

Northwestern University

Department of Radio/Television/Film

Fall 2022

Alumni News



2022 has been a busy year for **Farhan Arshad** (MFA WSS '10). He's recently been hired to be a Co-Executive Producer for the new ***Frasier*** reboot starring Kelsey Grammer on Paramount+. Prior to that, he was staffed by Greg Daniels as a Supervising Producer on season three of ***Upload*** on Amazon Prime. He also served as a Supervising Producer on ***The Pradeeps of Pittsburgh***, a new series that will premiere on Amazon Freevee. His pilot, *The Peters*, is in development at Bell Media and Cineflix. Comedian Russell Peters is attached to star. Lastly, Farhan was admitted into the Sony Pictures Showrunner Training Program, an initiative that grooms the next generation of showrunners.

Nayna Agrawal (MFA WSS '2015) just wrapped on a first season high-fantasy, live action Netflix show as an Executive Story Editor. She is now in Brooklyn for her one-year playwriting fellowship with the Bechdel Project. She was recently a finalist for The Writers Lab (funded by Meryl Streep and Nicole Kidman), the WP Playwrights Lab, and the Roo Residency. Her play, ***The Punctuation Play***, received a reading via the Axial Theatre in July. She is a StartWith8 Mentor, a BIPOC initiative for emerging female writers in Hollywood.

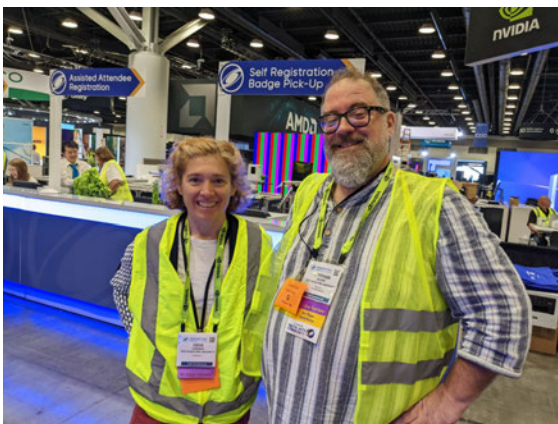
Faculty News



Eliza Bent's play ***The Regulars*** received a reading with Fault Line Theatre over the summer at Tannen's Magic Shop in New York City. Bent's short film "**Summer's Last Swim**" and web series ***Package Thief*** were screened at the Brick Theatre in October in Brooklyn followed by a Q&A with Jess Barbagallo.



Night's End, a feature film written by associate professor of instruction **Brett Neveu**, and produced by **Neal Edelstein, Neveu** and **Professor Dave Tolchinsky**, expanded its distribution from exclusively Shudder/AMC to VOD platforms including Apple, Amazon, and GooglePlay.



Over the summer, **Ozge Samanci's** new VR Projection Art installation ***VastWaste*** was exhibited at [Siggraph 22 Art Gallery](#) in Vancouver and [ISEA](#) in Barcelona, Spain. This data-driven installation will be in exhibition in Piksel New Media Festival during November 17-27 in Bergen, Norway. Stephan Moore designed the sound for VastWaste.

Professor Zayd Dohrn's narrative podcast ***Mother Country Radicals*** premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in March, where it won the award for "Best Audio Storytelling." Since then, the series has been included on dozens of "Best of 2022" lists, received rave reviews, and has been streamed and downloaded over a million times. Dohrn is the creator, host, and executive producer of the series, which is produced by Crooked Media and Audacy.



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Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies, 9.2, 2022

Alan Bates '78

by Jacob Smith — Northwestern University



Alan Bates '78 from Jacob Smith on Vimeo.

Jacob Smith's videographic essay, "Alan Bates '78" has been published in the new issue of [in]Transition, the Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies.



RTVF faculty member **Ines Sommer's** essay film ***The Hills*** will address how the steel industry's toxic legacy continues to scar and contaminate land, water, and human health on Chicago's Southeast side. Sommer was thrilled to receive support for ***The Hills*** from the new E(art)H Chicago art initiative in the form of a \$35,000 grant

for production costs and community screenings of the documentary next summer. E(art)H

Chicago aims to raise awareness, create dialogue, and inspire action on climate change, natural resource use, and environmental justice.

This fall, **JP Sniadecki** presents his films at: the Academy of Motion Pictures Museum in LA; the "Made in China" festival in Rennes, France; the Madrid Cineteca as a retrospective of his collaborations in China; and a new work included in the group exhibition in honor of filmmaker Bruce Baillie at the Arkuna Zentroa in Bilbao, Spain. He also co-edited (with Li Xiaofeng) the fourth edition of the Chinese Independent Cinema Observer journal, which was published this September. His 2013 film **YUMEN** (co-produced with Huang Xiang and Xu Ruotao) will enjoy a theatrical run at Spectacle Theater in New York City, and he will give a talk on media anthropology at UCLA. The Climate Crisis + Media Arts Working Group, which he founded and co-leads, has been awarded funding through the Buffett Institute at NU and actively supports innovative projects by artists and scientists from diverse backgrounds across the world.



Assistant Professor **Danielle Beverly** received a post-production grant from Doha Film Institute for her upcoming documentary **"Qatar Stars"**. This coming-of-age story about the joys and growing pains of girlhood follows a rhythmic gymnastics team in Doha, Qatar. Beverly screened a work-in-progress at London School of Economics & Political Science in their Middle East Centre, supported by a Global Connections Seed Grant from Buffett Institute for Global Affairs. **"Qatar Stars"** was selected for First Cut Lab, a late stage edit consultancy based in Paris, and the 2022 DOC NYC Industry Round Tables.

Professor Dave Tolchinsky's film **Cassandra** was awarded Best International Short by Austin International Film Festival. **Cassandra** screened with the other awardees Oct 26 at the Austin Crown Cinema in Austin, TX . Tolchinsky was also asked to introduce Sarah Lemire's "57 Scariest films of the time" for NBC's TODAY





Associate professor **Kyle Henry** completed his first year as a mentor at the Chicago International Film Festival's year long CIX fiction film development lab, along with other mentors like filmmakers Jennifer Reader and Stephen Cone. The lab is supported by an NEA grant and the Chicago Film Office. He's signed up for another year mentoring fiction filmmakers from re-writes through public pitch sessions for financing at the festival in 2023. More info about the lab via [Screen Magazine](#).

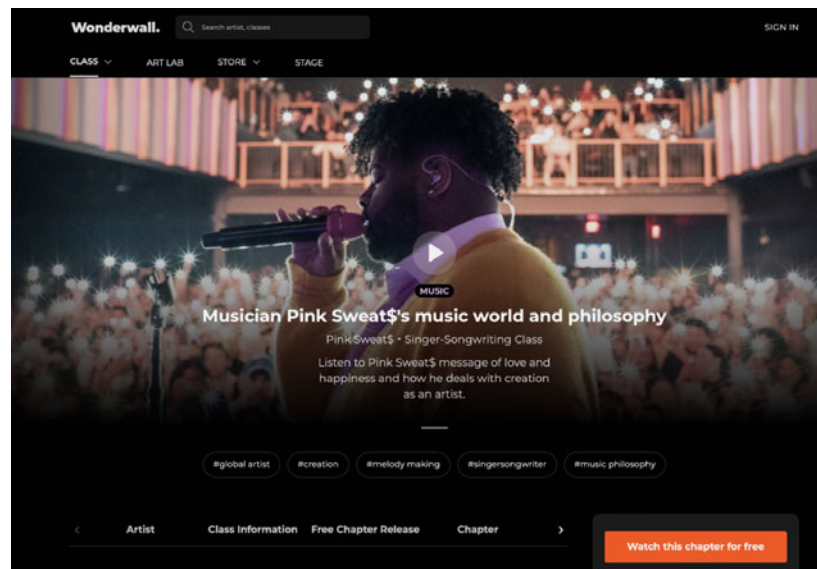
Current Student News



"Coo-Coo", a short film assignment made in JP Sniadecki's Bolex class, filmed by **Ella Harmon** (MFA '23) and sound designed by Xi Yi, received a special mention in the [One Reeler](#) Film Festival. The film was shot entirely on one roll of 16mm film with all cuts made in-camera.

Zaki Alabdullah (MFA '23), the only Saudi and Arab student in the program had his short film "Sultan of Pitchers" [accepted to the 8th Edition of the Saudi Film Festival](#). Zaki worked on the project during his winter break at home after finishing the first quarter of the film MFA program at Northwestern. He was extremely excited, as this is his first time screening in the big screen with an audience filling the theater. The Saudi film festival celebrated Saudi filmmakers and the new sector of cinema in the kingdom after more than 40 years of cinema theaters being banned. Zaki is part of the first cultural scholarship program, managed by the Saudi Ministry of Culture, that send students to the top universities around the world to study

fine art programs as the kingdom moves toward 2030 vision. Two of his short films, "Emotions Within" and "Sultan of Pitchers", were selected for Alder International Short Films Festival in Chicago, one of which was Abdullah's 551 project.



Graduate student, **Ella Harmon** (MFA '23), directed two documentary masterclasses for [Wonderwall](#) featuring musicians [Pink Sweat\\$](#) and [Mac Ayers](#). The music video, "[Inamorato](#)", for band Thus Love, was featured in [Rolling Stone](#) magazine among other music publications this spring. Harmon filmed, directed, and co-edited the video.



2nd year MFA in Doc Media student, **Ian Kelly's** (MFA '23), short film "Memoria(l)" has played in a number of film festivals over the past few months, including Cleveland Int. Film Festival, Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival, Chicago Underground, St. Louis Int. Film Festival, and the Dayton Film Festival where it was awarded Best Documentary.

Jake Kessler's (MFA '23) short film **"Supernova"** screened via several festivals and platforms this last year including [NoBudge](#) (online), Nefiltravanae Kino (online), Alexandre Trauner Art/Film Festival in Szolnok, Hungary, QRC. PRJCT in Athens, Greece, and Zlatý Voči in Prague, Czech Republic.



Department of Radio/Television/Film

Annie May Swift Hall

1920 Campus Drive, 2nd Floor

Evanston, IL 60208

Phone: 847-491-7315



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