

# HAMPTONS FILM

## HAMPTONSFILM ANNOUNCES SELECTED SCREENWRITERS, SCREENPLAYS & MENTORS FOR 25th EDITION OF THE SCREENWRITERS LAB

**Award-Winning Mentors Include Justin Kuritzkes (Writer, CHALLENGERS), Rachel Shukert (Showrunner, NINE PERFECT STRANGERS), and Dan Janvey (Producer, NOMADLAND)**

**Lab to Take Place April 4-6, 2025**

**East Hampton, NY (March 24, 2025)** – HamptonsFilm, home of Hamptons International Film Festival, announced today the selected fellows, screenplays and mentors for the 25th edition of their annual Screenwriters Lab, which will take place April 4-6, 2025.

The three selected screenplays for 2025's Lab are **"Lullaby"** by **Aliza Brugger**, **"Halloween 1999"** by **Keaton Ventura**, and **"The Mirex"** by **Pepi Ginsberg**. The Lab pairs rising screenwriters with established screenwriters, directors, and creative-producers for a weekend of one-on-one mentoring sessions.

"After reviewing this year's submissions, we were impressed by how these three projects stood apart with their originality and fresh storytelling. We're also pleased to have three esteemed creative voices to assist in fostering and mentoring the next generation of creative talent." stated Artistic Director David Nugent.

This year's mentors include Academy Award winning producer, and Head of Film at Ventureland, **Dan Janvey**, whose past work includes REBUILDING, JANET PLANET, A LOVE SONG, NOMADLAND (Academy Award® winner for Best Picture), TIME, HEART OF A DOG, and BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD; playwright, novelist, and screenwriter **Justin Kuritzkes**, who most recently wrote CHALLENGERS, directed by Luca Guadagnino, produced by Amy Pascal and Rachel O'Connor, and starring Zendaya, Josh O'Connor, and Mike Faist, as well as QUEER, adapted from the William S. Burroughs novel, also directed by Guadagnino, starring Drew Starkey and Daniel Craig; and **Rachel Shukert**, the executive producer/showrunner of the second season of *Nine Perfect Strangers* (HULU), executive producer on *The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu), writer/supervising producer on *Glow*, and showrunner and creator of *The Baby-Sitters Club* (Netflix), amongst other television, Broadway, and literary credits. She is currently adapting Judy Blume's novel *Summer Sisters* for Jenna Bush Hager.

HamptonsFilm will also present one of the participating screenplays with the 2025 Melissa Mathison Award. The award was established in 2016 and named for the late, beloved Oscar®-nominated screenwriter, and strives to foster the continued development of female writers in the industry. Previous recipients include **Sarah Mokh's "Diary of a Muslim Cynic," Shehrezad Maher's "Theory of Colors," Farida Zahran's "The Leftover Ladies," Lana Wilson's "Back Seat," Kelly O'Sullivan's "Mouse," Kirsten Tan's "Higher," Aemilia Scott's "The Birthday Suit," Annabelle Attanasio's "Mickey And The Bear," and Cathy Yan's "Dead Pigs."** The 2024 Melissa Mathison Award recipient will be announced at an upcoming date and will receive access to a casting director and a staged reading of their project in New York City. To support women in film, please donate to the Melissa Mathison Award here: <https://bit.ly/mathisondonate>.

Highlights of the Screenwriters Lab over the past 25 years have included Anu Valia's WE STRANGERS, starring Kirby and Maria Dizzia, which premiered at the 2024 SXSW Film Festival; Andrew Semans' RESURRECTION, starring Rebecca Hall and Tim Roth, which premiered at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival; Michael Tyburski and Ben Nabors' THE SOUND OF SILENCE, starring Peter Sarsgaard and Rashida Jones,

which premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival; Ísold Uggadóttir's AND BREATHE NORMALLY and Christina Choe's NANCY, which both premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival and received awards for directing and screenwriting, respectively; Destin Daniel Cretton's SHORT TERM 12, starring Academy Award®-winning actors Brie Larson and Rami Malek, which won the Grand Jury and Audience Awards at SXSW in 2013; and Sara Colangelo's LITTLE ACCIDENTS, which premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival, starring Elizabeth Banks and Chloe Sevigny.

Photos of this year's mentors and participants are available [here](#). For more information on this program, please visit the [HamptonsFilm website](#). Additional information on HamptonsFilm's year-round programming, including the upcoming 17th annual SummerDocs documentary showcase, and the Summer Outdoor Screening Series, will be announced at a later date. As previously announced, the 33rd annual Hamptons International Film Festival will take place as an eleven-day event from October 3-13, 2025.

## **SCREENPLAYS**

### **“Lullaby” by Aliza Brugger**

**Logline:** Freshly released from prison after helping her oldest daughter obtain an illegal abortion, Frankie returns to her rural hometown where her religious relatives are seeking custody of her youngest child. In a conservative community filled with fear, hate and anger, Frankie must find allies willing to publicly defend her maternal capabilities in court and confront the community's threatening hostility.

**Bio:** **Aliza Brugger** is an award-winning filmmaker based in Los Angeles, originally from Nebraska. They received an MFA in screenwriting and directing from Columbia University, where they wrote and directed films that have screened internationally. ROADKILL was an official selection at the Oscar-qualifying Outfest Los Angeles, Out on Film, and Out at the Movies, winning Best Screenplay. AIN'T NO MERCY FOR RABBITS was selected for Torino, Montclair, the Oscar-qualifying In the Palace, and Female Eye Festival, where it won Best International Short Film. SOMA was accepted into the Oscar- and BAFTA-qualifying Los Angeles International Film Festival and the Maine International Film Festival. Alongside their short films, Aliza's feature-length adaptation of ROADKILL and their television pilot *Trashy* were both selected for Columbia University's prestigious Selects Program, the highest honor at Columbia. Trashy won Best TV Comedy Pilot.

Since graduating, Aliza has been hired to write and direct a range of exciting projects including HOLE IN THE WALL, a short film set to accompany the upcoming album of an acclaimed Danish-Zambian artist and The Casting Couch on Greenwich St. written/produced by Emily Bronner. Additionally, Aliza produced WHITE SPACE, written and directed by Raymond Perez, who wrote on Netflix's *Selena*. Their upcoming projects include short films INDULGE by China Pharr and MUSE by Mary Kate MaGee. Their feature screenplay LULLABY was a finalist in the Sundance Film Labs and was accepted into the Hamptons Screenwriters Lab. The film tells the story of Frankie, who is freshly released from prison after helping her oldest daughter obtain an illegal abortion. Returning to her rural hometown, Frankie must face her religious relatives, who are seeking custody of her youngest child.

In addition to their narrative work, Aliza has directed commercials, music videos, and web series. They are most fulfilled when exploring themes of class, queerness, family dysfunction, and the subconscious, often weaving nature into their work as both a setting and a thematic element. Their goal as a filmmaker is to create empathy and connection.

### **“Halloween 1999” by Keaton Ventura**

**Logline:** In the days leading up to the Halloween of 1999—the final witching season of the twentieth century—Sally Dressing, a young, working class mother in upstate New York, finds her world upended by an untimely death. Faith, family, and everything in between comes into question as she gets caught in the supernatural veil of the season.

**Bio: Keaton Ventura** is a New York-based writer and director whose short films—including FIRE BURNING, THE DARK ARTS, WET LOOKS, and DANDELIONS—have screened in both film and art world settings. His work explores a range of narrative styles, from young adult thriller to fantasy to personal documentary.

Beyond filmmaking, he has worked as a storyteller and creative director for Airbnb, Samara and other international brands. He is also the co-founder of *Film Fun*, an online publication that explores the evolving relationship between audiences and the film industry in the 21st century. He is currently in development on his first feature film.

### **“The Mirex” by Pepi Ginsberg**

**Logline:** A suburban teenager plays a privileged noble in *The Mirex*, an immersive role play game set in a remote, 11th-century-style village in the woods, where she struggles to untangle herself from her team’s increasingly violent feud with a rival clan as the line between fantasy and reality becomes dangerously blurred.

**Bio: Pepi Ginsberg** is a filmmaker and former singer-songwriter. Before turning to film, she released five albums, receiving critical acclaim from NPR, KCRW, Pitchfork, and more while touring extensively across the US. She then enrolled in NYU Grad Film, where she earned an MFA in writing and directing.

Pepi’s latest short film, WASSUPKAYLEE, premiered at SXSW '25 and was acquired by ARTE. Her thesis film, THE PASS, premiered at Cannes '22, and went on to screen at TIFF, BFI, Hamptons, and many more. THE PASS is distributed by Criterion, *The New Yorker*, Canal+, and Kanopy, and was selected as a Vimeo Staff Pick. Ginsberg was a 2023 Purple List winner for her script HAAZER. She was a 2021 and 2023 NYU Development Studio Fellow with two separate projects, a 2021 Princess Grace Award winner and a 2021 IFP Marcie Bloom Fellow. Her first short BAD CANDY won first prize at NYU’s Wasserman Awards.

In addition to her narrative work, Pepi directs music videos for artists such as John Cale and helms commissioned projects for brands such as Gucci. She is currently in development on her first feature, THE MIREX.

## **MENTORS**

### **Dan Janvey**

Dan Janvey is an Academy Award®-winning producer, and Head of Film at Ventureland. His past credits include REBUILDING, JANET PLANET, A LOVE SONG, NOMADLAND, TIME, HEART OF A DOG, and BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD. He’s currently based in Brooklyn, NY.

### **Justin Kuritzkes**

Justin Kuritzkes is a playwright, novelist, and screenwriter. Kuritzkes most recently wrote CHALLENGERS, directed by Luca Guadagnino, produced by Amy Pascal and Rachel O’Connor, and starring Zendaya, Josh O’Connor, and Mike Faist. The film was released in theaters and Prime Video in 2024. Justin also wrote QUEER, adapted from the William S. Burroughs novel of the same name, which marks his second collaboration with director Guadagnino. The film, starring Daniel Craig and Drew Starkey, played at the Venice Film Festival and the Toronto International Film Festival, and was released by A24, also in 2024.

Productions of Justin’s plays have been staged by The New Group, JACK, and Actors Theatre of Louisville, and he has been awarded residencies from Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, and the Edward F. Albee Foundation. His debut novel, *Famous People*, was published by Henry Holt in 2019.

### **Rachel Shukert**

Rachel Shukert is currently adapting Judy Blume’s novel *Summer Sisters*, for Jenna Bush Hager at

UCP/Peacock. Rachel is the Executive Producer/Showrunner of the second season of *Nine Perfect Strangers* for Hulu. Previously Rachel was an Executive Producer on *The Handmaid's Tale* for Hulu. She is the Showrunner and Creator of Netflix's critically acclaimed series *The Baby-Sitters Club*, for which she was awarded two Emmys, including "Outstanding Children's and Family Program."

Additionally, she was a Supervising Producer on *Glow* for Netflix and wrote on *Supergirl* for CBS and *Red Band Society* for FOX. Rachel wrote the *Starstruck* novels, a three-part young adult fiction series set in Hollywood in the 1930s, as well as two memoirs, *Everything is Going to Be Great* and *Have You No Shame?*

Rachel is a prolific playwright, with plays including *Bloody Mary* (NYIT nominee), *The Sporting Life*, *The Nosemaker's Apprentice*, *The Three Gabor Sisters*, and *Wasp Cove* (with Julie Klausner). She wrote the book and lyrics for the upcoming Broadway musical *How To Write Dirty Books for Fun and Profit* (Aaron Glick/David Stone/Marc Platt producing) and is currently co-writing (with Marc Shaiman, Scott Wittman, and Isaac Oliver) *Knockouts*, a new musical show starring Bridget Everett and Patti LuPone, also set to open on Broadway in 2026. She is currently an Executive Producer on the upcoming UCP/Peacock series *The 'Burbs*.

### **ABOUT HAMPTONSFILM**

HamptonsFilm, home of the Hamptons International Film Festival (HIFF) was founded in 1992 to celebrate the art of film and to introduce a unique and varied spectrum of international films and filmmakers to our audiences. A non-profit organization with year-round screenings of global narrative and documentary films, an annual Screenwriters Lab, a summer documentary showcase, and extensive educational initiatives, HamptonsFilm offers programs that enlighten, educate, and provide invaluable exposure for filmmakers, while also providing the East End of Long Island with an educational and cultural experience that enriches the lives of its citizens and contributes to the local economy. HIFF, celebrating its 33rd year, is an annual premiere film event in New York State, and an intimate showcase of some of the year's best offerings in contemporary cinema from around the world. Awarding prizes to filmmakers in cash and goods and services of over \$130,000 each year, with over \$5 million awarded in competition funds and services over the decades, our program continues to play an important role during awards season. For more information, please visit [hamptonsfilmfest.org](http://hamptonsfilmfest.org).

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