Welcome Back!

Welcome back faculty, staff, and students! We hope you had a safe winter break, didn’t get buried in too much snow, and are enjoying the spring semester. In this issue of In The Loop, we are showcasing our MFA alumni and all of their accomplishments. We are also hosting an information session for folks who want to learn more about our MFA programs in Film and TV Writing. See below for details.

Alumni News

We have so many people to be proud of both in our programs and in those who have graduated. 2018 alumna James Sharpe has produced three feature-length films. In his final year of studies, he co-produced Big Fork with fellow classmate Helen Waters, which had its world premiere at the Breckenridge Film Festival. Big Fork was written and directed by fellow alumni Bentley Heyman. James went on to single-handedly produce Tom of Your Life, which Richard Roeper calls, “One of the best movies of 2020.” The film also won Best Narrative Feature Film at the Albuquerque Film Festival. James also produced and starred in thesis student David Schultz’s The Girl in The Straw Hat, and has recently been recruited into the newly formed film department at Jacksonville State University.

Another notable highlight from our alumni include: Yasmin Gomez, a 2020 graduate, was the production manager of Beyoncé’s Black Is King. Former student Michelle Ngo served as an editor on PBS American Portraits, the new PBS docu-series, out now. Jamie DiNicola, former MFA student, produced a documentary pilot, Trans in Trumpland, which was just picked up as a series by Netflix.

Our TV Writing alumni are also having huge success. Sam Nosratian is the showrunner’s assistant for Tom Fontana, our executive producer. He joined the writing team on Showtime’s City on a Hill, which stars Kevin Bacon, Kate Levitt, won First Place at the Nantucket Film Festival for her one-hour pilot, Living. She also shared first prize for the best TV Pilot from Stony Brook’s NOFOTVFest and was a finalist at the Atlanta TV Pilot competition. She also wrote Beach Boy, which she co-produced with MFA in Film thesis student Doug Forrester, who directed. Nathalie Perus is a writer on Beyoncé’s Game, a six-part limited series about the Fairy Tale.

Also of note, MFA Film student David Schultz became our first student to finish a feature-length film during the COVID-19 pandemic (The Girl in the Straw Hat), and second year MFA Film student Lisa Thomas also finished her first year short film after her shoot was shut down last March. Finally, our Alumni have started an organization for all Stony Brook MFA graduates. Kate Levitt and Helen Waters started it. They told us, “We hope for the alumni association to be a combination of incubator for new works and a resource to support ongoing works. We’re fortunate that our creative community features a diverse range of skills—everything from writers, to directors to producers—and part of our mission is to foster collaboration. We hope to hold periodic gatherings, either on Zoom or (someday) in person which will act as introductions, and possibly feature guest speakers. We would love for everyone to get involved, and absolutely welcome suggestions for events!” We can be reached at film_tvalumni@stonybrook.edu.

March Info Session

Calling all folks interested in learning more about earning an MFA with us in Film or Television Writing! Please join us on March 19 from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST for a virtual Information Session. If you have questions like: What courses do you offer? Who are the professors? What kinds of film equipment do you have? How many students are accepted each year? Come hang out with us on Zoom.

RSVP to MFAManhattan@stonybrook.edu

New Website

With the new year, our programs have launched our new, easy to use website. Feel free to visit our new pages at www.stonybrook.edu/film-tv-writing. We love the look and intuitiveness of the site, and we think you will, too.