



2019 Biographies

Words to “Action”!



Sandra Lea Abrams is an award-winning video/television producer and digital marketing consultant. She has worked for MSNBC and CNNfn in New York as a guests’ producer and breaking news editor and for Reuters TV in Washington, DC as a producer covering Congress and the White House. In addition to her broadcast experience, she was a business news reporter for *New York Post*, *IDD* magazine and *SmartCEO*. Abrams has experience as a marketing and creative branding specialist for the military and as a digital content strategist for USAGOV. She was selected as a Women of the Year by American Women Radio and Television and for a German-American (RIAS) Journalism Fellowship.



Barbara Ballow is an award-winning editor who has been telling compelling stories for more than 30 years. She has edited films and videos on topics as diverse as tango dancing to PTSD, and for a variety of organizations, including Conservation International, The Hewlett Foundation and the World Bank. Her films have appeared on PBS, HBO, National Geographic and CBS, and in film festivals around the world. Her recent film, *THE SPY BEHIND HOME PLATE* (2019) is being screened across the country.



Monica Lee Bellais is a Council member of the Writers Guild of America, East, AFL-CIO (WGAE), which is a labor union representing thousands of members who write content for motion pictures, television, news and digital media. She serves on the Advisory Committee for Women in Film & Video in Washington, DC. Some highlights of her career are working at James Cameron's Lightstorm Entertainment; in the Office of Jeffrey Katzenberg at DreamWorks; Warner Bros. Records; Discovery Communications; Smithsonian Networks; Public Broadcasting Service; and TeleProductions International. She has extensive international production experience in Canada, Egypt, England, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Monaco, Pakistan, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates.

Her professional memberships include the Writers Guild of America, East, the Producers Guild of America, SAG-AFTRA, National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences - Documentary Programming Peer Group, British Academy of Film and Television Arts, and The National Press Club, in Washington, D.C.



Emily Best is the founder and CEO of Seed&Spark, an entertainment platform built to increase diversity and inclusion for filmmakers and audiences. Seed&Spark’s curated streaming platform is fed by its crowdfunding platform, which has the highest campaign success rate in the world. In 2011, she produced the feature film, *LIKE THE WATER*, starring Caitlin FitzGerald (*MASTERS OF SEX*, *UnREAL*). Since then she has served as executive producer on a host of film and virtual reality projects that have played at festivals from Sundance to SXSW to Tribeca and beyond. Most recently she co-created and co-directed the web series *F*ck Yes!*, which *Refinery 29* called, "The sex education you wish you had in high school."

Emily was named a 2013 *Indiewire* Influencer, a 2014 New York Woman of Influence, was included on the 2015 Upstart 100 list, and graduated from the 2016 class of Techstars Boston. She has raised millions of dollars in traditional funding, equity crowdfunding, and rewards based crowdfunding, and contributed to over 300 crowdfunding campaigns to date.



Kaitlyn Cortes is an editor from Brooklyn, NY. She received her Masters in Post-Production at Brooklyn College's Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema. Kaitlyn is currently editing narrative, commercial, and documentary projects using Resolve, Avid and Premiere. Her recent work includes branded content, ROSA'S ESPERANZA, SUCKER and HALF LIFE.



Jamie Coughlin is the recipient of a White House News Photographers Award for Best Documentary, an Emmy nominee, and is an IFP Documentary Lab Fellow and a RIAS fellow. TRANSMILITARY, Jamie's feature debut which she produced and wrote, premiered at SXSW 2018, where it won the Audience Award for Best Documentary and received critical acclaim. She was named to the 10 Filmmakers to Watch list by *The Independent*. Her work has been supported by the International Documentary Association, The Rogovy Foundation, GLAAD Media Institute, Frameline Completion Fund, and others. Prior to starting SXS with Gabriel Silverman in 2015, Coughlin worked for *USA Today Sports*, where she managed the editorial and branded video content.



Joan Darling was the first woman nominated for an Emmy® for television direction. She was nominated four times winning both the Emmy® and the DGA Award. She is considered the first woman director of the modern age. She is widely recognized for her talents as a director and actress. In the early 1970s, Joan had a recurring character role in the television series OWEN MARSHALL, COUNSELOR AT LAW. In her early directorial career, Joan directed the pilot and many other episodes in the first season of the hit TV series MARY HARTMAN, MARY HARTMAN. She also directed episodes of M*A*S*H*, RICH MAN, POOR MAN, and MAGNUM P.I., among others. She directed the *Chuckles Bites the Dust* episode of THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW, which was named "the number one TV episode of all time" by *TV Guide*. *The New York Times* named it "the funniest episode ever on TV". Her first film, FIRST LOVE, was released in 1977, and was named one of the year's ten best by CBS. Joan created the Directing the Actor workshop for the Sundance institute and has taught directing at the Sundance Lab for 20+ years.



Jane Fleming is a founding partner with Mark Ordesky in Court Five, a multi-platform media company that develops and converts diverse intellectual properties and brands into bold filmed entertainment. To date, through Court Five, she has produced four feature films, including LOVELY MOLLY, THE FROZEN GROUND, EXISTS and #REALITYHIGH as well as the groundbreaking reality/scripted ABC television series, THE QUEST. She is currently developing and packaging several independent features as well as multiple television series with Amazon Studios, Red Arrow International, Chernin Entertainment, and Endeavor Content. Fleming forged her career as a senior executive at New Line Cinema, ultimately holding the position of Senior Vice President, Business Development. From 2006-10, Fleming served as President of Women In Film and continues to serve as its President Emeritus. She is also a member of PGA and the Television Academy.



Successful in the film industry as a choreographer and director, **Anne Fletcher** got her start as a dancer in such films as THE FLINTSTONES, THE MASK, and BOOGIE NIGHTS. Her choreography work has appeared in several major movies, including: HAIRSPRAY, WALK HARD, STEP UP, THE 40-YEAR OLD VIRGIN, WEDDING CRASHERS, and ALONG CAME POLLY. Anne's directorial debut was 2006's STEP UP. She also directed the acclaimed romantic comedies 27 DRESSES and THE PROPOSAL. Most recently, Fletcher directed DUMPLIN' for Netflix, starring Jennifer Aniston and Danielle MacDonald.



Dusty Gwinn, Esq. is an attorney at Dunlap, Bennett & Ludwig, LLC, an agent, and an entrepreneur from Beckley, WV and currently focuses his practice on intellectual property, business transactions, estate planning, sports and entertainment law, and start-up ventures. He spent eight years working in technology transfer as a patent attorney and managing the WVU Business Incubator program for the West Virginia University Research Corporation in Morgantown, WV and has also worked as a business coach with the West Virginia Small Business Development Center and the New River Gorge Regional

Development Authority. Gwinn has also been a founder, owner, partner, or manager of several West Virginia companies, including his own agency Wild Dog Management, LLC.



Emma E. Hickox, ACE, was born in the UK but 'cut her teeth' in the American film industry assisting and cutting under the watchful eye of Frank Morriss. Her break out movies were A WALK TO REMEMBER (2001) and BLUE CRUSH (2002). She has made a conscious effort to avoid cutting just one genre of film switching between comedy (BAD MOMS, 2016 and DUMPLIN', 2018) and drama (BECOMING JANE, 2007 and MIRACLES FROM HEAVEN, 2016) loving the challenge of both and loving making an audience roar with laughter or sob uncontrollably!



Susan Hormuth has been providing still image and motion picture research services in the Washington, DC area for more than 30 years. Her clients include documentary and fictional filmmakers, museum curators and exhibit designers, theatrical production designers, and book publishers and authors. She specializes in researching historical footage and still images in the public domain from public institutions and her projects have included topics from the Blues to Broadway Musicals, from the Civil War to Civil Rights, from Jazz to Jewish Basketball, from Reconstruction to Route 66, from the Sixties to the Supreme Court, and from Woody Guthrie to Watergate.



Aviva Kempner has a mission in life to investigate non-stereotypical images of Jews in history and celebrate the untold stories of Jewish heroes. Among her documentary films are THE SPY BEHIND HOME PLATE (2019) about baseball catcher Moe Berg, ROSENWALD (2015) about businessman and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald who partnered with Booker T. Washington and African American communities to build over 5,000 schools in the Jim Crow South, and YOO-HOO, MRS. GOLDBERG (2009) an exploration of television pioneer Gertrude Berg, who received the first Best Actress Emmy in history and paved the way for women in media and entertainment. Kempner's films have received awards including the CINE Golden Eagle, George Peabody Award, audience awards from numerous film festivals, and honors from the National Society of Film Critics, the National Board of Review, and the Broadcast Film Critics Association. Her many accomplishments include starting the Washington Jewish Film Festival in 1980, being a

member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, receiving the 1996 Guggenheim Fellowship and the 2000 DC Mayor's Art Award, as well as a 2001 Women of Vision award from WIFV. In 2009, Kempner was the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival's Freedom of Expression Awardee. She received the 2017 Bernardo O'Higgins Award and a honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the University of the District of Columbia in 2018. She writes film criticism and feature articles for numerous publications.



Kurt R Klaus, Esq. is a seasoned entertainment/media business and legal affairs attorney with decades of in-house, law firm, and Of Counsel experience. He regularly functions as lead attorney on domestic and international transactions involving many of the world's leading entertainment distribution and production companies and provides creative and practical guidance with related legal and business strategies. Kurt supports legal aspects of marketing and social media relationships – including influencer engagements. Outside of legal practice, Kurt was an executive in two mid-sized media production and distribution companies and functioned as a producer, assistant director, and production manager of 140+ television commercials and industrial films, earning 16 regional and national awards. Kurt also worked in the production department of four LA-based studio feature films.



Lily Kleinman is a freelance picture editor based in New York City. She began her career in post-production working on a feature-length documentary with Florentine Films. After, she spent time living and working in Spain before returning to the US to complete her MFA in post-production from the Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema. Lily has now edited numerous episodic, short form, and feature narrative projects, and has done branded work for clients like Mercedes Benz USA, Adidas, Lindblad Expeditions & National Geographic, Blackmagic Design, Cosmopolitan Magazine, NY Comic Con, and more. Lily also post-supervised the first season of NYC Media's new series, HALF LIFE.



Lance Kramer is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and executive director/co-founder of the DC-based production company Meridian Hill Pictures. Kramer produced the feature-length documentary CITY OF TREES, an official Selection 2016 Full Frame Documentary Film Festival with subsequent national broadcast on PBS series *America Reframed* and Netflix release in May 2017. He produced the Webby Award-winning documentary series THE MESSY TRUTH WITH VAN JONES, released on Van's Facebook page and CNN.com to more than four million viewers. In 2014, Kramer received the prestigious DC Mayor's Arts Award from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, the highest honor bestowed upon working artists in the city. He has served two terms as Board Member of Docs in Progress, and was a DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities Individual Arts Fellow in 2015. In 2017, Kramer was selected to the 2017 Impact Partners Documentary Producers Fellowship cohort and in 2018 he was a fellow at the Sundance Creative Producers Summit.



Eduardo Sanchez received his BA in Motion Picture Production from the University of Central Florida. While at UCF, Sanchez met his future Haxan Film partners and in 1998 he co-wrote, co-edited, and co-directed THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT. He also designed and built the original BLAIRWITCH.COM website and co-directed the Sci-Fi Channel special CURSE OF THE BLAIR WITCH. He has since directed ALTERED (2005), SEVENTH MOON (2009), LOVELY MOLLY (2012), and EXISTS (2014). For TV, Sanchez was the producing director of Season 4 of the USA series QUEEN OF THE SOUTH, a lead writer for the ABC series THE QUEST, director of the first four episodes of the BBC America series INTRUDERS, and is directing the fifth episode of SUPERNATURAL for CW.



May Santiago is an emerging film scholar and micro-budget filmmaker. Her work focuses on themes of intersectional identity within mental health, queer identity, and decolonization. Her film projects include *LITTLE GIRLS* (2013), part of a study of teen films and the effect they have on female teen societies, *NIGHTGAZE* (2017), a “visual album” based in music video theory to depict a young woman’s visceral experience with depression, *TEEN IDLE* (2014), an essay film on the study of the pageant image, and *Super’ mance* (2015), a fantasy-action short. Her work has screened across the country, including the Brooklyn Women’s Film Festival, Tampa Bay Comic Con, Florida’s Undergraduate Research Conference, Orlando Film Festival, and more. Santiago has a slate of projects coming up, including a foreign-horror based podcast she hosts and writes, *Horrorspiria*, and another essay film based on female friendships juxtaposed against the obstacles of colonization, immigration, and distance.



Laurie Scheer is a former vice president of programming for WE: Women's Entertainment. She has worked as an assistant, d-girl, and producer for ABC, Viacom, Showtime, and AMC-Cablevision. She has also been involved in producing series for the web, films for video games, and other digital based forms of entertainment. Scheer has been an instructor at numerous universities across the US from Yale to UCLA. As a professional speaker, she has appeared at annual conventions for NAB, NATPE, Realscreen, WIFV, FTX West, and the Willamette Writers Conference. Scheer has mentored many successful industry professionals throughout her career and is currently a Faculty Associate with UW-Madison’s Division of Continuing Studies. There she is the Director of UW-Madison’s annual Writers’ Institute, founding editor of the regional publication *The Midwest Review*, and a writing mentor to hundreds of students in-person and online. Her current interest is in exploring ways to preserve storytelling within the digital marketplace. Her book *The Writer’s Advantage: A Toolkit for Mastering Your Genre* is available on Amazon.



Bill Svanoë is an award-winning screenwriter and playwright. He has written highly acclaimed and rated television movies including *MILES TO GO* which won a Christopher Award; *TERROR ON THE BEACH*; *RETURNING HOME*; *THE DREAMMAKERS*; *THE CARDBOARD HOUSE*, and *SPARKS*. Feature films include, *WALTZ ACROSS TEXAS*, starring Anne Archer, and *FATAL BEAUTY*, starring Whoopi Goldberg. His first play, *THE NEWSTAND*, won awards in New York and Europe. His plays, *THE BLACK DUCK*, *PUNCH AND JUDY*, *THE LAST LAUGH*, and *CALLBACK* have been published and are performed around the country. For five years he was the playwright in residence for Zephyr Rep in New York. He taught playwriting and screenwriting at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for seven years. Currently he teaches at festivals and forums around the country and also does private coaching.



Ligiah Villalobos is a Writer, Producer, Consultant, Educator and Lecturer. She is best known for the independent feature film *UNDER THE SAME MOON* (*La Misma Luna*), which she wrote and executive produced. The film was released by Fox Searchlight and The Weinstein Company in 2008 after it was acquired at the Sundance Film Festival, where it became the highest sale for a Spanish-language film in the history of Sundance. Made for under \$2M, the film earned over \$23M worldwide. More recently, Villalobos was a Cultural Consultant on the Academy Award winning Pixar movie, *COCO*, which has become the highest grossing movie of all time in Mexico (and highest grossing Pixar movie in China). She is also the recipient of the Humanitas Prize, for writing the Hallmark Hall of Fame movie, *FIRELIGHT*, produced by Alicia Keys and Mary Martin, which aired on ABC. Villalobos has developed projects for multiple studios and networks, including ABC, NBC, ABC/Family (now Freeform), F/X, Showtime, BET, HBO, Lifetime, Nick Jr., and Sesame Street, among others. As a studio executive at The Walt Disney Company, Villalobos oversaw

television production in Latin America for five years, launching eight #1 children shows in seven countries and then overseeing the Writing Fellowship Program and the Directors Training Program for the Studio. She then worked as a Current Programming Executive at The WB, where she oversaw six prime time shows, including the four highest rated shows on the network. Villalobos lectures and teaches writing workshops around the world, including for the Sundance Film Institute, the Taipei's Film Commission San Miguel de Allende's Writers Conference and NALIP. Villalobos is a professor in the TV Film and Theatre MFA program at Cal State LA. She has also taught at USC's School of Cinematic Arts, Colorado College, and Tisch/Asia in Singapore (NYU).

PITCH TEAM via Skype courtesy of ROADMAP WRITERS

Chris Deckard – Fictional Entity

Since co-founding the management/production company Fictional Entity in late 2016, Chris Deckard has developed an international clientele that includes writers, directors, actors, and producers. Chris' clients have been named to The Black List, The Hit List, The Young & Hungry List, The Blood List and been lauded by the PAGE Awards, The Academy Nicholl Screenwriting Awards, The Australian Writers Guild, and The Australian Directors Guild. His clients have written, directed, starred, and produced for companies like Netflix, NBCUniversal, Warner Bros., Amazon, Blumhouse, Comedy Central, TruTV, Super Deluxe, Hallmark, CBS, CryptTV, PopTV, VH1, Facebook, E!, and MSNBC, and have premiered at top festivals including the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival. Prior to Fictional Entity, Deckard spent over seven years working with and representing talent at major agencies such as ICM Partners and WME.

Liliana Granados - JuVee Productions

JuVee Productions seeks to produce economical yet premium, sophisticated, and character-driven stories with an emphasis on producing narratives from a diverse range of emerging and established voices alike. Granados serves as JuVee's Creative Executive for the features department.

Audrey Knox - The Cartel

Audrey Knox has experience in both scripted and unscripted television, on set, in production, and in writers' rooms. Her true passion lies in producing depressingly introspective comedies, but she's never met a British gangster drama she hasn't liked. Knox also has a four-year old rescue mutt who has performed with the hit comedy rap trio "Three Loco."

Dan Seco – Schemers Entertainment

Daniel Seco previously served as a motion picture literary coordinator at Writ Large and an assistant for a motion picture literary agent at CAA before joining Schemers Entertainment as a literary manager in 2018. He also worked at Resolution. Prior to moving to Los Angeles, Seco worked as a sports journalist and special education teacher. Schemers Entertainment is a full-service production and management company founded by producer/manager Gavin Dorman, and represents a diverse slate of writer, director, and producer clients whose award-winning works have appeared at numerous film festivals and have been financed, produced, and/or distributed by some of the biggest names in Hollywood including Blumhouse, Netflix, and Hulu. Schemers prides itself on molding up-and-coming talent and helping them transition into the studio world.

ScriptDC Committee:

Jane Barbara, Chair



After receiving a full scholarship from The Rockefeller Scholarship Fund, graduating with a Fine Arts Degree from Parson's School of Design, Jane went on to work as Costume/Set Designer for several Off-Broadway productions, a political illustrator (*The New York Times*), freelance graphic and book jacket designer, and Publications Designer for Exxon Corporation. After leaving Exxon, Barbara was Partner/Art Director of Menu Makers Plus, a full-service design company located in New York City, which serviced the NYC metro area 16,000 restaurants and gourmet shops. After moving to Maryland, Barbara was able to combine her love of film, art, music, dance, and storytelling. She has completed five feature length screenplays, several shorts, and is currently working on developing several television series.

Along with producing partner, Oriana Oppice, Barbara wrote and produced the comedy short, LOBSTER FRA DIAVOLO – The Movie, which screened at the 2015 Cannes Court Metrage Shorts Film Corner, as well as other international film festivals. The LOBSTER screenplay was a finalist at the 2014 Moondance International Film Festival screenplay competition, and a 2014/ 2015 Roy W. Dean Grant Finalist. LOBSTER has received several awards for comedy, editing and best screen fight. Inspired by the Women's March, Jane's most recent dramatic short, LEIA'S ARMY, has won The Best Director Award at 2018 NY Chain Film Festival and The Global Impact Film Festival in Washington, DC. LEIA'S ARMY will be screened at The Imagine This Women's International Film Festival in November in New York City. Jane is Chair for Women in Film & Video's Screenwriters' Roundtable and ScriptDC, WIFV's annual filmmakers' conference.



John Benedetto ("Detto") moved to Washington, DC to attend American University's MA program in Film and Video. After graduating with a concentration in Screenwriting, Detto totally expected to end up in NYC or LA in a few short years. Instead, over a decade later, he finds himself fully immersed in the DC media world as a writer, director and editor. He has written for Capital Arts Entertainment, the FBI, and HGTV, has completed six spec screenplays and is currently putting the finishing touches on his first novel. On the post production side, Detto has edited five feature length films and is an award-winning VFX artist, and edited six different true crime reality TV series for networks such as ID, TVOne, and LMN. Looking to expand his resume, Detto co-founded XIII Stories Media, a production company dedicated to developing quality narrative and documentary productions in the DMV area. XIII Stories most recent project, the horror short THE PHAGES which Detto co-wrote and co-directed, is currently being submitted to festivals across the world. Benedetto is a member of the WIFV Board of Directors.