

MUMBAI MANTRA | SUNDANCE INSTITUTE
SCREENWRITERS LAB 2013

Screenwriters Lab Participants and Projects

- **BETAMAX**
Terrie Samundra
Writer/Director
- **BLACK FREEDOM**
Nitin Kakkar
Writer/Director
- **DELIRIUM**
Abhijit Mazumdar
Writer/Director
- **FORGIVEN**
Neha Sinha
Writer/Director
- **INK**
Pratim D. Gupta
Writer/Director
- **TELEVISION**
Kavanjit Singh
Writer/Director
- **THE MUSIC TEACHER**
Sarthak Dasgupta
Writer/Director
- **TRIBHANGA**
Renuka Shahane
Writer/Director

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SCREENWRITERS LAB 2013

BETAMAX

It is the heat wave of the century in the tense summer of 1976, and London is on the brink of a youth uprising. The South Asian ghetto of Southall pulses with the sounds of dancehall, punk and bhangra. Gurmel, a Sikh corner shop owner, sets aside enough money to purchase a newly released Betamax camera.

His latest business scheme is Indian wedding videos, and even though he knows nothing about making videos, his 15 year old son Harjit can do the busy work. Barely out of the box, the camera is stolen by a gang of punk kids. When they can't figure out how to use it, they accost Harjit to help them make a video for their punk band. The ringleader, Maddie, is an 18 year-old squatter with bright green hair and a bad attitude. When the video wins a contest on a local BBC program, Maddie's guilty conscience prompts her to return the camera, and an unlikely friendship blossoms between the two, a friendship tested by differences in culture and class.

Things get even more complex as Harjit develops a mad crush on Maddie and Maddie, in turn, develops a crush on Harjit's sister. Meanwhile, racist attacks on immigrants culminate in the murder of a Sikh teenager and the National Front plans a town hall meeting in the heart of Southall. As London burns with racial tension, young love, broken hearts and shared growing pains join the fates of Maddie and Harjit.

TERRIE SAMUNDRA



Terrie Samundra grew up between a rural village in India, a small farming town in Missouri, and the California coast. She is the Director of the award-winning short films **Kunjo** and **A Short Tale of Xian**, and co-wrote **Pooja's Honor**, the first screenplay in **The Ballad of Pooja** trilogy. She is a Princess Grace Award recipient, a National Geographic All Roads Seed Grant recipient, and is currently the Head Programmer at the 2013 Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles.

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BLACK FREEDOM

Black Freedom weaves together five short stories by Saadat Hasan Manto, one of the most well-known and controversial authors of the twentieth century.

Toba Tek Singh: Officials of both side of the border of India and Pakistan decide, like regular people, lunatics in the asylums should also be transferred to their respective countries, as per their religion. It's the fight of Bishen Singh who wants to stay in the village where he was born. It is difficult to decide if the people inside the asylum are lunatics or outside it.

Khol Do is the journey of a father who moves to Pakistan during partition, and in the chaos, loses his 17 year-old daughter. While he is sure she will survive, as no one would kill such a pretty girl, the mob has a mind of its own. A harrowing analogy to a time where humans cease to be humane.

Tetwaal Ka Kutta A dog becomes the object of amusement for soldiers posted on both sides of the border.

Sharifan In a brutal wave of mob violence, women become targets for rape by members of the opposing side. An eye for an eye will make the world blind.

The Last Salute: Two childhood friends grow up to become soldiers in the army of undivided India. In 1942, they fight for the British in a war that is not actually. India gets its freedom in 1947, and now they find themselves pointing guns at each other across the newly formed border of India and Pakistan. The question is, who are they fighting for, and who is the enemy?

NITIN KAKKAR



Born in Mumbai, **Nitin Kakkar** grew up on a staple diet of Bollywood. After gaining experience as an assistant director for Hindi movies, Nitin Kakkar made his directorial debut with the award-winning short film **Black Freedom** (2004). Since then, he has worked on a number of television projects including **Prayaschit**, **Jersey No 10**, and **CID**.

Nitin's debut feature film **Filmistaan** received a Special Jury Mention during its World Premiere at the Busan International Film Festival. The film also won awards for Best Debut Director at the International Film Festival of Kerala and Jaipur film Festival.

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SCREENWRITERS LAB 2013

DELIRIUM

This story is about six people. Six specks of dust floating around in the endless city of Mumbai. Maqsood, a young small time real estate broker. His younger brother, Qalim, an office boy in a private bank. Mr. Rao, an elderly staunch Hindu, high-ranking officer working in the same bank, recently transferred to the Mumbai office. Nafisa, a young social activist just arrived in Mumbai for research and Rao's neighbour. Shinde, a corrupt cop who doesn't hide his hatred for other religions. And a nameless wierdo who loves eating coins. Qalim, who is falsely implicated in a case of stealing by Shinde, is also at the receiving end of Rao's paranoia and anti-Islamic mind.

Maqsood, meanwhile, is waiting to avenge the systematic assault on his brother and his community. Nafisa searches for inspiration and funding for her philanthropic project aimed at ending religious strife. The story takes a turn when Qalim successfully gains a hold over Rao's psyche and begins to extort money from him. Maqsood hatches a plan to kidnap the cop's son to teach him and the entire police force a lesson.

Nafisa accidentally comes across the coin-eating man and follows him around for the next few days. She believes that he is the key to her 'utopia'. A crisis develops as the coin-eating man disappears and there is news of an impending meteoric disaster in Mumbai. Six specks of dust cross paths, ready to raise a storm.

ABHIJIT MAZUMDAR



Abhijit Mazumdar is a Direction graduate from Film & Television Institute of India, Pune. He has made a number of short films, documentaries and commercials. His films have received both national and international awards. His latest medium length film ***Vanishing Point*** is an official selection in Jameson Dublin International Film Festival 2013, Glasgow Short Film Festival (Competition Section "Adrift") 2013, International Film Festival of India (Indian Panorama) 2012, International Documentary & Short Film Festival, Kerala (Focus Section) 2012.

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FORGIVEN

It is 2003, and Anitha travels to her grandfather Damodaran's spice plantation in Kerala 16 years ago. He is dying, and she is forced to reunite with her maternal family to bid him farewell. However, the unwelcome arrival of her aunt Leela with her daughter, and the family's disdain brings back all the troubled memories of Anitha's last trip to the plantation.

During the sultry summer of 1987, free-spirited Leela returns from art school in Europe to her orthodox Brahmin family and their spice plantation. Her sister Veena is pregnant and impatient; and 8-year-old Anitha is left feeling ignored and insecure. Anitha finds a friend and confidante in Leela, who gifts her a Polaroid camera and notebook.

Leela's liberal sentiments find sympathy with the changing socio-political climate of Kerala. The communists are in power, and encouraged by an untouchable socialist, Vasudevan Pulayan, the plantation workers are on strike. As the monsoon showers break, Leela meets Vasudevan deep in the refuge of the plantation. Leela is torn between her ideology and her loyalty and love for her family. Together with an awestruck Anitha, she secretly starts attending political meetings, helping Vasudevan with his political agenda and organising a rally demanding workers' rights. *Forgiven* is a tale about a disintegrated family that is forced to come together, re-visit their past and find forgiveness.

NEHA SINHA



After studying Philosophy at Lady Shri Ram College and film at the National Institute of Design, **Neha Sinha** has worked as a documentary filmmaker and as art director at the advertising firm JWT. She has also been a creative assistant to adman Ram Madhvani on various commercials, including the Cannes Lions 2007 winning 'Palace' for *Happydent White*, and assisted Abhinay Deo on Aamir Khan Production's acclaimed film *Delhi Belly*. Currently, she works with Siddharth Basu in Big Synergy where she develops content and fiction based TV shows. *Forgiven* is her first original screenplay.

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SCREENWRITERS LAB 2013

INK

Shantilal is a weather reporter at a reputed English newspaper in Kolkata. In his late 30s and single, he lives with his mother in the suburbs.

Though Shantilal is technically a journalist, he has arguably the worst job in the world. Mostly, his days consist of calling the meteorological office to take down temperature and humidity. And when he does file a story it has to pass the desk of his editor, a moody and difficult man. After work, he goes for drinks with the reporters working the crime beat, hearing their unbelievable stories and learning the tricks of their reporting trade, knowing all too well that he won't ever be able to apply them to his work.

Thanks to a fortunate chain of events in the office, Shantilal gets a prized pass to the premiere of a much-awaited and star-studded film. Once there, he is mesmerized by the stunning Sofia, the reigning box office queen of the film industry.

One thing leads to another and Shantilal chances upon a long lost scandal about Sofia. The journalist in him is roused and he sets about investigating the story. He puts everything at stake, including his mother's jewelry, to find out about the hushed-up event from the past. As he digs deeper, Shantilal finds himself more and more obsessed with Sofia.

Once Shantilal has the evidence, he maneuvers to secure the front page for his story, a way to show up his editors, who had previously made a joke out of his existence.

When Sofia finds out that someone is looking into her past, she reaches out to Shantilal. Two people from very different strata of society come to face-to-face, and that climactic rendezvous decides whether "the story of a lifetime" finds its way in ink on a newspaper page or changes both of their lives forever.

PRATIM D. GUPTA



Pratim D. Gupta has been the resident film critic for **The Telegraph** newspaper in Kolkata, the largest selling English daily in east India, for eight years. His screenplay ***The Deaths of Ray*** was selected from India for the Binger Script Lab at the 2009 Locarno International Film Festival. ***Paanch Adhyay*** (Afterglow) was Pratim's first feature film as writer-director.

The 2012 romantic drama was selected as the Centrepiece Premiere at the South Asian International Film Festival in New York and was picked as the New Voice in Indian Cinema at the Mumbai International Film Festival. It also won the Best Film Award at Kalakar Awards, one of the oldest and most prestigious award ceremonies in India.

MUMBAI MANTRA | SUNDANCE INSTITUTE
SCREENWRITERS LAB 2013

TELEVISION

Vijay does not believe in love, but loves watching romantic movies. He is 28, works as a small time carpentry contractor during the day and as a ticket checker in an old cinema theatre at night. Soon, Vijay will marry Sohini from his village in an arranged marriage. Two weeks before his marriage, Vijay meets Meera, one of Sohini's friends. Meera reminds him of a lead actress from his favourite romantic film, *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*. At first, he thinks it's nothing, but every time he meets her, something happens between them. Slowly, they find themselves drawn to each other. As Vijay's marriage comes closer, both are faced with unanswered questions and must choose their path to future.

Ravi is an honest cop in a city rife with corruption. He desperately wants to get his 3 year old son into the very reputed but very costly iFuture school. However, the school requires a big donation for admission, which is out of Ravi's reach. Ravi tries to look for cheaper Government schools but can't find anything good enough for his son. Ravi now must choose whether to let go off his principals as a police officer in order to get his son admitted to the school of his dreams.

Malik is newly retired and lives happily with his wife. His only son works in America and visits him once every two years. Malik's simple, peaceful life is turned upside down when his son calls to say that his boss is visiting India for the first time, and he has invited him to stay at Malik's house. Malik's son wants him to decorate the house to make a good impression on his boss. Malik must paint the house, get new curtains and many other small things, but most importantly install a big LCD TV. And all of this must be completed in 7 days!

This is the story of:

- **Vijay**, who is about to get married and start a new life.
- **Ravi**, who wants best for his three year-old son.
- **Malik**, who is now retired and wants to live a peaceful life.

Unforeseen circumstances have put these three men at crossroads. They must decide what path to choose.

KAVANJIT SINGH



Kavanjit Singh is a screenwriter and director from Pune, India. Kavan started his film career at Whistling Woods, graduating in Film Direction. A former Infosys Project Manager with an undergraduate degree in electronics engineering, Kavan is pursuing his passion for cinema.

His short film *Jagjeet* has won 9 Best Short Film Awards across the world.

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SCREENWRITERS LAB 2013

THE MUSIC TEACHER

This is the mid-nineties. In a small, sleepy town in North-Western Bengal, Beni, a music teacher, is madly in love with Jyotsna, a student he taught several years ago. She has since left town and become a nationally celebrated singer, and in these years, Beni and Jyotsna have not been in touch..Once, Jyotsna had been in love with Beni, but he had stopped her because she was too young. Today, Beni has no idea how she feels about him.

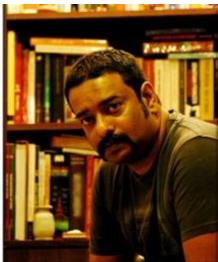
Beni's neighbor, Geeta is a beautiful woman, but lonely. Her husband, whom Beni looked up to as an elder brother, is rumored to have found another woman in the city and has settled there. Beni and Geeta find in each other unexpected companionship, which for both, is an existential need.

Meanwhile, Beni's sister is preparing to get married. Their ever-dissatisfied mother is stressing them both out in her quest for the perfect wedding. In the midst of all this, posters begin to appear on the town walls announcing a gala show in which Jyotsna will perform.

The whole town gears up to welcome the daughter of the soil. Even Beni warms up after reading a newspaper interview in which Jyotsna has spoken highly about him.

Armed with hope, Beni prepares to meet Jyotsna once again and have his one crucial shot at love and life.

SARTHAK DASGUPTA



With a Bachelor's degree in Engineering and a Master's degree in Business Management, and five years in the corporate world of Mumbai, Sarthak Dasgupta realized life needed a different definition than the one he was living. Sarthak left his cushy job and set out to become a filmmaker.

His debut feature ***The Great Indian Butterfly*** has been screened at various International Film Festivals. Most recently, Dasgupta received the Sundance Institute | Mahindra Global Filmmaking Award at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival.

MUMBAI MANTRA | SUNDANCE INSTITUTE
SCREENWRITERS LAB 2013

TRIBHANGA

Tribhanga is the story of three women, from three generations of a family- Nayan, Anu and Masha.

The eldest, Nayan, is a critically acclaimed Marathi author with many state and national literary awards to her credit. But her family life has been less than perfect. Nayan's divorce and characterization of her daughter Anu in her writing has determined the course of Anu's disturbed life for many years.

Tribhanga unfolds through a series of flashbacks seen through Anu's eyes as she tries to recount her relationship with her mother. .

Memories of the pain, frustration, anger, and promiscuity; all describe a life full of angst. Anu has borne her daughter Masha out of wedlock with a Russian man. Though Anu is looked at with disdain in society, she is a wonderfully warm and nurturing mother to Masha. In contrast, Nayan has never been able to form a bond with her children; nor has she been able to form long lasting relationships with men. She becomes dependent on alcohol in her late 60s. This is when Anu brings Nayan to live with her. With all three under one roof, they attempt to repair their bond as family.

And so the lives of these three women overlap each other's like concentric circles, each determining the shape of the other, each contributing to the other's life in a deep way, each becoming the other's strength. Their lives are like 'Tribhanga', the Odissi dance pose that is so disjointed, yet so beautiful, magical and mesmerizing.

RENUKA SHAHANE



Renuka Shahane has been an actress in Indian theatre, television and film for the past 25 years. Her work in television includes *Lifeline*, *Surabhi*, *Circus*, *Imtihaan*, *Sailaab*, *Close-up Antakshari*, *Kora Kaagaz* and the celebrity dance competition *Jhalak Dikhla Jaa*. In her film work, she is best known for the Bollywood blockbuster *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun?*

Her first feature as director was the critically acclaimed *Rita* for which she won Best director for a Marathi film at the 16th Nokia Star-Screen Awards 2010. She also received the **Best Screenplay Award in Marathi Films** competitive section of the 8th Pune International Film Festival.