**For Immediate Release**

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**29th New Orleans Film Festival Screenplay Competition Finalists Announced**

**New Orleans, La. (September 4th, 2018)––** The New Orleans Film Festival announced the finalists of **its inaugural Screenplay Competition**. The festival received over **700 screenplay submissions** from all over the world and 28 finalists have been selected in **Feature, Short, Episodic and Louisiana Screenplay** categories. **All finalists will be provided with an All-Access Pass** to the 29th New Orleans Film Festival **October 17 – 25, 2018**. Finalists will take advantage of the screenings, panels, roundtables, and numerous opportunities to connect with other writers, filmmakers, and industry professionals. **Winners** in each category will be announced at a special reception during the festival. The winner of **Feature Screenplays category** will receive a cash prize of **$1000**; Short and Episodic Screenplay category winners will receive a cash prize of $500. For Louisiana residents: **the Louisiana Film & Entertainment Association (LFEA)** is sponsoring a **$1000 prize** for the **best screenplay from a Louisiana-based writer** and a runner-up prize of $500. *Please scroll down to see synopses and writer bios of all 28 finalists.*

**All #NOFF2018 Passes are On Sale with a New Pass for Students**

As the countdown for the 29th New Orleans Film Festival continues, the New Orleans Film Society has begun sales of all types of #NOFF2018 passes via [**neworleansfilmfestival.org**](https://neworleansfilmsociety.org/festival)New Orleans Film Society members get discounts on pass purchases.

For true film buffs who would like to experience all 9 days of the festival, an **All Access Pass** ($320)is the best option. All Access Pass holders enjoy free tickets to all screenings (230+) with **priority entrance to theaters**, access to **parties every night** of the festival, **feel like a star** at the Festival VIP Lounge, and more…

**Weekender Pass** ($195) holders enjoy all of these privileges between **Friday, October 19th, and Sunday, October 21st**. The New Orleans Film Festival’s Weekender Pass is **a great opportunity** to visit New Orleans for out-of-towners while exploring some of the best new and seasoned voices in cinema.

**Unlimited Film Pass** ($150) gives access to all festival screenings with advanced reservation while **Six Film Pass** ($65) is a discounted pass containing 6 film tickets. **Both** of these passes are available as of Tuesday, September 4th.

This year’s new **Student Pass** gives students **access to all festival screenings (200+)** with advanced reservation plus **free admission to the Saturday Night Party** on October 20th for **$50**! Students should **email a copy of their valid Student ID** to info@neworleansfilmsociety.org to receive a link to book their pass online.

Pass holders and NOFS members will be able to start claiming their free tickets on September 24th at noon, while individual tickets will go on sale for the public on October 3rd at noon. Detailed information about **#NOFF2018 passes and tickets can be found at** [**neworleansfilmsociety.org/attend-2**](https://neworleansfilmsociety.org/attend-2/)

### **SUPPORT FOR THE 29TH NEW ORLEANS FILM FESTIVAL COMES FROM…**

### The 29th New Orleans Film Festival’s **Marquee sponsors** are **21st Century Fox** and **New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation**.

### **Chloe Wine Collection** is the festival’s **Official Wine Sponsor**. **The New Orleans Advocate** is the festival’s **Signature Media Sponsor**. **The Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans** is an official sponsor of the festival HUB.

### Producing, Premiere and Premiere Trade sponsors include **The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences, Bond Moroch, the City of New Orleans, The Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans, Cox Communications, Hilton New Orleans Riverside, Kyotocolor, Louisiana Entertainment, The New Orleans Hotel Collection, Panavision, Restore the Mississippi River Delta, Second Line Stages, Solomon Group** and **VER**.

### Grantors include the the the Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts & Sciences, the Arts Council of New Orleans, Greater New Orleans Foundation, the Helis Foundation, Jazz & Heritage Foundation, Louisiana Division of the Arts, South Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

### **ABOUT THE NEW ORLEANS FILM SOCIETY**

### The New Orleans Film Society discovers, cultivates, and amplifies diverse voices of filmmakers who tell the stories of our time. Founded in 1989, NOFS produces the Academy-accredited New Orleans Film Festival annually and invests year-round in building a vibrant film culture in the South to share transformative cinematic experiences with audiences and connect dynamic filmmakers to career-advancing resources. Year-round programming includes free and low-cost screenings for members and the broader community of cinephiles in New Orleans, a 20-year running French Film Festival featuring contemporary and classic French cinema, and filmmaker professional development programs created to nurture diverse voices in filmmaking in the American South. NOFS is a 501(c)(3) organization.

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### **The 29th New Orleans Film Festival - Screenplay Competition Finalists**

### **Feature Screenplay Finalists**

**All See None by Zev Aaron** – Traumatized by the discovery of two dead inmates, an architect tries to sabotage the construction of a prison he’s designed. When the prison corporation that hired him finds out, he and his young daughter must run for their lives.
**Zev Aaron Bio** – Zev Aaron was born in 1990 in New York and presently lives there. He received a B.A. in History from the University of Pennsylvania and an M.A. in Liberal Studies from The New School. He has made a series of experimental analog shorts and is currently shooting two narrative shorts, one on 16mm and one on 35mm.

**Audrey, 2.0 by Imogen Grace** – A Hollywood actress struggling to make a comeback begins to form a deep and dangerous attachment to her android body double, in this lo-fi sci-fi set in a near future.
**Imogen Grace Bio** –Imogen is a screenwriter based in Toronto, Canada. She studied dramatic arts in New York City and has written and directed short films that have appeared in international film festivals. Her feature screenplay Audrey, 2.0 is an official selection of Oaxaca Film Festival and Catalina Film Festival. She is the co-founder of the women in film initiative The Bechel Bill.

**Delos by María A. Otero** – A Mexican girl with unusual powers struggles to deal with her impending womanhood, her disastrous family, the constant torment of bullies and her crumbling sense of identity while fighting to keep her sanity and avoid her breaking point.
**María A. Otero Bio** – María Otero was born in Mexico in 1996. She started writing as soon as she learned how to at age 6. A few years later, before she was allowed to watch “grown-up” movies, she defied her parent’s rules and saw Schindler’s List. This changed her life. From that moment on, she lived for films. She divides her time between MX and NYC.

**Johnny Ace by Moon Molson** – On the night of Christmas Day in 1954, two Houston Homicide Detectives are called to the City Auditorium to investigate the accidental suicide of R&B singer Johnny Ace and discover that the death of the legendary crooner is anything but an “open and shut” case of drunken Russian Roulette.
**Moon Molson Bio** – Moon Molson’s short films Pop Foul (2007), Crazy Beats Strong Every Time (2011), and The Bravest, The Boldest (2014) all premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, have screened at over 250 international film festivals, and won over 100 awards worldwide. He is a 2015 Guggenheim Fellow in Film-Video and currently an Assistant Professor in Visual Arts at Princeton University.

**Kibou by Cassie Hayasaka and Keith Hayasaka** – In a political and cultural backdrop acutely relevant today as 75 years ago, a young Japanese-American loses everything – his freedom, cultural identity, and the love of his life – when his family is split up by the government and forced to relocate to a desolate internment camp during WWII. When faced with the prospect of post-war renewal, the bonds of family and loyalty to country threaten to eclipse his happiness.
**Cassie Hayasaka and Keith Hayasaka Bio** – Cassie and Keith Hayasaka have collectively lived all over the United States but now call the Pacific Northwest home. Drawing on diverse experiences and socioeconomic/cultural backgrounds, they strive to craft engaging narratives while exploring timely issues of race, social disparity, and family.

**Plaçage by G. Michelle Robinson** – In early 19th Century New Orleans, it was not uncommon for a White man to enter into consensual common-law union with a woman of color. The practice was called Plaçage. Emilie, a 17-year-old mixed-race woman, has been raised in a life of relative luxury in just such a household. Her sister, Marie Elaine, is about to embark into the same lifestyle. But for Emilie, enchanted by stories of the West she reads of in penny novels, the life she’s known holds no allure.
**G. Michelle Robinson Bio** – Originally from Washington State, Michelle is a Brooklyn-based actor and writer. She’s been on TV and film, most notably a recurring role on HBO’s Boardwalk Empire, and theatre, including the 2002 Edinburgh Fringe First winning Black to My Roots.

**Shock by Rosie Rosato** – Baltimore City has become a haven for queers all over the state of Maryland. Everything is temporary here; both this kind of love, and this kind of life. Mandatory conversion therapy plucks everyone at random from the city for a country retreat at a center outside of town. Zooey, a 24-year-old painter who is startled by how much falling in love has changed her life, has recently lost her girlfriend Sam. Zooey and her group of friends navigate their city, and live their lives the way they feel they should for as long as they can. Shock is a social horror that slides in and out of memories; it is a soft boil through and through. Rebellion can exist in small acts, like falling in love, and staying true to yourself. Shock questions our permanence and our strength to be honest with ourselves.
**Rosie Rosato Bio** – Rosie Rosato is a Brooklyn, NY based screenwriter/filmmaker from Baltimore, MD. She bleeds genres, playing with Horror, Drama, and Syfy, suspending disbelief to dive deep into ourselves. Shock, a queer-social-horror based in her hometown, is her current project in pre-production. Shock is Rosato’s first feature-length script. Rosato holds a BFA in Film/Video from Pratt Institute.

**True Blue Masters by Hadley Witcher** – An aspiring young copywriter investigates water rights and stumbles into an underhanded political scheme surrounding the emerging gaming industry in 1990s New Mexico.
**Hadley Witcher Bio** – Hadley Witcher received her BFA from Cornell University, then settled in Tesuque, New Mexico, where she worked in photography and video production. She also wrote commentary and film reviews for KUNM, Albuquerque’s NPR affiliate. She later moved to her native Philadelphia area with her husband and two children. She earned her MFA in Creative Writing at Rosemont College in 2017.

### **Episodic Screenplay Finalists**

**Banshees by Cari Daly** – After her Irish mob-boss husband is arrested by the FBI, a mother of three with plans to escape, steps up to lead the family business.
**Cari Daly Bio** – Cari Daly is the granddaughter of Irish immigrants who may not have been on the right side of the law. She made good by attending NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, receiving her BFA in Directing and Dramaturgy, followed by the AFI Conservatory, where she received her MFA in Screenwriting. She won’t break your kneecaps…she promises…

**Deadline by Branden Hampton** – A relentless black journalist struggles through the world’s top journalism school in the midst of racism, politics and corruption in Chicago.
**Branden Hampton Bio** – Branden T. Hampton is an award-winning director, producer, musician and writer from Atlanta, Georgia. The award-winning documentary “FEARLESS” that he co-directed/co-produced was nominated at the Chicago/Midwest Emmys for two College Production Awards and has premiered at major international film festivals. He is a proud graduate of Howard University and Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism.

**Generation-Y by Chelsea Holmes-McKnight** – Gen-Y (Generation-Y) follows the life of Elisha Danbrooke, an African American woman whose world is turned upside down when she discovers she’s contracted an incurable STD. Throughout the series, viewers will learn how she navigates through the dating world with this stigma.
**Chelsea Holmes-McKnight Bio** – My name is Chelsea Holmes-McKnight, I am from Charlotte, North Carolina. I began writing in high school for the newspaper and yearbook, but my love for storytelling developed during my college years. I originally went to school to become a journalist, yet after taking several fiction writing courses, I was hooked. The rest is history.

**The Quickening by Brittany Worthington** – Eleanor Murphy Ballard is a 19th-century housewife who is not only struggling to conceive a child with her wealthy husband but struggling to conceal her past and true identity as a runaway slave. She is forced to confront her true self when a close friend finds herself pregnant with nowhere to go. It is soon revealed that Eleanor aided in providing illegal abortions to women across the city. Pulled back into that world with the promise that she might find the daughter she gave up nearly a decade ago, Eleanor starts down a path towards becoming Chicago’s most-notorious abortionist. But with the Council of the Suppression of Vice and a Chicago mobster after her, Eleanor must face some hard choices as she confronts who she is and what she truly wants.
**Brittany Worthington Bio** – Brittany Worthington is a native Michiganer –Grand Rapids, MI to be exact– who completed her MFA in screenwriting at the University of Texas at Austin. Brittany is currently pursuing her screenwriting career in Los Angeles. She was recently named the second place finalist in the LAUNCH Million Dollar Screenplay competition.

**The Realm by Crystal Ellington** – Episodic fantasy drama The Realms explores the notion that there is life after death. The protagonist, Kyna, is struck with amnesia at the time of her death, and must navigate the new realm to uncover the truth behind her life and death. In order to unlock the details of her existence, she must master the role of Guardian, one who assists the dead with life’s unfinished business. With each soul assisted, she unlocks a key to her life and death. As she gets closer to the truth, tensions rise in the world of the living and the dead. The barrier between the realms is thinning. All hell is about to break loose.
**Crystal Ellington Bio** – Born and raised in Florida, Crystal studied journalism and communication at Ashford University. After a brief stint as an on-air radio personality, she moved to Europe for a couple years before returning to her hometown to care for her two daughters. She now works in banking and spends her free time indulging her passion for writing.

**The Reservoir by Dylan Allen (Teleplay), Eddy Vallante + Dylan Allen (Story)** – In an age when water is rapidly becoming the new oil, an ambitious engineer reluctantly returns home after public doubt is cast on the sustainability of the local reservoir. But as she reconnects with the family she fled and the community she left behind, she begins to struggle with the reason she’s back: to flood her hometown.
**Amalgamated Picture Co.** – Amalgamated Picture Co. is an award-winning production house based in Brooklyn, NY. Their most recent short film THE PRIVATES won Hammer to Nail’s Spring ‘17 Short Film Contest and was released as a Vimeo Staff Pick Premiere. It was featured on Short of the Week, io9, Film Shortage and won New Hampshire FF’s Best NH Short Narrative award.

### **Short Screenplay Finalists**

**Flight by Alexis Stratton** –In 1950s small-town South Carolina, Dee helps her lover Sam break free from the South by cutting off their hair.
**Alexis Stratton Bio** – Alexis Stratton has spent their life in many homes, from New Orleans to South Korea. They received an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of South Carolina, and they currently work as a freelance writer. Previously, they wrote and directed two short films, “Crosswalk” and “GHOST\_GIRL,” which have been screened at festivals in the U.S. and beyond.

**Freya by Jo Fox and Sophia Tamaro** – A grieving painter finds solace and creative inspiration through sexual encounters with strangers.
**Jo Fox and Sophia Tamaro Bios** – A former doctor and teacher, Yorkshire writer/producer and married mother-of-two, Jo is a Nicholl Fellowship Quarterfinalist, with a passion for sharp dialogue and rich characterisation. | Writer/director and UK Film School graduate, multilingual German/Italian born Sophia has a flair for intriguing, original stories and is committed to increasing diversity in film.

**My Black Friend by James M. Martin** – A new premiere subscription service seeks to help young, woke, progressives avoid costly social mistakes related to issues of race and help demonstrate their allegiance to black causes; all without actually needing to get involved.
**James M. Martin Bio** – James M. Martin is a lifelong writer and college educator who loves creating worlds that are outside of the norm. If there’s a way to work a bit of the unusual or the outright weird into everyday situations, he’s all for it. As a writer, director, and editor he knows he should be doing less, but sometimes has trust issues.

**Strangers on the Outside by Derek Weissbein** – After discovering they can recapture the feeling of falling in love for the first time by inhabiting the bodies of others, a couple begins playing an addictive game to reinvigorate their monotonous relationship while ignoring the ethical and physical implications.
**Derek Weissbein Bio** – Derek Weissbein is a screenwriter located in Los Angeles. He was featured on the 2016 Hollywood Blacklist with his screenplay, Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs, about Eric Clapton and George Harrison. He has since been attached to write three more biopics. Although he enjoys bringing non-fiction stories to life, he is just as passionate about telling grounded sci-fi stories.

**The Frog by Tate Nova & Courtney Powell** – A young woman working as a maid on a remote Hawaiian island drinks an herbal tincture she hopes will solve all her problems, but she discovers her troubles have just begun.
**Tate Nova & Courtney Powell Bios** – Courtney Powell and Tate Nova have been making films together in New York City since 2015. Their first film, The Surf Report, was an official selection of the New Orleans Film Festival in 2016 and they are excited to show their new film The Future Is Bright at #NOFF2018.

**Wa Wa by Amy Wang** – A 5-year-old girl attempts to overcome feelings of inadequacy and isolation at a boarding school for overworked parents.
**Amy Wang Bio** – Amy Wang is a Chinese-Australian filmmaker who grew up in the suburbs of Sydney, Australia. She graduated from the American Film Institute where her thesis film screened at numerous festivals around the world including being nominated for the Grand Prix at Clermont-Ferrand. She’s a recipient of the Young Directors Award at Cannes Lions 2018 and is a Bluecat Screenplay Winner.

### **Louisiana Screenplay Finalists**

**Bird by Renso Amariz** –A young woman who can’t leave her apartment has a difficult time finding love, until an alluring, fast living, neighbor shows up. The two women find comfort in each other, but there is a bigger secret on why she can’t leave her apartment that will change the lives of both women.
**Renso Amariz Bio** – Renso Amariz spent 9 years working as a military photojournalist. Since leaving the military, he has followed his passion for storytelling and focusing on film. He’s written and produced several shorts, and one ill-fated feature. Currently he’s working with Invisible Pictures and writing a digital series for internet release.

**Empyrean by Meghann McCracken** – In 2047 Silicon Valley, genetics researcher, Nia Donne, becomes embroiled in an international cover-up with implications for all of humanity.
**Meghann McCracken Bio** – Meghann’s plays have been read, produced, or honored at the Last Frontier Theatre Conference (Alaska), The Playwrights’ Center (Minneapolis), Southern Rep (New Orleans) and American Blues Theatre (Chicago). She also has been a quarterfinalist for the Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting. She has a B.A. in Film Production from U.C., Santa Cruz. She lives in New Orleans with her husband and son.

**Gun Island by Max Cusimano** – A federal agent is called to a remote Louisiana island to investigate a high-profile murder and uncovers a conspiracy involving the American arms industry.
**Max Cusimano Bio** – Max is a Louisiana native who gained an arguably overrated film degree from USC and spent a few years wandering about Southern California. Ridley Scott said some nice things about his short film, “The Rhapsody” (see IMDB.) Max’s documentary feature “New City” is available on Amazon Prime. He lives in New Orleans with his wife, daughter, and two dogs.

**Homesick by Adrian Ferrara & Gavin Ferrara** – When a horrific virus that turns those infected into savage, animalistic creatures sweeps through the grounds of a children’s summer camp, a precocious eight-year-old girl and her friends must fight to survive their summer of fun.
**Adrian Ferrara & Gavin Ferrara Bios** – Screenwriters Adrian and Gavin Ferrara are cousins who co-own New Orleans-based, award-winning production company Flittermouse Films. Growing up in a show business family led them to pursue careers in filmmaking and screenwriting, an endeavor that would eventually culminate in the production of several films and the creation of numerous screenplays. Looking to the future, they hope to continue creating together!

**Little Lying Wild by Samantha Aldana & Bryce Parsons-Twesten** – In Belize, Carmen, an outcast girl with an obsession for stories is the only witness of a depraved murder that happens in her village. Being seen as a liar for constantly spinning tall tales, Carmen has to prove to her people that what she has seen this time is not an illusion.
**Samantha Aldana & Bryce Parsons-Twesten Bios** –Samantha Aldana is a Belizean-American award-winning director/writer. Her love of stories was born from the fusion of storytelling traditions of the American South and the folktales of Belize. At the age of 12, she began putting her stories on screen. Samantha’s work has been featured on PBS, The Film Shortage, Comic Con, and other festivals and platforms around the world. | Bryce Parsons-Twesten grew up on a farm in Southern Illinois. He is the literary manager of PRIME, a theatre company that specializes in 24-hour play festivals. He worked previously with Samantha Aldana, co-writing THE MELANCHOLY MAN which has won “Best Narrative Film” in the Audience Awards Women’s Film Challenge and various other honors.

**Seven Kinds of Soup by Kim Turner** – Following the sudden death of her husband, a woman must navigate her way through her grief with the help of her friends and a mythic creature who may be a manifestation of that grief.
**Kim Turner Bio** – Kim Turner is a writer and a graduate of the Conservatory at Second City in Chicago. Additionally, she studied writing at iO and the Annoyance Theater. Her screenplay, Christy’s Got Cancer!, was one of twelve works selected for the inaugural Meryl Streep Screenwriters’ Lab in 2015. Kim resides in Mandeville and daily tests the physiological limits for human caffeine ingestion.

**Swanson by Shaq Cosse** – In parallel time periods, ACE’s life mirrors the challenges of growing up in an adopted family and working in a group home for teenage boys placed out of their homes. While working in the group home, Ace comes up with the idea to start a bootleg therapy practice, which he’s strongly urged against because of his lack of formal training. Ace must now deal with the dangers of his illegitimate practice, everyday group home problems, and the memories of his own dark past. Each episode will take us on a journey through a flashback into Ace’s past, which will present a theme mirroring a theme going on in the present day, inside of the group home.
**Shaq Cosse Bio** – Shaq Cosse is a hip hop journalist from New Orleans, LA who has spent the last six years publishing stories in national media about the rise of New Orleans’ underground music, and art culture. After spending a year and a half living and gathering research inside of one of Louisiana’s most notorious out-of-home facilities for teenage boys, Shaq has embarked on the journey of telling the stories of his, “lil homies”.

**The Funeral Band Pilot by Nicholas Manuel Pino** – On his first day as the newest member of “Thicker than Blood Brass Band,” John, a now teenager displaced by Katrina, learns all about the unique community he’s been disconnected from for so long and the traditions that follow them to the grave.
**Nicholas Manuel Pino Bio** – Nicholas Manuel Pino is a Chilean-American Award-Winning Writer/Director/DP and composer. His passion is writing comedy with heart. In 2017, he was awarded the “Emerging Voices” fellowship from New Orleans Film Festival.