

Brazilian Gets Hollywood's Women in Film Filmmaker Grant

Contributed by Newsroom
Monday, 13 June 2005

Winners of the WIF Latina New Filmmaker Grant, announced in February by Women In Film (WIF) were revealed at WIF's 27th annual Crystal + Lucy Awards dinner gala, June 10, at the legendary Beverly Hills Hotel in California.

The grant is awarded annually to five up-and-coming Latina filmmakers, providing them with a broad-based understanding of the business of filmmaking through a six-day, full-immersion mentoring program shepherded by members of WIF, which includes much of the industry's most successful female talent.

In front of a prominent entertainment industry gathering - including Sandra Bullock, Bruce Willis, Jamie Foxx and Debra Messing, to name a few - Latina actress Daisy Fuentes announced the grant's inaugural winners, including:

* Carolina Pfister, New Orleans, Louisiana - Having recently earned her masters degree from the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, where she also taught video workshops at inner city schools, Pfister is now living in New Orleans.

She is currently editing Viva Viva, a documentary about three generations of punk rockers in São Paulo, Brazil.

Born in Europe to Brazilian parents fleeing dictatorship, Pfister - who worked at MTV Brazil while attending undergraduate film school - has filmed/interviewed a variety of subjects from Latino gang members in Milwaukee to female inmates in Brazilian prisons.

* Carmen C. Avila, Glendale, California. - In addition to her position as manager of production payroll in the television department of NBC/Universal, Avila was executive in charge of production for Disney/Touchstone's Mercenary II: Thick & Thin, a Robert Townsend project filmed in Mexico.

Avila's film English Only, produced for Universal Television's The Hispanic Film Project, was selected from 1,500 entries to complete at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival.

A second effort, El Artista, was sold into syndication. She is currently developing a feature film based on the novel Albuquerque, by Rudolfo Anaya, who is known as the "Godfather" of Chicano literature.

* Yasmina Cádiz, Chicago, Illinois - Co-founder of XChromosomeFilms.com in 2003, a film production company that promotes, supports and helps create opportunities for women in the entertainment industry.

Producer, writer and director of the short film Mama Said, a selection at six film festivals (including the upcoming New York International Latino Film Festival, July 26-31), Cádiz is currently at work on her next project, Twelve Signs, based on 12 interwoven stories with an astrological theme.

* Claudia A. Mercado, Los Angeles, California - Founder of Womyn Image Makers, Mercado - a substitute teacher for the Los Angeles Unified School District - has served as a producer, director, cinematographer and editor on a variety of projects.

She is currently at work on her first documentary, Women Who Remember, about Chicana, Latina and Mexican women living in the U.S. who are embracing "indigenismo," urban Native American Latina culture.

* Nicole Valdizan Sacker, Los Angeles, California - A writer and filmmaker who has produced and/or directed 14 films, Sacker's work has been chosen as an official selection at 17 film festivals, with The Duel winning "Best Director" at the

2004 Boyle Heights Latina Independent Film Extravaganza.

She is also serving as production coordinator on the horror film *Seventy-Five* and at work producing/directing a pilot for a TV sitcom, *Living Together*.

Commented Judith R. James, chairperson of the WIF/GM national committee, "These women were selected based on their enormous amount of talent and creativity. Our mission is to assist outstanding Latina women to successfully turn their aspirations into reality by providing them with a better understanding of the entertainment industry and the process of getting a film into production and distribution."

The five winners will be hosted by Women In Film and GM at the bi-annual International Summit of Women In Film in Los Angeles, October 29 - November 1st.

They will also be provided with passes by WIF and GM to certain seminars and events at the American Film Market (AFM), November 2-4 in Santa Monica, California.

Additionally, they will meet as a group with a panel of studio executives and distributors in film and television to discuss the trends and criteria shaping the industry.

Further, they will meet with one or more international sales agents to discuss the current trends in buying and selling product for the international market.

Recipients of the grant were chosen through an application process, overseen by a diverse panel of accomplished filmmakers - executives, directors, producers and distributors - from across the nation, including committee members, Carey Graeber, Adair Simon and Judith James; and judges Paula Heredia, Cynthia Lopez, Natalia Almada, Marta Sanchez, Margarita de la Vega, Kathryn Galan and Alicia Rivera Frankl.

Entrants were required to submit a candidate's statement; description of current projects; two letters of recommendation; resumé; 15-minute DVD or VHS sample of previous work; and statement of warranty.

About the WIF/GM Alliance:

The Women In Film/General Motors Alliance was created to expand WIF programs supporting women in the entertainment industry.

The national initiative was announced in January 2005 by Iris Grossman, WIF president; Judith R. James, WIF/GM national committee chair; and Gary Cowger, GM group vice president, global manufacturing and labor.

Founded in 1973 in Los Angeles, Women In Film is the leading non-profit organization dedicated to women in the global entertainment industry.

Its purpose is to empower, promote, nurture and mentor women in the industry through a network of valuable contacts, events, programs, workshops, finishing funds and scholarships.

In the U.S., there are chapters in Arizona, Atlanta, Dallas, Florida, Houston, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Maryland, New England, New York, Palm Springs, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, D.C.

The international network, Women In Film and Television International, of which WIF-Los Angeles is a founding member, boasts 35 chapters on six continents. Member chapters range from developing nations to countries with established industries, including the U.S., Mexico, Jamaica, Australia, Ireland, South Africa, Canada, France, United Kingdom, India

and New Zealand, to name a few.

Hispanic PR Wire