

## Dallas International Film Festival Screenplay Competition Enlisting High Profile Filmmakers

Oscar Winner, Emmy Contenders, Blockbusters Filmmakers and Executive Producers to Judge DIFF Screenplay Competition



**Dallas, Texas Feb 8, 2023** ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Dallas International Film Festival (DIFF), Torfoot Studios, and Event Horizon Films revealed today an all-star judge lineup for the 2023 [screenplay competition](#) to support emerging writers and showcase Dallas' strong film community.

Oscar-winner Brenda Chapman developed scores of iconic family animations and was the first woman to direct an animated feature for a major Hollywood studio. Executive producer Jessica Sharzer was a three-time, Primetime Emmy nominee for FX's *American Horror Story*. Two-time Emmy-nominated Kelsey Scott played Anne Northup in the Oscar-winning *12 Years A Slave*. Screenwriter Thomas Dean Donnelly topped the Box Office with *Sahara*, starring Matthew McConaughey. Award-winning Writer-Director Johnathan Brownlee recently announced *The Will Rogers Story*. Bestselling author Harry Hunsicker is rounding the film festival circuit with [\(\\*\)hit Squad](#), a Script to Screen winner, and Dallas Film's James Faust has served on juries and panels all over the world.

Each judge will leverage their combined industry experiences to select the top screenplays, teleplays, and short scripts that were submitted [HERE](#) to the Dallas International Film Festival. Winning screenwriters are exposed to high-profile industry experts and receive a variety of prizes and networking opportunities. Award-winning filmmaker Johnathan Brownlee will produce and direct the short script winner and screen it across the film festivals circuit.

**Johnathan Brownlee** is an award-winning director, producer, writer, and actor, best known for *Three Days In August*, *The Standoff at Sparrow Creek*, *Decoding Annie Parker*, and *Johnathan Brownlee's AtHome*. Brownlee's feature films, and episodic and digital content have been viewed in more than 100 countries in 14 languages and honored with 32 Telly Awards. Brownlee's Torfoot Studios is currently in development and production of the features *Montserrat*, *Eyes of Jefferson*, *Brewmaster: In the Beginning*, *The Kira Wahlstrom Story*, Hallmark's *An Island Light* and the recently announced limited series about the life of American icon, Will Rogers. He recently served as CEO and president of the nonprofit Dallas Film, where he produced the internationally recognized Dallas International Film Festival and was responsible for co-creating the Veterans Institute for Film & Media (VIFM), a training program for military veterans. Brownlee earned a Master of Fine Arts at Brandeis University. He received his bachelor's from Hofstra University and studied film at New York University.

**Brenda Chapman** is the co-creator of 'Twas Entertainment and an Oscar-winning animation film director, writer, and story artist. With more than 30 years of experience working on the most iconic family animations, she was the first woman to direct an animated feature for a major Hollywood studio. Best known for creating, writing, and directing Pixar's *Brave*, she was the first woman to win an Oscar, BAFTA, and Golden Globe for Best Animated Feature Film. While at Pixar Animation Studios, she was also a senior story artist on *Cars*, and contributed to *Ratatouille*, *Up*, and *WALL-E*. Before that, Chapman helped launch DreamWorks Animation Studios in 1994, where she contributed to *Chicken Run*, *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas*, and *Shrek*, as well as co-directed the Oscar-winning *Prince of Egypt* with Simon Wells and Steve Hickner. Chapman started her career as a story artist at Walt Disney Feature Animation, contributing to *The Little Mermaid*, *The Rescuers Down Under*, the Oscar-nominated *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and *Fantasia 2000*. Chapman was also the story supervisor on the original *The Lion King*, for which she won the Annie Award for Best Individual Achievement for Story Contribution in the Field of Animation.

**Thomas Dean Donnelly** is a veteran screenwriter and script consultant with more than 30 years of experience in the film industry. He has worked on franchises from *Voltron* to *Uncharted* to Marvel's *Doctor Strange* to *The Walking Dead*. Over the last decade, Donnelly's been working continuously as a screenwriter for FOX 2000, Warner Brothers, Universal, Columbia, Paramount, Miramax, and MGM. His action-adventure script, *Sahara*, starring Matthew McConaughey, Steve Zahn, Penelope Cruz, William H. Macy, and Delroy Lindo was released by Paramount and opened No. 1 at the Box Office in North America, as well as hundreds of foreign territories, with a hundred million dollars grosses worldwide. Donnelly was also the writer, creator, and executive producer of *Thoughtcrimes*, a 2-hour pilot for the USA Network. He wrote *Conan the Barbarian* for Lionsgate, starring Jason Momoa, and

wrote *A Sound of Thunder* for Warner Brothers, based on a famous Ray Bradbury short story, starring Edward Burns, Catherine McCormack, and Ben Kingsley. Donnelly started his career as an editor working on the 1994 Emmy Awards, the 66th Academy Awards, and several pilots for new TV series. He earned a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Southern California in the Production Program of the Cinema School, and received his Bachelor of English from Film Vassar College.

**James Faust** is the artistic director for the Dallas Film Society and the Dallas International Film Festival. He has served on juries and panels all over the world, speaking about film festival management, programming, and marketing. Faust began his film career as a grip on *Armageddon* and *Walker Texas Ranger*. After working his way up to being a commercial producer, Faust started a local production company for which he won a local Emmy. In 2006, he began as DIFF's senior programmer, when Dallas Film was still called AFI DALLAS. That position followed programming roles with the Asian Film Festival of Dallas, The Austin Film Festival, and the Texas Black Film Festival. Faust received telecommunication and theatre degrees at Texas Tech University, which he followed up with a degree in Cinema Studies at Southern Methodist University.

**Harry Hunsicker** is a creative writing teacher, the bestselling author of eight crime thrillers, and the creator of numerous short stories. The winner of the 2022 Script to Screen Competition, his crime comedy, *(\*)hit Squad*, directed by award-winning filmmaker Johnathan Brownlee, was produced by Torfoot Films, Event Horizon Films, and IdeaMan Studios with legal partners, Litwin Law Group, PLLC, and The Law Office of LaToya L. Blakely. The short film has screened at Dallas Noir Fest, Dallas International Film Festival, ATX Short Film Showcase, Twin Falls Film Festival, and Chandler Film Festival and was selected for many others.

**Kelsey Scott** is a two-time Emmy nominated actress, producer, and screenwriter, best known for her role as Anne Northup in the Oscar-winning *12 Years A Slave* and her two-season arc as Wes Gibbins' mother, Rose, on *How to Get Away With Murder*. Her guest star role on *Giants* earned her a 2019 Daytime Emmy nomination, and in 2017 she received a Primetime Emmy nomination for her leading role on *Fear the Walking Dead: Passage*. Additional acting credits include, *Better Call Saul*, *Insecure*, *NCIS*, *True Detective*, and the CW's *Dynasty* reboot, among 40 other roles. Scott's screenwriting career began with the Sony Pictures thrillers, *Motives*, and she subsequently penned the film's sequel. Scott spearheaded the screenwriting curriculum at Golden West College in Huntington Beach, Calif, and continues to write commissioned scripts, in addition to shepherding her slate of original projects. She earned a Master of Fine Arts in Film from Florida State University and received her Bachelor of Science in Broadcast Journalism from Florida A&M University.

**Jessica Sharzer** is a three-time, Primetime Emmy nominated producer, writer, and director. She has developed feature films for Universal, HBO, MTV, 20th Century FOX, FOX 2000, Sony, Lionsgate, Netflix, and Paramount. Her produced features included *Nerve* (2015) and *A Simple Favor* (2018). Her sequel, *A Simple Favor 2*, is slated for production in October 2023 with Amazon. Also in the works, is an adaptation of *The Girls I've Been for Millie Bobby Brown* on Netflix. Other recent projects included remakes of *Hitchcock's To Catch a Thief* for Paramount and *The Hunger* for Warner Brothers. Meanwhile, Sharzer has developed a range of drama pilots for CBS, FOX, MTV, APPLE, and ABC networks. She was co-executive producer on FX's *American Horror Story*, FOX's *Star*, APPLE's *Amazing Stories*, and Hulu's *Perfect Strangers*. She is currently adapting James Patterson's bestselling series, *Women's Murder Club*, along with Carol Mendelsohn for Amazon. As a director, she made her feature debut with *Speak* (2004), which premiered at Sundance and was nominated for Writers Guild and Directors Guild awards. Sharzer holds master's degrees from New York University and UC Berkeley, and is an adjunct professor of screenwriting and script analysis at the University of Southern California.

Headshots and logos available  
here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/phx1j3lgwuggwlbyv1j5a/h?dl=0&rlkey=1es7yri9v159iac28xwhd4r4w>

The DIFF 2023 screenplay competition, presented annually by Event Horizon Films, offers writers the opportunity to submit scripts for feature films, television pilots, and short films, which are reviewed by readers at top talent agencies and management companies in the industry. The finalist judges nominate the winners in each category.

DIFF runs from April 28, 2023, to May 5, 2023. DIFF and Event Horizon Films are accepting screenplay entries [HERE](#), now through midnight on June 18, 2023. The short script category, which provides a produced film to the winner, closes at midnight on April 7.

Short script submissions must be 10 pages or under and set in a single, indoor location. Short script winners will be revealed at the festival. Additional competition winners will be announced in the summer of 2023.

For more information on the Dallas International Film Festival, visit [dallasfilm.org](http://dallasfilm.org) or contact [info@dallasfilm.org](mailto:info@dallasfilm.org). Information can also be found on: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#). Details on the screenplay competition are available at [eventhorizonfilms.com](http://eventhorizonfilms.com)

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## About Dallas Film

The Dallas International Film Festival (DIFF) is the signature program of Dallas Film ([www.dallasfilm.org](http://www.dallasfilm.org)), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established as Dallas Film Society in 2006 by people who believe passionately in the magic of film. Through the curation of the broadest range of expression through film, DIFF is the region's most powerfully inclusive and equitable platform for diverse, emerging, and underrepresented voices. Since its founding, DIFF has screened more than 2,000 widely diverse new films from 50 countries, provided more than \$1.1 million in awards, and hosted nearly 100,000 filmgoers and filmmakers. #WeAreDallasFilm

## About Torfoot Studios

Torfoot Studios is an award-winning film, television, and digital content production company founded in 2010 with offices in Canada and the US. Veteran filmmaker Johnathan Brownlee serves as President and CEO. Brownlee is a Canadian/American director, producer, writer, and actor. Torfoot's work has been viewed in more than 100 countries in multiple languages and was recently honored with 32 Telly Awards. Torfoot has a variety of content in development and production. For information, visit [torfoot.com](http://torfoot.com).

## About Event Horizon Films

Event Horizon Films ([www.eventhorizonfilms.com](http://www.eventhorizonfilms.com)) is an online network of experienced film professionals established to help screenwriters improve stories, increase exposure and understand the business of Hollywood. From screenplay competitions and analysis services to industry exposure and production deals, Event Horizon Films is committed to encouraging writers to keep writing.

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Source : Dallas International Film Festival

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