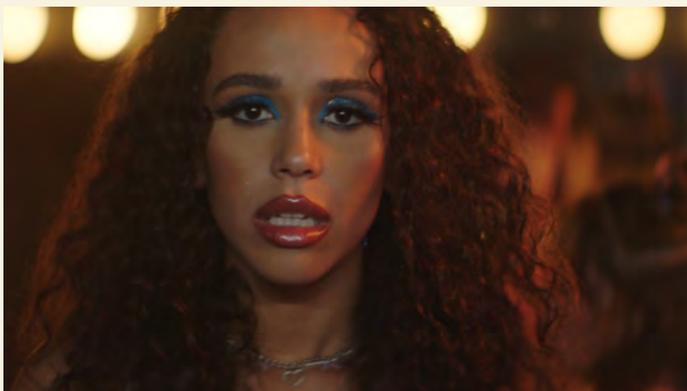


TING TANG

12:59

Black/African American

Grief has overcome once-lovers Wesley and Vaughna. The stark difference in their coping mechanisms causes them to lose everything between them.



WANNABE

13:35

Drama, Women

A 90s girl group must decide between working with their lead singer's rapist or giving up on their dreams.

GENRE

Thriller · Sci-Fi · Suspense · Horror · Fantasy

APOTHEOSIS

19:48

Drama, LGBTQIA+, Women, Science

An aerospace engineer has to compete against genetically engineered humans to secure a job position on the first habitable space colony.



BOO HAG OR SHADOW MAN

10:02

Comedy, Black/African American, Fantasy, Women

A career conjure woman accidentally brings home an evil spirit and ruins her roommate's night.



BOULEVARD

10:36

Drama, Fantasy, Latino

On a fateful afternoon in East Los Angeles, two cousins are unwittingly dragged into a dangerous, ancient underworld of magic and monsters that will change their lives forever.



LITTLE BOX

12:06

Drama, Women, Science

Alone and locked in against her will, Octavia wakes up in an AI-controlled room at her pharmaceutical company. She must overcome her issues with mental illness and outwit the supercomputer to escape.



MORSE CODE

13:04

Drama, Women, Mental Health

Haunted by a loved one's tragic death, a grieving Stefani uses Morse Code to speak with The Beyond.



OST.

19:23

Drama, Asian/Asian American, Women

A scoring assistant working on a horror film finds her debilitating perfectionism has manifested as the film's malevolent spirit who will not let her live past the night unless she delivers a perfect score.



RATED R

12:00

Comedy

A dark-as-midnight comedy in which an 8-year-old boy plots a heist to see his first R-Rated movie against his mother's wishes.



SUNDOWN

12:05

Drama, Family/Teen/Kid, Women

A young girl tries to escape from the strange hospital and the creature made of shadows that stalks her from the corner, but the only way she'll survive the night is by uncovering the dark secret of her admission.



INDUSTRY JURY



Jill Gilbert

Animation

Throughout her twenty-plus year career, Jill Frenzel Gilbert has led creative processes from concept through execution and built thriving animation businesses. Jill's business, JFG Consulting LLC, works with clients to build development infrastructure, provide development services, develop go-to-market strategies, and produce animated content for clients including Epic Games, Supercell, and more. Drawing on her studio executive experience at The Walt Disney Company, Paramount Animation, and Technicolor, Jill successfully built original IP divisions from scratch for independent animation studios Luma Pictures and Psyop. She effectively transitioned the core businesses from animation/VFX partners to content creation studios, overseeing the creation of development infrastructure and obtaining financing offers.



Missy Laney

Animation

Missy Laney is the Director of Development at Adult Swim. Previously she worked at BitTorrent Inc leading their film strategy and Sundance Institute. Laney is based in Los Angeles.



John Andrews

Animation

John Andrews is the co-founder and co-director of the Los Angeles Animation festival, launched in 2007. A long-time animation producer, John was VP of Animation at MTV in the 1990's and brought together the writing and animation teams for MTV's Beavis & Butt-Head and Daria, as well as supervising such shows as Aeon Flux and MTV's Oddities. In addition to producing Beavis & Butt-Head, John co-produced the feature Beavis & Butt-Head Do America. He then spent over 13 years at Klasky Csupo as Executive Producer and Creative Director of commercials and special projects. Multi-year stints at Six Point Harness, Dream East Pictures, House of Cool and his own Perfect Combo Productions followed. He is currently working as a consultant for Mumbai-based Cosmos-Maya.



Séverine Tibi

Comedy/ Drama

Séverine Tibi is a French film producer from Cannes who worked in Sponsorship at the British Film Institute before co-founding Sevana Films in 2017 with Anaïs Calmels. Together, they have produced documentary and fiction films in several countries and with international teams, which have screened at festivals across the globe. Séverine regularly attends festivals as a consultant, through talent development programs and to discover the next generation of filmmakers. Most recently, she was a Film Mentor at SXSW, a Rotterdam Lab and Zurich Film Festival Academy participant, and she won the Film & TV Charity's John Brabourne Award.



Chantal Lian

Comedy/ Drama

Chantal worked for 10 years in the film industry at French distributor Sophie Dulac Distribution where acquisitions included Joshua Weinstein's *Menashe*, Whit Stillman's *Love and Friendship*, and Zhang Tao's *Last Laugh*. In parallel, she curated Champs-Élysées Film Festival for 8 years and developed the industry programme, US in Progress Paris, by helping American independent films producers/directors meeting European partners (sales agents, distributors). She covered scripts for Wild Bunch International Sales and executive produced David Gutnik's first feature film *Materna* (2020) which premiered in Tribeca 2021. She is currently Head of US Programming at Champs-Élysées Film Festival and part of Oxbelly Scriptwriting Residency's reading committee and pursuing a professional training in Art-therapy.



Warren Etheridge

Comedy/ Drama

Warren Etheridge is a Storyfinder™, a successful producer, published author, staged playwright, veteran festival programmer and public speaker. As a producer, credits include *PERSONHOOD* (d. Jo Ardingner), *HAPA* (d. Abby Alishio), *EVERY BEAUTIFUL THING* (d. Sonya Lea), and more. He has hosted multiple television series including *The High Bar*, his Emmy®-nominated television series devoted to "raising the bar," *Scene! & Heard* for GreatMovieScenes.org, *Reel NW* on KCTS and *ArtsLink*. He served as the VP of Curation & Acquisitions for Tom Skerritt's start-up, *Triple Squirrels Media* and as the Chief Storytelling Officer for *Enthrall Sports*. He is the Co-founder and Curator for the *Walla Walla Movie Crush*, shorts programmer for *The Seattle Jewish Film Festival* and Director of Film Programming for the *Gesa Power House Theater*.



Leo Chiang

Documentary

S. Leo Chiang is a filmmaker based in San Francisco and Taipei. His most recent film, *OUR TIME MACHINE*, was nominated for an Emmy and the Gotham Awards. In 2020, he directed two episodes of the Peabody-winning 5-part PBS series, *ASIAN AMERICANS*. His previous films include the Emmy Award-nominated *A VILLAGE CALLED VERSAILLES*, *OUT RUN*, and *TO YOU SWEETHEART, ALOHA*. He has been a Sundance-Time Warner Fellow, a Rockwood JustFilms Fellow, and a Co-Chair of New Day Films. He has served as a mentor for the Hot Docs CrossCurrent Fellowship and more. He is the co-founder of the Asian American Documentary Network and a documentary branch member of the Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences.



Courtney Pledger

Documentary

Courtney Pledger is Executive Director & CEO of Arkansas PBS, the statewide public media network serving more than three million people. Prior, Pledger worked for over three decades in the international film and television community in creative development, production, and management. Her career began at Hearst Entertainment, and she's had senior leadership roles at multiple organizations including Rastar, IndieProd Company, Universal's Illumination Entertainment, and Radical Pictures. She currently serves on the national PBS Board of Directors, is co-chair of the Organization of State Broadcasting Executives (OSBE) and is rising chair of the National Educational Television Association (NETA). Pledger has produced Emmy-winning projects, been the recipient of Women in Film's Lillian Gish Producing Award and is on the advisory board for Arkansas Women in Film.



Ben Proudfoot

Documentary

Academy Award® winning director and 2020 Forbes 30 Under 30 entrepreneur Ben Proudfoot is the founder and creative force behind Breakwater Studios. In 2018, Proudfoot partnered with Gigi Pritzker's Madison Wells to make Breakwater Studios one of the first venture-backed branded content studios. In addition to a long list of awards and distinctions, Breakwater won an Emmy for the PBS documentary *Montage: Great Film Composers and the Piano*. His original film, *That's My Jazz*, had its world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival and won a James Beard Award. In 2021, Proudfoot was nominated for the 93rd Academy Awards for his short documentary *A Concerto Is a Conversation*, a collaboration launched at Sundance with his friend and co-director Kris Bowers and executive produced by Ava DuVernay.



Miguel Berg

Genre

A 1st Generation Colombian-American, Miguel first ventured into television in 2007 producing for Discovery's Travel Channel where he earned his first accolades. After graduating from Chapman University's M.F.A Film & Television Producing program, he worked at NBC Universal across the spectrum of television, working on major theatrical and television marketing campaigns for brands like E!, Telemundo, Style Network, and Universal Pictures and later applying his experience in scripted drama development on international co-productions and Emmy nominated programs. An ally and leader for authentic representation, he was recognized as one of the industry's top 10 rising talents as part of Colour Entertainment's 2020 Next Up 2nd Annual List, highlighting the next generation of diverse Hollywood leaders.



Sophie Carroll

Genre

Sophie Carroll is the Sr. Manager of Acquisitions for Gunpowder & Sky's Horror brand ALTER and Sci-Fi brand DUST. Carroll graduated from the University of Warwick, England with a BA in Film Studies. After working at a variety of production companies in production management in London, Sophie joined Gunpowder & Sky and spearheaded the development of their ALTER brand in 2018, joining the DUST team in 2020.



Dave Lawson

Genre

David's love of film started at an early age while living in Baltimore, MD. After graduating high school, he enlisted in the US Air Force. There he not only met many people with the same affinity for cinema, but also took to heart their core values: integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all you do. He has since brought those values to Los Angeles, where he has been working his way up the commercial and feature film ranks. After years of working as an independent producer, David joined Snowfort Pictures, as their Head of Production, from 2015 until 2017. Then, along with long time collaborators Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead, he formed RUSTIC FILMS. His features include SYNCHRONIC, THE ENDLESS, AFTER MIDNIGHT, SOMETHING IN THE DIRT, TRASH FIRE, 68 KILL, and RESOLUTION.

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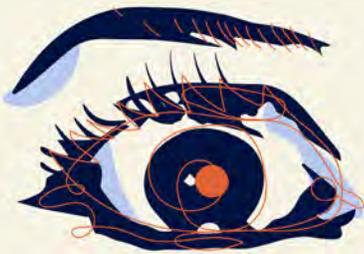
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Thank you for your support

Marcia Lucas