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Agli Fasal

Next Crop

Hindi, Urdu, Awadhi

Amitoj Singh

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Budget

USD 390,000

Synopsis

In the Naqvi family's ancestral orchard, where graves bloom under mango trees, lives Kallu – a humble gravedigger who serves the dead as faithfully as the living. Bound to the feudal Naqvis even after their deaths, Kallu buries their bodies, tends their graves, and endures the ghosts' endless chatter. His bedridden wife Nida, wasting away from grief, pleads for one final wish – to have their long-lost daughter Zuriya's remains brought home and buried beneath the orchard's shade. But the orchard is sacred ground, reserved only for the Naqvi dead.

When the spirit of Khalida Naqvi, a matriarch yearning to speak to her estranged son, offers Kallu a dangerous bargain – her help in exchange for possession of his body – Kallu's faith, loyalty, and sanity unravel. His defiance sets off a quiet rebellion of souls, as class hierarchies dissolve between the living and the dead. In a journey through the mystical countryside, Kallu gathers his daughter's scattered remains and returns to bury her beside Khalida. His final act of love – digging a grave forbidden to him – redeems the restless spirits and heals his wife's grief. In the orchard's dawn light, the dead rest, the living eat mangoes again, and love transcends caste, class, and death itself.

Writer's Statement

My dad died on December 3, 2022. A heart attack. We talked two days before, but I didn't call again. I was too busy, I told myself. That regret claws at me every day. His voice—angry, bursting with humor – still echoes, keeping him alive in my stories. But I'd give anything for one more conversation, to say what I left unsaid. I'm haunted by those 48 hours I let slip. I'm no optimist, just a son wrestling with guilt, trying to make peace with what I can't change. I dream of a moment where the dead can speak, where I could sit with him under a mango tree's shade, sharing stories like we used to. This is for anyone who's lost someone, who carries that ache, praying for one more chance to say what matters, to heal the silence left behind.

Biography

Amitoj Singh is a screenwriter and filmmaker based in Mumbai, India. He is a graduate of Direction and Screenplay writing from the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune. He is currently working with director Sudhir Mishra as an associate and a writer.

Hailing from a small town called Farrukhabad in Uttar Pradesh, he did his Bachelor's in English Literature from Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi, where he also worked in Collegiate theatre, performing, writing, and producing stage and street plays. He subsequently also worked as a copywriter and a translator. He was a part of the Doc-Commune program at PSBT, where his short documentary *Between the Dead and the Dying* about the dying Zardozi tradition in Farrukhabad was formulated.

He is currently working on developing his first feature film titled *Next Crop*. It is a one-of-a-kind attempt at Magical Realism in Hindi Cinema. The film arises out of the death of his father and the grief of not being able to talk for one last time. His goal is to create a cinema that feels like a whispered confession—honest, gentle, hopeful.

A self-described skeptic, he believes that his debut feature would provide a lot of people with hope and wishful thinking about closure. It is an attempt to seek forgiveness for moments missed and a world where stories mend what's broken.



Kavita

Double Tap

Malayalam, Hindi

Chintan Bhatt

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Budget
USD 202,000

Synopsis

Kavita, 28 years old migrant from Kerala is living in the suburbs of Mumbai with her father Bhaskar. She works as an Assistant in an Advertising agency under a toxic boss, working hard to pay off the debts of her father's failed business. She shares a complex love-hate relationship with her father, Bhaskar. But what gives her ultimate joy is being in front of the camera, trying day and night to be a social media influencer where she feels heard, can express herself which she has never been able to do being introverted, neurodivergent. Having been bullied, living in financial strife all her life, Kavita has developed a ruthless drive to succeed.

But then Bhaskar is detected with cancer. Dejected and feeling hopeless for the first time, Kavita makes one final video where she truthfully talks about her life, her vulnerability and their journey through this illness. To her shock, this video goes viral. As she keeps making more videos around her father's cancer treatment, she starts to become famous and turns into a positivity influencer for the millions of followers who start following her. She comes close to being termed the most powerful influencer which will change her life. Obsessed with success, Kavita decides to lie to the world that her father's cancer has gotten worse even after he recovers. But a family health crisis forces her to choose between her dreams and the life of a loved one.

Writer's Statement

Story of *Kavita* is extremely personal to me because like her I too come from a smaller town, am neurodivergent and have had situations in life which push me to succeed. Seeing a generation growing up on social media in a morally ambiguous and shifting society of today's India gave me the idea of this film.

In such a divided society and with the advent of social media, the understanding of morality is under a microscope in *Kavita*. Story of *Kavita* is contemporary to the extent that it is rooted to the now and cannot be set in any other time. At the same time the emotions, contradictions and conflicts between a family dealing with trauma, guilt and financial strife are as universal as they can be. Primary characters Kavita and Bhaskar represent generational and moral divides which anyone and everyone can deeply relate to but at the same time they are extremely rooted to Indian values, pathos and contradictions.

Social media angle in the story is a powerful tool which examines how that aspect has deeply entrenched and changed the way the younger generation looks at the world. But being a lifelong lover of pulsating cinema, I wanted to tell this story with oscillating tonal shifts which ranges from human and family drama to emotional hitchcockian tension constantly keeping viewers guessing and questioning their own ideas of right and wrong.

Biography

Chintan Bhatt started his career in Advertising, Television and Feature films as an Assistant Director, Director and Script consultant. After a decade in the industry, finally in 2018 he founded his own Production company Green Chutney Films and has been actively Producing, Directing Ad Films for leading brands in their sectors such as Mama Earth, Dabur, MG motors amongst 100 other top brands. Chintan also co-wrote and produced the short film *The Song We Sang* which won the best film award at IFFLA along with many other festivals.



Misfits

Hindi, English

Manish Sharma

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Budget
USD 1,200,000

Synopsis

Vipul, an earnest social worker from Bhopal, spends his days in brothels rescuing trafficked girls and advocating for sex workers' rights. When a private investigator snaps him coming out of a raid and delivers the photos to his in-laws, his "respectable" image collapses. Refusing to give up his work, Vipul watches his wedding fall apart overnight. Into this chaos crashes Kheer, an NRI teacher raised abroad, whom Vipul literally meets after a road accident. As they fall in love, Vipul learns that Kheer is adopted and the daughter of two gay Indian men, Raghu and Kashi, who live overseas. When Kheer brings her fathers to Bhopal, Vipul's Dalit parents mistake them for business partners and guardians. Raghu and Kashi think they've been accepted as a couple. Vipul, caught in between, is terrified the façade will crack – especially as his own buried trauma and internalised homophobia surface.

What follows is a comedy of errors stretching from Bhopal to Ishwar's ancestral village: a roka ceremony where everyone is offended for different reasons, an antakshari-filled train journey, and finally an engagement where a single childhood photo outs Kheer's dads to the entire town. As the crowd turns on them, Vipul must decide whether to protect his "image" or publicly stand with the queer parents he's been afraid of. *Misfits* is a funny, heartfelt portrait of a modern Indian family.

Writer's Statement

I grew up in an India where casual homophobia and caste prejudice were part of the air we breathed, even in "educated" homes. *MISFITS* comes from the uncomfortable moment I realised that, despite my politics and profession, a lot of that conditioning still lived inside me. The film is my attempt to look at that contradiction with humour and tenderness.

MISFITS uses a very familiar Indian genre – the wedding family dramedy – and quietly tilts it. On the surface, it has all the ingredients: a cancelled shaadi, nosy relatives, trains, a village engagement, chappals flying. Underneath, it's about a man who works in brothels to protect trafficked girls, yet freezes when he has to introduce his fiancée's gay fathers to his own parents. The film is less interested in "villains" and "heroes" and more in how good, loving people can still carry prejudice, and what it costs to unlearn it. I wanted to place this story in Bhopal and its surrounding villages because these spaces hold a beautiful contradiction: deep conservatism and quiet, everyday rebellion sitting side by side.

MISFITS is a warm, accessible ensemble comedy that lets everyone be vulnerable, flawed and funny. My hope is that audiences walk out feeling like they've spent two hours with real people they know, and that someone, somewhere, goes home a little less afraid of a different kind of family.

Biography

Manish Sharma is a Mumbai-based writer-director and editor. An alumnus of the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, he edited *Dhak Dhak*, a Viacom18 Studios feature produced by Taapsee Pannu, now streaming on Netflix and JioCinema.

Starting out in theatre and later moving into advertising, Manish has directed some of the most emotionally resonant campaigns for brands like Sabhyata and Titan, with work created for agencies such as Ogilvy and Leo Burnett. He is the founder of p se picture, a boutique agency and production house focused on behaviour-change storytelling.

Misfits is his debut feature as writer-director, expanding his long-standing preoccupation with love, stigma, and stereotype-breaking into a warm, accessible family dram-edy.



Nazma Ka Tadka

Nazma's Tadka

Hindi

Sapan Taneja

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Budget

USD 200,000

Synopsis

In a dense Mumbai neighbourhood, Nazma lives a quiet, repetitive life. Her days are spent cooking, cleaning, and tending to her husband Afzal, his ailing aunt, and neighbours who depend on her. Her world is small and contained, until Mehak, a lively young woman from upstairs, enters her life. Mehak dreams of becoming a social media influencer. When she discovers Nazma's talent for cooking, she convinces her to appear in her videos. At first, Nazma is hesitant as she's uncomfortable about putting herself in front of the camera. But, when the video goes online, viewers adore her warmth and authenticity. Encouraged by Mehak, she begins secretly running her own channel, *Nazma Ka Tadka*. For the first time, she feels seen. But, her husband's growing jealousy and the community's judgment soon threaten to shut her down.

Across the same neighbourhood, Shakir, a tailor still grieving his late wife, finds solace in Nazma's cooking videos. Drawn to her voice, he begins following her recipes, hoping to cook the Yakhni Pulao he once promised his late wife. Through them, he begins to reconnect with the world around him, even as his home is threatened by an impending demolition. Set against the rhythms of working-class Mumbai, *Nazma Ka Tadka* is a quiet portrait of two strangers connected through food, loss, and the fragile act of choosing oneself in a world that rarely allows it.

Writer's Statement

Nazma Ka Tadka is a story about claiming space for oneself in a city that rarely pauses for anyone. In Mumbai's crowded lanes, people live side by side yet remain unseen, bound by duty and circumstance. I wanted to explore how ordinary acts can become forms of resistance and renewal.

The intersecting arcs of Nazma and Shakir come from lived encounters, each reflecting a distinct relationship to loss and agency. Both characters struggle to carve out a sliver of autonomy in a world that constantly defines them through others. Crafting their journeys felt like shaping a love story between two people who never meet, yet unknowingly heal and influence one another through small, everyday gestures.

My approach to this film draws from observation and lived experience, informed by years of working within communities across Mumbai. I hope to capture the quiet dignity of people who continue to dream, even when the city leaves little room for it. My filmmaking practice is rooted in observational realism and poetic minimalism, inspired by Abbas Kiarostami, Payal Kapadia, and Wim Wenders.

Set against the relentless rhythm of Mumbai, the film explores how fragile connections and acts of care can carve out moments of meaning, even amidst confinement and loss. With this film, I hope to evoke the quiet dignity of people in their shared search for belonging.

Biography

Sapan Taneja is a filmmaker and writer based in Mumbai with over eight years of experience across documentary, fiction, and experimental formats, including 8mm and 16mm film. His work has been showcased at festivals such as Oberhausen, MAMI, and the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK).

As a curator, he has programmed initiatives like India on Film at the Serendipity Arts Festival and the Nazaria Arts Mela. His practice is community-rooted and led by collective authorship. As a founding member of the Nazaria Arts Collective, he collaborates with marginalized communities on participatory storytelling projects. His current initiatives include Reimagine and Khoj-fiction and nonfiction filmmaking labs designed for youth from low-income neighborhoods. These programs are grounded in a process-driven, co-authored approach to cinematic education.

He is most recently a Writers' Ink and Docustan Lab alum, and in 2025, he was a Flaherty Film Seminar fellow.



Once Upon A December

English, Tamil

Arya A Menon

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Budget
USD 1,813,189

Synopsis

In 1997, Sam Joseph (10F), an orphan from Ooty, wins admission into an elite convent boarding school as a charity scholarship trial, on the condition she assume a false identity under the Sisters' wardship. Sam struggles to adjust to this strange new world of privilege, class and fear. Desperate to conceal the truth, Sam is a loner, but her odd accent, and her brilliance in sport and academic work turns her into a figure of mystery amongst her peers. Driven by ambition and determination, Sam dreams of becoming a doctor, a goal that keeps her anchored amid the loneliness and dread of being discovered. When the school's star student befriends her, their friendship blossoms into an innocent yet forbidden bond that, over the years, crosses the limits and boundaries of the convent's faith. It defies the school's rigid moral order, triggering jealousy, betrayal and public disgrace. Expelled and presumed dead, Sam vanishes, her name erased from every record, as if she never existed. The scholarship trial is not repeated. In the present day, a novice nun named Maria is poised to enter sisterhood in a convent in Landour, Mussoorie. She awaits the elusive "call from God," unaware the past she buried is about to resurface. When a stranger at a bus stop addresses her as Sam, Maria's new life begins to unravel. Days later, a handwritten letter from Ooty arrives, forcing her to confront the truth she has spent a lifetime outrunning. *Once Upon A December* is a story about the struggle to defy one's destiny, and the hope for second chances.

Writer's Statement

Once Upon A December comes from a personal place. I was sent to boarding school in Ooty when I was four, and the experience of growing up there, away from home, surrounded by discipline and silence, has stayed with me.

Set against the late 1990s and early 2000s, it was the advent of globalisation, computers, and cable television in India, marking a generation caught between tradition and the promise of a modern world. The film weaves in moments like the Kargil War, 9/11, Princess Diana's death, the arrival of Internet cafés, MTV India, Channel V, and the Y2K IT wave, tracing a country on the edge of transformation.

The music and pop culture of the time, from A. R. Rahman to Billboard Top 100 hits, and films such as *Titanic*, *The Matrix*, *The Exorcist*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Anastasia* and classic Disney animations, mirror the hopes and confusion of a generation growing up too fast.

Through this story, I want to explore what it means to come of age in a system defined by hierarchy and control, and how love and defiance become acts of survival.

Biography

Arya A Menon is a Producer whose work spans fiction, documentary, and animation. Her credits include *Famous in Ahmedabad* (2015) by Hardik Mehta, winner of the National Award for Best Non-Feature Film, *Sacred Games* (2018-2019) by Vikramaditya Motwane and Anurag Kashyap, *AK vs AK* (2020) by Vikramaditya Motwane, *Wade* (2020) by Upamanyu Bhattacharyya and Kalp Sanghvi, *Decoupled* (2021) by Manu Joseph and Hardik Mehta, and *Ctrl* (2024) by Vikramaditya Motwane.

Arya is a founding partner at Odd & Even, alongside Shubham Karna. Their recent productions include *2024* (2021) by Rohin Nair, *Kiss* (2022) by Varun Grover, *Kovarty* (2025) by Rohin Nair, *Susu* (2025) by Shubham Karna, and *Distance* (2025) by Swapnil Sonawane. Upcoming projects include animated feature *Heirloom* by Upamanyu Bhattacharyya in association with NFDC-India, *Happy Patel* by Vir Das and Kavi Shastri for Aamir Khan Productions, *Silkyara* by Anagh Mukherjee with The Indian Express, *Vishu Bumper* by Rohin Nair, *White Rabbit* by Vikramaditya Motwane, and *Why The Poor Don't Kill Us* by Manu Joseph.



White Guy

English

Niharika Puri

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Budget

USD 5,200,000

Synopsis

Sixteen-year-old Rannvijay “Jay” Mangat navigates 1980s Birmingham torn between his father’s rigid ideals and Thatcher-era racism. At school, he’s mocked for his faith and brown skin. His only refuge is an old Casio keyboard where city rhythms blend with echoes of home.

Over time, a rare skin condition turns him visibly white. Jay’s world flips. Teachers smile, doors open, strangers embrace him. Hiding behind makeup and lies, he becomes, ironically, a “white guy.”

Everything changes when he discovers Birmingham’s underground daytimer parties - secret daytime clubs where South Asian teens fused Bhangra, punk, and Brit-pop to claim their freedom. There, Jay finds Sahiba, a fiery singer challenging her community’s limits. Together with another friend, they form Kamikaze Desi, a band fusing Brit-pop swagger with Punjabi rhythm. Their sound ignites the daytimer scene... and outrage from both worlds.

As Jay’s two identities collide, he must decide what face - and what voice - he will claim as his own. *White Guy* is a vibrant, music-driven coming-of-age story about race, rebellion, and rhythm. It is the journey of a teenager remixing his heritage to be heard in a country that now must listen.

Writer’s Statement

White Guy was born from a real encounter. My uncle’s Punjabi friend in the UK contracted vitiligo and literally turned white, fundamentally altering how society treated him overnight. This transformation sparked my imagination - what if this happened to a young South Asian navigating Britain’s racially turbulent 1980s? I became fascinated by the era’s daytimer clubs: safe identity through music fusing Bhangra with British authentically theirs. These venues represented discrimination, where community and creativity flourished despite societal rejection. Weaving together vitiligo’s life-altering impact, the daytimer scene’s cultural significance, and the period’s explicit racism creates a story examining privilege, identity, and belonging. Jay’s journey reflects how external change forces internal reckoning, questioning whether acceptance gained through altered appearance is genuine. Though set in the 1980s, these themes of code switching, cultural authenticity, and assimilation remain painfully relevant today.

Biography

Niharika Puri is a screenwriter and author based in Mumbai. A journalism graduate, her foray into the film industry was purely by accident. After working with major studios like Eros International and Nadiadwala Grandson, Niharika made her screenwriting debut with the military thriller series *Code M* season 2. Following that, she wrote the Indian adaptation of Sherlock Holmes for BBC India, called *Shekhar Home*. *White Guy*, her labour of love as a feature film script, has been co-written with debuting screenwriter and actor, Ankit Bhatt.



Yayavar

The Migrating Bird

Gujarati

Dr. Darshan Ashwin Trivedi

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Budget
USD 4,50,000

Synopsis

Tejas Rathva, a celebrated professor and writer, has built his life on education, literature and success. Once an idealistic person, he has materialistic – a man defined by his achievements and reputation. His marriage to Tara, full of love and idealism, has collapsed under the weight of his transformation. To finalize their divorce, Tejas sets out on a simple journey to Lakhpat about 400 kilometres from Ahmedabad, unaware that it will turn into a profound odyssey.

When his bus breaks down in the desert, Tejas is forced to continue by chhakda (au auto rickshaw), camel cart, and finally on foot. As he moves deeper into the arid vastness, time begins to blur. He loses his belongings, his sense of direction, and eventually, his certainties. The desert confronts him with visions – a mythical bird Garuda's shadow, a witch, a mirage of gold, and the eternal wanderer Ashwatthama from Mahabharata. Then comes Ghulam, a mysterious traveller who shares fire, food, and the haunting tune of the twin flutes, teaching Tejas the beauty of simply being.

When Tejas finally reaches his destination, he learns that a whole year has passed. What began as a quest for closure becomes a journey of awakening. *Yayavar* is a philosophical reflection on love, ego, and the need to lose oneself in order to truly find oneself.

Writer's Statement

Yayavar means the migrating bird; it refers to the soul, which migrates from one form to another. *Yayavar* is the second of the 'illusion trilogy' by the writer, the first one being *Mrugtrushna*. The film is about those insignificant events and ways of life that are very significant. It projects the Indian spiritualism and philosophy. It throws light on the notions of materialism. The non-linear form of narrative works like a meterless poem. The film is a confluence of music, painting, dance, poem, illusion and reality of time and space. The mysteries, the flutist living a wonderer's life, the painter who represents the space, sound which represents time in poetry, the mad man who talks to god, choice of unconventional traveling route, the hallucinations, the man who talks to plants are motifs to communicate attainment of enlightenment through the mysterious experience that the protagonist encountered in the desert.

Biography

Dr Darshan Ashwin Trivedi is an Indian filmmaker, educator, media consultant, researcher, and entrepreneur. His Gujarati films *Mrugtrushna* and *Mara Pappa Superhero* have been screened at several international film festivals. Darshan is the founder of a content company named Twenty21 Studio.

Darshan began his career at age ten as a radio artist and later acted in television, theatre, and films. Over time, he moved into strategy, business, and consulting roles in leading media companies. He has worked across television, radio, films, and digital platforms.

Darshan holds a Master's in Development Communications and a Ph.D. in Sociology and Law from Gujarat National Law University. Darshan teaches as an adjunct faculty member at MICA and has been the editor of the Indian OTT Platforms Report for eight years, contributing to research and consulting in the media and entertainment industry.



ZaZiZa

Malayalam

Dr. Swati Jha

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Budget
USD 362,000

Synopsis

Zaziza tells the story of 23-year-old trans man Zahhad, who becomes the first father to ever carry a child. Born in the year of the tsunami, he has always imagined himself a child of storms - daring, restless, and searching for a love as fierce as his own. That love arrives in trans woman Ziya, a beautiful classical dancer who becomes Zahhad's own superheroine. Together, they dream of something impossible, something that was apparently not meant for them- having a child, a family. Through illegal hormone prescriptions, kitchen-table surgeries, broken hospital beds, and nights soaked in rain, dance, and silent prayers, the two stitch a fragile world of their own making.

But love in their world is never without consequence. As Zahhad's planned pregnancy becomes perilous, their bodies revolt, and the couple is forced to confront the limits of what they can endure. Their home becomes both a battlefield and a cradle. They must decide how much of themselves they are willing to lose to bring new life into the world. *Zaziza* is a love letter to all those who have built families from the ruins, and a defiant testament that motherhood, fatherhood, and love are acts of pure rebellion.

Writer's Statement

During my thirteen years of training in the humanities, I have been consistently made aware of the gendered lens through which the world appears profoundly crooked and mismanaged. I wanted to tell this story to understand what love, body, and choice mean when they exist beyond the boundaries of gender. This curiosity led me to explore the world of a trans-masculine man experiencing pregnancy, a reality that exists on the fragile border between science, identity, and survival. There are only a few documented cases worldwide, and the accounts of medical practitioners are filled with stories of both triumph and tragedy. Some lived; others succumbed.

Ziya and Zahhad's tale unfolds within this fragile intersection. Their lives challenge not only the notion of the gender binary but also the very institutions of family and the logic of science upon which medicine rests in its pursuit of reproduction. For bodies that stand in conflict with their assigned gender, politics and ethics manifest through prohibitions, regulations, limitations, and control.

In choosing to give birth, Ziya and Zahhad enter a complex dialogue between biology and identity, between what is chosen and what is imposed. Their journey is not about resolution, but recognition, of how life, in all its contradictions, seeks to persist beyond the limits of definition.

Biography

Swati Jha is a writer-director, documentary filmmaker, and former journalist. She is currently creating and writing a political thriller series for a leading Indian studio. The show is based on Independent India's biggest scam and will stream on a major platform. She recently directed a documentary on the struggles of widows of farmers in Maharashtra, highlighting the agricultural debt crisis just miles away from India's financial capital. She has formerly worked with leading dailies such as The Asian Age, Deccan Chronicle, The Indian Express and The Free Press Journal. Holding a PhD in Sociology from the University of Mumbai with a strong focus on gender studies, she brings deep insight to her work.

Screenwriters' Lab Mentors

Claire Dobbin



Claire is a script editor/ EP/ Creative Producer who works globally with development agencies, screenwriters, producers, directors, broadcasters, streamers and film festivals. Claire was Senior Executive (Creative) at Australia's national screen agency where she was instrumental in establishing the First Nations Film Fund. From 2003 – 2019 she was Chair of "Australia's most significant screen event" (International Screen Guide), the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) where she devised, established and secured the funds for MIFF's acclaimed industry programs.

Additionally Claire :

- Devises and runs screenwriting labs in Europe, India, Sth America, Australia, NZ, The UAE and Kosovo, Italy, Ukraine, Spain, Portugal.
- Script edited projects from Sarajevo, Kosovo, Italy, India, Iran, the UK, Germany, Norway, Finland, Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand

Claire was awarded an AM for Services to the Australian Film Industry and the Jill Robb award for outstanding leadership in the Victorian Screen Industry.

Christina Andreef



Christina's film career spans her life in Sydney, Australia, and more recently in Wellington, New Zealand. An award-winning writer/director, her films have screened at over 100 international festivals: *Excursion to the Bridge of Friendship* – official selection Sundance and Cannes; *The Gap* – Sundance and Telluride; *Shooting the Breeze* – Sundance and Berlin. Her feature film *Soft Fruit* brought her a fourth invitation to Sundance and also screened in Critics' Week in Cannes. *Soft Fruit* won the FIPRESCI Prize in San Sebastián and AFI Awards in Sydney. Christina learnt her craft from Jane Campion while working as Director's Assistant on Jane's early films: *Sweetie*, *An Angel at My Table*, and *The Piano*.

In recent years, she has worked as Development Executive for the New Zealand Film Commission, providing script and creative support to dozens of New Zealand's writers and directors. She has been development lead on many high-profile NZ films including: *Pike River* (Dir. Rob Sarkies); *The Rule of Jenny Pen* (Dir. James Ashcroft); *Went Up the Hill* (Dir. Samuel Van Grinsven); *Big Girls Don't Cry* (Dir. Paloma Schneiderman); *Red, White and Brass* (Dir. Damon Fepulea'i); *Joika* (Dir. James Napier Robertson); *Uproar* (Drs. Paul Middleditch and Hamish Bennett).

Recent festival successes following her development input have included: *Mārama* (TIFF 2025); *Never Look Away* (World Competition, Sundance); *Head South* (Opened Rotterdam FF); *The Moon is Upside Down* (Best Film at Estonia's Tallinn Black Nights); *We Were Dangerous* (Special Jury Award at SXSW); *Alien Weaponry, A Mistake* (Tribeca Film Festival).

Screenwriters' Lab Mentors

Bikas Mishra



Bikas Mishra's latest feature, *Bayaan* (2025), premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and had its Asian premiere at the Busan International Film Festival. The film is currently travelling to festivals around the world.

Based in Mumbai, Bikas made his debut with *Chauranga*, which won the Grand Jury Prize at the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles and was awarded Best Indian Feature at the Mumbai Film Festival (MAMI) in 2014. His short film *Naach Ganesh* (Dance of Ganesha) screened at leading international festivals including Clermont-Ferrand, IFFR, and Busan.

A former film critic, he served on the Visionary Jury of the Critics' Week at the Cannes Film Festival in 2012. Bikas has been mentoring screenwriters at the NFDC Screenwriters' Lab since 2018.

Umesh Vinayak Kulkarni



Umesh Vinayak Kulkarni is a renowned Indian film director. He is an alumnus of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune. He is known for Marathi films such as *Valu* (The Wild Bull), *Vihir* (The Well), *Deool* (The Temple), *Highway* and Netflix series *Murder In A Courtroom*. He received a National Film award for Best Debut Director for his short film *Girni Deool* (The Temple), his feature film, received a National Film Award for best film in the year 2011.