ANNUAL REPORT
2021

FEATURING
PINBALL
An MPI Original Films Production
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OUR MISSION

The Moving Picture Institute is a production company and talent incubator that creates high-impact films designed to entertain, inspire, and educate audiences with captivating stories about human freedom.

2 THE MOVING PICTURE INSTITUTE
FROM THE PRESIDENT

In the following pages, you will read about the Moving Picture Institute’s many accomplishments in 2021 as we fulfill our mission to promote freedom through film. I am pleased to report that MPI’s team and the hundreds of individuals who worked for us in various capacities this year completed principal photography on 10 projects (one narrative feature, one documentary feature, three narrative short films, and five episodes of a comedy series). We also developed our future slate with 10 new projects, completed the scripts on two narrative feature films (which will be filmed in 2022), and supported 82 freedom-minded filmmakers.

MPI is truly unique. We operate as a nonprofit independent film production company and talent incubator. Our in-house producers develop and create top-quality content that is viewed by millions and generates revenue that supports our mission. MPI’s talent programs attract promising filmmakers; we train them in the art of filmmaking, invest in them at key points in their careers, work with them to develop high-impact concepts and scripts, and then acquire the best scripts to produce as MPI Original Films. We are developing and producing content which is starting conversations about human freedom and inspiring positive change.

MPI’s budget and production capacity has more than doubled over the last five years. I am proud of all the progress made by our team, MPI filmmakers, and the wide reach of the content we are producing. Of course, none of our work would be possible without the ongoing support provided by MPI’s partners and donors for whom I am very grateful.

Sincerely,

Rob Pfaltzgraff
President & Producer
The MPI Original feature film Pinball is based on the true story of GQ journalist and real-life pinball wizard Roger Sharpe, who in 1976 overturned New York City’s 35-year ban on pinball machines.

The MPI production team developed Pinball with MPI filmmakers Austin and Meredith Bragg (The Bragg Brothers), who wrote and directed the project. Pinball features an all-star cast led by British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) nominee Mike Faist (Steven Spielberg’s West Side Story, Broadway’s Dear Evan Hansen), Crystal Reed (Swamp Thing, Teen Wolf), and Dennis Boutsikaris (Better Call Saul, Billions, The Bourne Legacy). Under the supervision of MPI producers, Pinball was shot in New York’s Hudson Valley over the course of 21 twelve-hour days with a cast and crew of more than 200 (including seven MPI interns).

The film is a funny, smart take on the ridiculous nature of government overreach that will inspire audiences with the message that human freedom is the secret to human flourishing.
MPI Talent Pipeline in Action

The Bragg Brothers are an award-winning writing and directing brother duo who are also producers at Reason TV. Over the years, they have participated in a number of MPI’s talent development workshops through our Rising Filmmaker Program (RFP) including MPI’s Short Film Lab. Through the Lab they wrote and directed the MPI Original Film A Piece of Cake, which won several awards and was nominated for Best Narrative Short at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2020.

Their journey is a great example of MPI’s mission in action and the synergy between our talent development and production programs. We invest in talented, like-minded filmmakers and work with the best of them to produce culture-changing MPI Original Films that can move the needle on important issues by reaching broad audiences with the ideas of freedom.
In 2021, MPI completed scripts on two narrative features which we will film in 2022.

Based on the inspiring, true story of Melony Armstrong, **Freedom Hair** follows an entrepreneurial mother who works at a shelter for battered women and decides to start a natural hair braiding business to achieve financial independence for herself and others. To do so she must overcome unexpected obstacles imposed by a powerful cartel and the state of Mississippi.

**The Kemba Smith Story** is based on the true story of criminal justice reform activist Kemba Smith. As a college student she falls in love with a man, only to learn he is a drug kingpin who leads her down a path of abuse and manipulation, placing her in the middle of the government’s “war on drugs,” and ultimately landing her in federal prison.

MPI developed 10 new film projects, including acquiring the rights to **One Second After**—the *New York Times* bestselling trilogy written by William Forstchen. It tells the story of a resourceful professor who struggles to save his family and his small North Carolina town in the aftermath of a high-altitude nuclear electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack that destroys the nation’s electrical grid, sending America back to the Dark Ages. The series raises important issues such as individual rights and self-government. MPI has attached legendary sci-fi screenwriter J. Michael Straczynski (*SENSE8, Jeremiah, Babylon 5*) to write the pilot episode for a television series.

MPI also finalized principal photography on the feature documentary **Project Home: 3D Printing the Future**, which will document how the power of market-based innovation (3D-printed houses) can provide cost-effective solutions to homelessness and the lack of affordable housing—both in the US and abroad. MPI plans to release the documentary in 2022.
MPI filmmaker Matt MacDonald wrote and directed *Melons*—a delightful comedy short about a jolly, but meek, grocery store manager who learns to stand up for himself after a misunderstanding brands him as public enemy #1. **Starring Brian Huskey** (*Veep, Bob’s Burgers*) and Martin Mull (*Clue, Roseanne, Arrested Development*), *Melons* points out the dangerous and often ridiculous nature of cancel culture that is becoming more prevalent by the day.

The project was developed in MPI's 2020 Short Film Lab by MacDonald, who has helmed digital projects for Skybound Games, Warner Bros. Digital, and Lionsgate. *Melons* was shot over four twelve-hour days in Los Angeles with a cast and crew of more than 50 people including MPI producers and seven MPI interns.

We are currently submitting the film to festivals for a 2022 premiere.
MPI has an incredible track record. MPI is known for supporting exciting, thought-provoking stories. I’m thrilled to collaborate with the team and bring to life this story of fruit, freedom, and fighting for yourself when the masses write you off.”

– Matt MacDonald
Developed by MPI filmmaker Timothy Blackwood, *Infraction* tells the true story of a corrections officer whose unlikely friendship with a lifer forces him to choose between keeping his job and speaking the truth. Percy Daggs III (*Veronica Mars*) and Kevin Oestenstad (*Chicago P.D.*, *CSI: Cyber*) lead this dramatic short inspired by true events that tackles the important topics of over-incarceration and the need for criminal justice reform.

This film originated in MPI’s Short Film Lab and follows Blackwood’s award-winning, MPI-supported short documentary *The Conqueror*. The subject of *Infraction*, Terrance Lewis, is also an executive producer on the film. Terrance served over 21 years in prison on a wrongful murder conviction. After his release in 2019, Terrance created a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for wrongfully convicted people who are seeking legal representation. Terrance hopes this film will inspire lasting change in the criminal justice system.

*Infraction* was shot in a shuttered New Mexico prison over four twelve-hour days of filming with a cast and crew of more than 60 people, including five interns, under the guidance of MPI producers.

We are currently submitting the film to festivals for a 2022 premiere.
MPI supports work that has meaning.

“I’m so grateful to have had the opportunity to workshop Infraction through MPI’s Short Film Lab. The fact that MPI supports work that has meaning and real purpose is fundamental if we want to see transformation on a small and large scale in our society. If we really want to see that change, it has to come from inside of us, and that is what great films can do.”

– Timothy Blackwood

Writer-director Timothy Blackwood

The real-life Terrance Lewis on set with Percy Daggs III
Written and directed by MPI filmmaker Claudia S. Murray, **Unloaded** follows a young man who wants to propose to his girlfriend, but her family—and his own need to be liked—stand in his way. **Starring Niko Guardado (The Goldbergs, Party of Five) and Allison Gabriel (Sweet Magnolias, Baby Driver),** this comedy short was developed in MPI’s Short Film Lab and boldly addresses topics such as cancel culture, civility in times of growing division, and political correctness.

Murray previously directed and co-wrote the award-winning MPI Original short film *Gringa,* which earned her Best Director at the UCLAxFilmFest and Best Shorts Director at the Georgia Latino Film Festival.

*Unloaded* was shot on location in Encino, California over three twelve-hour days with a cast and crew of more than 40, including five MPI interns. Throughout the shoot Murray received on-set support from MPI producers.

We are currently submitting the film to festivals for a 2022 premiere.

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**Unloaded**

Niko Guardado as Jack

Go Behind the Scenes
“It’s an opportunity of a lifetime to work with MPI.

“Because this film went from pitch to production with MPI, they have been a partner along the entire way. It is really an opportunity of a lifetime to work with MPI and to get to use the experience of their producers and the benefits of their network to create something that you have imagined.”

– Claudia S. Murray
Written and directed by MPI filmmaker Elvira Ibragimova, We’re Doing Good is an MPI Original Series that follows a millennial couple aspiring to “do good” in the world. Despite their best efforts, however, they fail humorously and spectacularly at every turn, often harming the very causes they are trying to help. Playing the well-intentioned couple is Emily Pendergast (Veep) and Jonathan Braylock (Astronomy Club).

The series originated in an MPI workshop and was shot over five twelve-hour days with a cast and crew of more than 75 people including MPI’s producers and six MPI interns. Ibragimova, the writer and director, was born in Soviet-era Uzbekistan and came to America as a political refugee when she was just ten years old. Since the workshop, she has been hired as a director by Nickelodeon and is working on projects such as The Fairly OddParents! and Danger Force.

We’re Doing Good will make its world premiere in 2022 at the prestigious South by Southwest (SXSW) Film Festival and will use comedy to remind audiences that we need more than just good intentions.
I’m so excited to work with MPI.

This idea is based on my own doomed attempts at do-goodery, and I’m thrilled to be exploring the concept further with someone as creative as Lana and the rest of the MPI team.”

– Elvira Ibragimova
Rising Filmmaker Program
MPI is launching the careers of a generation of freedom-minded filmmakers. The Rising Filmmaker Program identifies, trains, and supports freedom-oriented directors, editors, and screenwriters. MPI invests in filmmakers at key points in their careers working with them to develop high-impact concepts and scripts through labs and workshops, and then we acquire the best scripts to produce as MPI Original Films.

The Hollywood Career Launch Program
MPI’s Hollywood Career Launch Program provides production internships to college students and recent graduates, placing them on the sets of MPI Original Films and at major production houses including BRON Studios (Joker), Millennium Entertainment (Olympus Has Fallen), and Bold Films (Drive).

To enhance their internships, participants attend talent development seminars hosted by MPI featuring instruction from industry experts. MPI also sponsors the Academy Gold Rising Program, which provides additional mentorship to MPI interns from members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Moving Picturecraft
Filmmakers are instructed by industry experts in the art of cinematography in this hands-on workshop. They learn how lighting, camera, and lens technologies can help them achieve their artistic intentions. During the workshop, filmmakers take a simple scene, design the lighting and camera movements, and then film the scene on a soundstage with state-of-the-art equipment.

Mindful Editor
Hosted in partnership with Smock Media, this workshop offers film editors the opportunity to sharpen the vital skill of editing to craft emotionally powerful stories. Editors are tasked to edit a short video each for a different genre and audience, all pulling from the same pro-freedom source material. The workshop culminates with fellows sharing their short films and reflecting on their creative decisions.
MPI has helped me as a cinematographer and first-time fiction screenplay writer and has provided a nurturing and invigorating environment in which I had the freedom and space to experiment and grow. My appreciation for MPI runs deep—not just because they have been supportive of me as a filmmaker but because in doing so, they have also felt in some ways like a family.

—Elizabeth Mirzaei
**MPI FILMMAKERS NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Elizabeth Mirzai**

Elizabeth Mirzai's documentary short *Three Songs for Benazir* was acquired by Netflix and nominated for an Academy Award. Elizabeth has participated in many workshop and masterclass opportunities offered by MPI's Rising Filmmaker Program. She began in MPI's Hollywood Career Launch Program as an intern at Millennium Films. She also participated in the MPI Short Film Lab. She gives back to the MPI filmmaker network by participating as a speaker in MPI's Documentary Storytelling Workshop, and she is currently developing a documentary concept with our team.

**Ryan Patch**

Ryan Patch continues to build on the success of his award-winning MPI Original Film *Regulation* with the recent release of his star-studded podcast *City of Ghosts*, for which MPI provided an intern production assistant. He is currently writing and directing in Los Angeles.

**Nicholas Brennan**

Nicholas Brennan's critically-acclaimed MPI-supported feature length documentary *Los Últimos Frikis* was released on the streaming service Topic and can now be seen on major platforms including Apple TV and Google Play.

**R.J. Daniel Hanna**, director of the MPI Original Film *Miss Virginia*, was named one of five winners in the Academy Nicholl Fellowships in Screenwriting. This is the film industry’s most competitive and prestigious writing competition and is hosted by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. This script was written in part in one of MPI’s Screenwriting Workshops.

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**Short Film Lab**

This comprehensive program provides filmmakers with hands-on training and mentoring to take their initial film concepts through the process of developing an outstanding short film script for production.

Filmmakers accepted into the Lab participate in screenwriting workshops where they develop original concepts under the guidance of experienced screenwriters and develop them into compelling, pro-freedom scripts for short or feature-length films. Select filmmakers then move on to MPI's Directing Workshop where they are taught the skills needed to effectively manage a crew, communicate with a cast, and prepare for pre-production, production, and post-production.

The best scripts from the workshops are then reviewed by the MPI production team for the possibility of being acquired and produced as MPI Original Films.

**Documentary Development and Production Lab**

Filmmakers receive hands-on training and mentoring to take their initial concepts through the process of developing, producing, and releasing a documentary film. Participants attend MPI's Documentary Storytelling Workshop which is designed to move them beyond the “talking head” format and learn how to find the story in their footage, develop character, craft compelling story arcs, and strike an honest, compelling balance between story and argument.

MPI may elect to acquire projects from the workshop to produce as MPI Original Films. Documentarians are then mentored through the entire production process, which is funded by MPI.
The Moving Picture Institute is governed by an independent board of trustees and is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. MPI relies on the private financial support of the general public—individuals, foundations, corporations, and program revenue—for its income and does not accept government funding. This report is a statement of MPI’s financial position for the 2021 fiscal year, January 1–December 31, and does not use final audited numbers.

REVENUE
$7,566,278 TOTAL
- 12% Program Revenue
- 48% Individuals
- 40% Foundations

EXPENSES
$8,712,488 TOTAL
- 5% Administration
- 95% Programs

ASSETS
$4,619,733 YEAR-END TOTAL

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WATCH MPI FILMS FROM THE COMFORT OF HOME

MPI Original and MPI-supported films are available to watch now on your favorite on-demand platforms such as Netflix, Apple TV, Amazon Prime Video, Google Play, and MPI's new streaming channel WatchMPIOriginalFilms.com.