

# NEH Application Cover Sheet (TD-277945)

## Media Projects Development

### PROJECT DIRECTOR

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Mr. Adam Kahan  
Producer/Director

(b) (6)

E-mail: (b) (6)

Phone: (b) (6)

Fax:

Field of expertise: Filmmaking

### INSTITUTION

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New York Foundation for the Arts  
Brooklyn, NY 11201-8352

### APPLICATION INFORMATION

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Title: *Sun Ra from Saturn*

Grant period: From 2021-05-01 to 2021-11-01

Project field(s): Film History and Criticism; Music History and Criticism; African American History

**Description of project:** A documentary film about the influential pianist and bandleader Sun Ra (né Herman Poole Blount, 1914-1993). The sophistication and range of Ra's music, his charismatic personality, his intellectual explorations and writings, and his continuing impact on jazz and related genres, make Ra a germinal figure of the 20th century.

### BUDGET

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<b>Outright Request</b>	74,970.00	<b>Cost Sharing</b>	0.00
<b>Matching Request</b>	0.00	<b>Total Budget</b>	74,970.00
<b>Total NEH</b>	74,970.00		

### GRANT ADMINISTRATOR

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Ms. Madeleine Cutrona  
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## SUN RA FROM SATURN PROJECT NARRATIVE

Adam Kahan 7.31.20



*Sun Ra from Saturn:* A sixty-minute Documentary Film.

### A.) Nature of the Request.

We are developing a sixty-minute documentary film about the multi-talented, influential pianist and bandleader Sun Ra (né Herman Poole Blount, 1914-1993). The sophistication and range of Ra's musical talents, his charismatic yet elusive personality, his incantatory, often imperfect poetry, the encyclopedic range of his intellectual explorations and his continuing impact on jazz and related genres, makes this eccentric jazz master a fascinating, germinal figure in 20<sup>th</sup> century music. Ra was an early Afrofuturist, an indefatigable miner of past musical resources and prolific composer, leaving behind a legacy of over a thousand songs that are still, 37 years after his death, frequently performed. Dr. Alondra Nelson, one of our distinguished Humanities Advisors, asserts:

“Sun Ra reigns as one of the most impactful, creative artists and intellectuals of the last century.”

Sun Ra devoted many years of study to uncovering the origins of black culture, driven by the certainty that black artists and art had been under appreciated. His prescient curiosity about “world” musical traditions led him to incorporate multiple idioms into his repertoire, including African and Caribbean influences, which further enriched his multi-level sounds and complex arrangements. A contrarian with his own idiosyncratic vision, Ra led his 12 to 16 piece “Arkestra” for 35 years, a record of sustained performance that rivals the longevity of Duke Ellington's incomparable band. Today, in a sort of modern commercial miracle, the Arkestra is still playing for enthusiastic, even fanatic, followers, encompassing an impressively broad, worldwide demographic.

We request \$74,970 for Development of the one-hour documentary film.

### B.) Program Synopsis: Not applicable. FOR PRODUCTION FUNDING ONLY.

### C.) Humanities Content.

- Music

Few musicians spread a wider sonic net than Sun Ra. His panoply of sound explorations and connoisseurship of musical styles offer listeners reinterpretations of classical music, ragtime, New Orleans jazz, Big Band Swing, Funk, Blues, marches, chants, experimental

sound art (including squeaking doors, twanging springs, the auditory shimmerings of sheet metal), Bebop and free jazz. Over his six-decade career Ra re-worked favorites from The American Songbook and even reinterpreted Disney tunes. Our documentary will address jazz history, jazz composition, the nature of Big Band sound and harmonies, and a brief look at American popular music including the musical articulations of Fletcher Henderson's legendary band. (When still a teenager, Sun Ra was the band's house pianist and transcriber.)

- Founder of an Ideal Community (of sorts)

“Man has failed, spirituality, educationally, governmentally.”

Sun Ra

Ra loved to talk almost as much as he loved to play. In 1950s Chicago he articulated his own theories while vying with Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam disciples and Marcus Garveyites for attention in Washington Park. His handouts included these titles:

“Is the White Race Going to be Destroyed by God?”

“The Transmolecularization of Black Folk,”

“Of Cosmic Blueprints”

“Everything Started in Egypt.”

In 1960s' New York his Monday night sessions at legendary jazz club Slugs' became a pilgrimage destination for an elite core of musicians, artists, intellectuals, celebrities and hipsters. In Philadelphia, he opened a grocery store that became a vital community resource and neighborhood hang out. Sun Ra didn't simply create swinging or esoteric jazz or just plain noise. He created a universe for his band, his fans and his neighbors, The Arkestra, a literal ark for black artists who accepted Sun Ra as their mentor. In his ideal community Sun Ra rewrote assumptions about the hard-living, macho jazzman. Arkestra members pledged not drink alcohol, do drugs and, most remarkably, abstain from sexual activity in the communal home. Indeed, the men who played with Sun Ra tolerated strict discipline. One band member insisted that they practiced over 120 hours for every hour of performance. The leader also punished laziness or what he considered bad faith, even locking one musician in a closet for several hours.

- Black Culture and Legacy: Afrofuturism

Decades before the above phrase was coined, Sun Ra knew that Black Lives Mattered. He was an early pan-Africanist, frequently touring the Continent, spreading his musical interpretations while absorbing portions of African mindsets and dress, rhythms and instrumentation. He was one of the founders of what became known as Afrofuturism, the movement that celebrates the black culture that has been systemically denied by white society, challenging the negations and celebrating hard-won achievements. (The flexible, evolving term includes music, film, art, literature, scholarship and, particularly, science fiction. Think of, for instance, Marvel Comics' hugely popular Black Panther.) Two of the most articulate spokespersons for Afrofuturism are Humanities Advisors to the project: Alondra Nelson and Gregory Tate:

Nelson: “Afrofuturism . . . a term of convenience to describe analysis, criticism and cultural production that addresses the intersections between race and technology. . . .” Afrofuturism. . . served as an “incubator” for ideas related to “science fiction metaphors and technocultural production in the African diaspora,” and subsequently “expanded . . . into a freewheeling discussion of any and all aspects of contemporary black life.”

Tate: “Afrofuturism is a cultural aesthetic that combines science-fiction, history and fantasy to explore the African-American experience and aims to connect those from the black diaspora with their forgotten African ancestry.” The scholarly and popular formulations have recaptured aspects of black culture that had been lost or obscured and, just as importantly, has reimagined a more informed future.

Sun Ra was fascinated by space and space exploration. Indeed, he often insisted that he was not an earthbound being but an interplanetary original from the planet Saturn. In 1974 Sun Ra starred as the hero of *Space Is the Place*, a dramatic film directed by John Coney. Sun Ra lands on a new planet on which he wishes to re-settle African Americans. The mode of transport—Ra’s music. To assure his utopian dream and rescue the fate of the black race, Sun Ra must win at cards against a villainous rival, The Overseer. We’ll use one or two brief excerpts from *Space Is the Place* to illustrate Sun Ra’s and the film’s significant role in Afrofuturism.

- Poetry and Discourse:

We’ll also employ brief excerpts from Sun Ra’s poetry, including “I am an instrument:”

I am an instrument  
the timbre of my voice flies with the  
winds of heaven  
. . . instruments are not sufficient in  
themselves  
they are cold and lifeless without the  
tortured hands and mind  
the artist holds myself tenderly in  
his hands  
first he touches the strings of my heart  
too fine to be in tune with the universe  
then suddenly vibrant thoughts  
strikes there  
and music from the world of time  
and space is born

Like his music, Sun Ra’s writings were celebrations and jeremiads, with considerable attention to angels and demons, space travel and death. Titles included “earth is a hole in space,” “stranger from the sky” and “the sound of infinity.”

In his lecture series at the University of California, Berkeley, “The Black Man in the Cosmos,” (We have access to 20 hours of recordings), Sun Ra offered a stream of prescriptions for the planet and black society. He argued for the primacy of black culture, insisting with the early 20<sup>th</sup> century “diffusionists” that all of western civilization was rooted in Egypt and Ethiopia. He also thought the black community was often self-defeating and needed massive doses of precision and discipline, approaches which he insisted upon in everyday life and with his musicians.

D.) Creative Approach.

*Sun Ra from Saturn* will be a multileveled experience visually and aurally, driven by on-camera scholarly interviews and archival film, photographs and audio clips of Ra speaking and performing. We also introduce original animation and graphic design. Project Director Adam Kahan has already used Ra’s position as an early, prescient globalist to enlist musicians, animators and artists to provide perspectives from the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia. These collaborations will innovatively evoke the range of innovations of Sun Ra’s expressive, unpredictable music and legacy.

Throughout the sixty-minute documentary we’ll hear an ear-pleasing and also challenging history of jazz, reflected through Sun Ra’s sensibility. Humanities Scholars will inform viewers of the variety of ways in which the bandleader integrated his musical and cultural passions into the Arkestra’s performances, including the band’s sometimes exotic instruments, tonalities and colorful costuming — dashikis, togas, capes, tribal robes. To illustrate Sun Ra’s global perspective, we’ll explore how ancient Egyptian culture, mysticism, intensive biblical studies and Ra’s obsession with space travel were woven into his musical output and intellectual pursuits.

Our scholars’ lively, informed analysis will suggest Sun Ra’s unique position in the history of jazz and black culture, a contrarian talent constitutionally at war with received ideas. An impressive rigor is evident in his music, so much so that a fellow musician complimented Sun Ra by stating, “The Arkestra was never complacent.” We’ll also demonstrate why Ra was praised for “abusing” his piano, how he emphasized the “bottom sounds” of the band, including the roles of the baritone saxophone, the bass and the drums, and how he created other convention-defying tones and tunes. We’ll see footage of him working with all extant keyboards, from acoustic piano to the Moog synthesizer. Sun Ra pioneered sounds that mystified even the jazz masters: the incomparable Coleman Hawkins once confessed that Ra wrote “the only song I ever met that I couldn’t play.” Sun Ra had an immense sonic palette, playing pop tunes, Disney compositions, swing, blues, funk, bop, spirituals while he also evolved what he labeled “decentered music.” He worked tirelessly on a “space key” which was intended to escape the bounds of the earth. His obsessions with space travel and interstellar space were spurred by his despair over the human condition and, in particular, the Black American condition, his quest to outpace death itself and his hope for a new beginning for our beleaguered planet.

Briefly then, *Sun Ra from Saturn* will be an ambitious documentary —part poem, part idiosyncratic history lesson, part music video and part futuristic artwork. Animation,

graphic design and forward-thinking documentary film techniques will aid us in a search for visual equivalents for Sun Ra's challenging, truly original music and thought. Animation will especially enliven the traditional form as we focus on Sun Ra's sounds and those of his predecessors and disciples. He was rarely satisfied because he knew that the process, the search, was as important as the product. He created gorgeous, integrated sounds and also conscious cacophony, partly because, at times, he felt existence was out of control. Sonny Blount/Sun Ra was a romantic who believed that his organized sounds could induce awareness of the cosmos. Indeed, he was certain that music could provide the metaphysical catalyst through which the player and the listener enter the sublime. Our film will embody the physical and metaphysical aspects of Sun Ra's enduring quests.

#### E.) Digital Component.

The film will include multiple short animated segments or scenes, each designed to exist as a stand-alone piece of its own. These animated shorts will be posted in series, as a series on our website, social media (Facebook, Instagram) streaming platforms (YouTube, Vimeo and others) and will be submitted to animation festivals that occur both on-line and in person throughout the world. As with Kahan's previous films, we will work and even partner with academic and arts institutions to arrange screenings and make the content available to these venues, their students, clients and audiences. Please view our work sample, "*Buster Williams with Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt*" as one example of a breakout work of animation, which is excerpted from Kahan's last feature documentary, *Buster Williams Bass to Infinity*.

Each animated segment will be created by a different artist, and each of our individual artists brings not only a unique look and voice to our film, but an audience as well. Our artists span the globe, which means that *Sun Ra from Saturn* will be a truly *global* project. We believe the project promotes inclusion and true cross-pollination – across cultures, countries, demographics and audiences.

Our animated short segments will focus on a different aspect of the Sun Ra story: One features Sun Ra's exploration of keyboard instruments, including his initial obsession with the acoustical piano as well as the electric piano, electric organ, pipe organ, the Theremin and the Moog Synthesizer. Each of these instruments extended the range of his sonic explorations.

Another segment focuses entirely on Ra's poetry and will be read by Herbie Hancock, who partnered with Kahan on his film *Buster Williams Bass to Infinity*.

Other short segments will be developed as we progress.

Our team of animators is led by Matt Smithson, and includes other award-winning artists, such as Måns Swanberg, Saiman Chow and Paris' Whizz Collective. Additionally, we have contacted multiple musicians, actors, artists, and pop culturists to collaborate on these animated shorts. We have already spoken with actors (b) (4)

(b) (4) poets (b) (4) as well as artist (b) (4)

F.) Collections to be used.

With the invaluable assistance of Sun Ra's estate, we've been given access to his prodigious output (please see letter of commitment from Irwin Chusid, Executor of the estate, confirming such). This comprises enough material for a half-dozen films on our subject. Below is a small sampling:

Books:

*Space Is the Place, 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*, John F. Szwed

*Sun Ra: Interviews and Essays*, John Sinclair

*The Execution of Sun Ra*, Thomas Stanley

*This Planet is Doomed*, the science-fiction poetry of Sun Ra (2011)

Video/Audio (and written) archive:

- Sun Ra's lecture and reading list from his 1971 UC Berkeley course "The Black Man in the Cosmos." This includes comprehensive written lectures and material, as well as literally hundreds of hours of recorded audio of Sun Ra speaking.
- Sun Ra interview and performance, Helsinki 1971.
- *Space is the Place*, 1974. Directed by John Coney. The 85-minute film drama stars Sun Ra.
- Sun Ra and the Arkestra Montreux Jazz festival performance 1976.
- *Detroit Black Journal* videotaped interview with Sun Ra 1981.
- Sun Ra interview and performance with David Sanborn on Night Music 1989.

Select Discography:

- Super-sonic Jazz, 1953, El Saturn Records
- Jazz in Silhouette, 1959, El Saturn Records
- Angels and Demons at Play, 1965 El Saturn Records
- Sun Ra Visits Planet Earth, 1966, El Saturn Records
- The Nubians of Plutonia, 1966, El Saturn Records
- We Travel the Spaceways, 1967, El Saturn Records
- Strange Strings, 1967, El Saturn Records
- Atlantis, 1969, El Saturn Records
- My Brother the Wind, 1970, El Saturn Records
- Lanquidity, 1978, Philly Jazz
- Omniverse, 1979, El Saturn Records
- Strange Celestial Road, 1979, Rounder
- Somewhere Else, 1988, Rounder
- Mayan Temples, 1990, Black Saint

In John F. Szwed's biography, *Space Is the Place, The Lives and Times of Sun Ra*, (Da Capo Press, 1998), Robert L. Campbell's Discography lists over 1000 original compositions and 200 recordings of Sun Ra's work. We have selected a number of Sun Ra's most characteristic and most evocative recordings. As per above, we will use excerpts from footage of Sun Ra and Arkestra in performance.

G.) Rights and Permissions.

We are working directly with the family and estate of Sun Ra. Essential to our collaboration is Irwin Chusid, executor of the estate. Kahan is in frequent contact with Chusid. (His letter is included in the proposal.) Our engagement with the estate includes the participation of Ra's only living relative, his nephew Thomas Jenkins. We are working closely with Ra's musical heirs and living links to his work, current and former members of the Arkestra. Most notably, the band's leader, 95-year-old saxophonist Marshall Allen, is committed to the project. We will film an interview with Allen and several of the musicians very soon.

All licensing of music, video, photographs and writings owned by the Sun Ra estate will be gifted to us. Other related music and archival material will be licensed by customary means, and we budget for such. Prudence Arndt will be in charge of archival research. Through our previous projects on musicians and artists, Kahan has working relationships with major archive providers, music publishers and clearance individuals and companies.

H.) Humanities Advisors.

We have had preliminary conversations with our scholars— Bill Adler, John Corbett, Professor Alondra Nelson, Thomas Stanley, John F. Szwed, Greg Tate, Gary Giddins and Paul Youngquist.

Brief biographies of our Humanities Advisors follow:

**Bill Adler**

Writer, historian and record producer, Adler's extensive, irreplaceable archive on popular culture, jazz and hip hop is now housed in the Cornell University Library, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

**John Corbett** Art Institute of Chicago.

Writer, musician, radio host, teacher, record producer and gallery owner, Corbett has written on a range of musical and cultural issues, including *Extended Play: Sounding Off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein* (Duke University Press, 1994) and *Forays into Other Music* (Duke University Press, 2015).

**Gary Giddins**

One of music's premiere critics and a National Book Critics Circle Award winner, Gary Giddins co-founded the American Jazz Orchestra with pianist John Lewis of the Modern Jazz Quartet. For five years Giddins was Executive Director of the Leon Levy Center for Jazz at CUNY. Among his many books are *Riding on a Blue Note* (Da Capo Press, 1981), *Celebrating Bird: The Triumph of Charlie Parker* (University of Minnesota, 1987), *Jazz* (W.W. Norton, 2009) and *Bing Crosby: Swinging on a Star—The War Years, 1940-'46* (Little, Brown, 2018).



**Alondra Nelson** President of the Social Science Research Council and Harold F. Linder Chair in Social Science at Princeton University's Institute for Advanced Study.

An internationally known scholar, Professor Nelson's books include *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (2011) and *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation after the Genome* (2016). She is currently working on a book about science politics in the Obama administration.

**Thomas Stanley** George Mason University.

An ethnomusicologist, Stanley has written extensively about Afrofuturism as an organizational stratagem. His latest book *The Execution of Sun Ra* (Wasteland Press, 2019) is widely regarded as an important new companion piece to John Szwed's biography. With David Mills, Stanley co-authored *George Clinton and P-Funk: An Oral History* (Avon paperback, 1998).

**John F. Szwed**

Szwed has written the definitive and acclaimed biography of Sun Ra - *Space Is the Place, The Lives and Times of Sun Ra* (Da Capo Press, 1998). He is an invaluable resource for commentary on Sun Ra, the recognized go-to scholar on our subject. Szwed is one of the world's most accomplished writers about contemporary culture and music.

**Greg Tate**

Musician and writer, Tate's 1986 essay "Cult-Nats Meet Freaky Deke" for the *Voice Literary Supplement*, is regarded as a milestone in black cultural criticism. In 1999, Tate established "Burnt Sugar", an improvisational ensemble that varies in size from 13 and 35 musicians. In 2004 Tate described the band as "a band I wanted to hear but could not find." He has been the Louis Armstrong Visiting Professor at Columbia University's Center for Jazz Studies. In 2010, Tate was awarded a United States Artists Fellowship.

**Paul Youngquist** University of Colorado at Boulder.

Professor Youngquist's books include *Cyberfiction: After the Future* (Palgrave Macmillan 2010), *Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism* (University of Minnesota, 2003), and *Madness and Blake's Myth* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990/2010). His volume on Sun Ra, *A Pure Solar World* (University of Texas Press), is yet another of the most acclaimed books about Sun Ra's oeuvre.

I.) Media Team.

Our media team brings the experience, quality, and an intimate familiarity with the filmmaking process — from production through distribution — necessary for the documentary to reach a national and international audience.

**Adam Kahan** Producer/Director, Project Director.

Director/Producer and musician Adam Kahan has been celebrating, studying, playing and proliferating Jazz music for over two decades. He has produced and directed multiple documentaries of artists and musicians. On film he has profiled visual artists Andres Serrano, Fred Tomaselli and Urs Fischer. His 2016 documentary *The Case of the Three-*

*Sided Dream*, on multi-instrumentalist Rahsaan Roland Kirk, won three “Best Documentary awards (Pan African Film Festival, L.A., Soundtrack Cologne, Germany, and Tucson Filmfest, AZ.) His latest film, *Buster Williams Bass to Infinity*, which focuses on bass player, composer, Buddhist and citizen of planet earth Buster Williams, was called “one of the finest music documentary we have seen” by The London Jazz News. In his ongoing film documentation, Kahan has created content that includes interviews, history and music from many jazz immortals, including Herbie Hancock, Benny Golson, Sarah Vaughan, Nancy Wilson and Charles Mingus.

Kahan serves currently as Director of post-production for AMC Networks across their five brands—AMC, IFC, WETV, Sundance TV and BBC America, and is also a working musician who composes and plays regularly both in New York and abroad.

He has attended dozens of performances of Sun Ra’s Arkestra, both with Sonny as leader and after his death.

**Kali Holloway** Senior Producer.

Kali Holloway is Senior Director of the Make It Right Project, a national initiative dedicated to removing Confederate monuments and rebalancing U.S. history. A frequent contributor to *The Daily Beast*, Holloway writes a monthly column for *The Nation*. She has written for *The Guardian*, *Salon*, *TIME*, *Huffington Post*. She co-curated the New York City Metropolitan Museum of Art’s 2017 summer performance and film series “Theater of the Resist.” She was the outreach director on the PBS’ documentary *The New Public*; Director of Outreach and Audience Engagement for the HBO documentary *Southern Rites* and the Emmy-nominated film *Brooklyn Castle*; and Outreach Consultant on the award-winning documentary *The New Black*. Currently Holloway is producing *Sunset and the Mockingbird* about jazz pianist Junior Mance. She was the speechwriter for a New York City Commissioner and Deputy Director of Communications for the New York State court system.

**Robert Seidman** Writer/Producer.

Robert Seidman is an accomplished novelist and screenwriter. His novel, *Moments Captured* (Overlook Press, 2012), was named as one of the six best books of the year by “Metro.” Robert wrote *One Smart Indian*, published by G.P. Putnam and Sons in 1977 and by Overlook Press in paper, 1979. With Don Gifford, Robert Seidman is co-author of *Ulysses Annotated: An Annotation of James Joyce’s Ulysses* (University of California Press, 2nd Revised Edition, 1988.) Robert’s film credits include *Billy Strayhorn: Lush Life*, a 90-minute documentary about the composer and arranger that aired nationally on public television in 2007. *Lush Life* won the Writers’ Guild Award for Best Documentary Script, a George Foster Peabody Award, and an Emmy for Best Documentary. Robert co-wrote the Academy Award short-listed and Emmy-nominated documentary film *A Life Apart: Hasidism in America*. He wrote *In Our Time*, the final show in the television series *Art in the Western World* and *Wallace Stevens: Man Made Out of Words*. He served as Creative Consultant to *Riding the Rails: Teenage Hobos in the Great Depression*, nominated for an Academy Award. Robert also has scripted feature-length documentaries on Margaret Mead, Samuel Beckett and Gordon Parks. Each of those

films received major funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. His most recent film, *Joseph Pulitzer: Voice of the People*, was one of six films nominated as Best Documentary Script by the Writers Guild of America East in 2019.

**Jen Fineran** Editor.

Editor Jen Fineran has two “Outstanding Editing” Emmy nominations: *AI WEIWEI: NEVER SORRY* (IFC Films) and *TAKE YOUR PILLS* (Netflix). Jen’s recent work includes *MADE IN BOISE* (directed by Beth Aala and produced by Beth Levison) which aired in 2019 on PBS’ Independent Lens; Jon Schienberg’s *COLOSSUS* (First Run Features), a rare look into the aftermath of deportation and separation; *THE BRINK* (as story consultant, Magnolia Pictures), Alison Klayman’s fly-on-the-wall documentary exposing Steve Bannon’s efforts to mobilize and unify far-right parties; and Adam Kahan’s *BUSTER WILLIAMS BASS TO INFINITY*.

Jen established Gypsy Camp Studios Inc. in 2005 just as technology was making a virtual edit studio possible. Her work can be seen on streaming services, on TV, in theaters and at film festivals such as Sundance, SXSW, HotDocs and Berlin International Film Festival. Jen’s first film job was assistant editing on Ruth Leitman’s southern gothic documentary *ALMA*. Since then Jen has edited a slew of documentaries including Emily Kassie’s Academy Award-winning *I MARRIED MY FAMILY’S KILLER*, about love and intermarriage in post-genocide Rwanda.

**Matt Smithson** Lead Animator/Graphic Designer.

Matt Smithson is a Director, Animator, Designer and Artist. From 2006-2017, he worked under the name Man vs. Magnet, during which time he served varied clients – commercial, non-profit, cultural, and those with social justice missions. Some of those clients include – IBM, Showtime, Samsung, MTV, The Girl Effect, UNESCO and the Ford Foundation. From humorous, craftily cut animations, to uplifting films, Matt creates with a unique style that attracts global clients. He was recognized in 2009 with a ‘Young Gun’ award from Director’s Art Club, and his work was displayed at the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York as part of the “Why Design Now?” Triennial Exhibition. Matt will lead our film’s graphic design (motion, print, web and social), be our chief animator, and provide creative direction for both the film and a team of designers with whom we will be collaborating.

**Prudence Arndt** Archival Producer.

Prudence Arndt has worked on dozens of documentaries as an archival producer over the last 25 years. She has developed an intimate knowledge of the resources available for locating historic material, and she has established relationships with key archives throughout the world. Recent work includes a film about Alice Walker for *American Masters*, HBO’s *I Knew It Was You* about John Cazale, and the proposal for *Rediscovering Kate Carew, 1890-1901*. Carew was a pioneering female cartoonist and interviewer for *The World* during its heyday under Joseph Pulitzer. Prudence worked for Spike Lee on *Major League Baseball and Civil Rights*, with Eugene Jarecki on *Why We Fight*, and with Chris Bell on *Bigger, Stronger, Faster*. Prudence has taught in the graduate film program at Hofstra University and at the Columbia University School of Journalism.

J.) Progress

[Director's statement:]

I have been preparing for this project for the last thirty years, ever since I first bought a Rahsaan Roland Kirk record at a garage sale in San Francisco. That record, *The Inflated Tear*, was my entry into the world of jazz and, subsequently, Rahsaan Roland Kirk was my entry into the world of directing and producing films about jazz. Rahsaan was the subject of *The Case of the Three-Sided Dream*, my first music documentary. Since then, I've made multiple films on music and jazz, each a response to the prior film. Each documentary has reflected changes in the filmmaking craft, the music, and my own skills and perspective. With each of these films representing a sort of evolution, *Sun Ra from Saturn* is the natural and necessary synthesis of my body of work to date.

I first attended a concert by Sun Ra and his Arkestra thirty years ago, and I have seen/heard the group multiple times, including the Arkestra's recent concert in New York City, led by 95-year-old Marshall Allen, and accompanied by our writer/producer Robert Seidman.

Since we're in pre-production and applying for Development funding, the bulk of our work to date has been engagement with the jazz community, and more specifically – the community that orbits Sun Ra. We've been strategizing, writing, and speaking with our Humanities Advisors as well as others who will contribute to the project. We have created a 'paper' version of our film. This is what we've accomplished to date. The actual making, the creating, lies ahead of us. Your funding will help us continue and expand our engagement with the incomparable, sui generis works of Sun Ra.

K.) Distribution plan and audiences.

Our audience consists of persons interested in music, jazz, history, American history and culture, Black history and culture, Bible studies and space travel.

Our marketing and distribution will be through traditional, electronic and emerging means. Programming will include film festivals, limited theatrical, educational and television broadcast – on PBS, possibly (b) (4)

Through media partners with whom we've previously worked, such as DL Media, and writers and journalists such as Nate Chinen, we anticipate press in publications, (both physical and online) including but not limited to *The New Yorker*, *Downbeat*, *Rolling Stone* and others.

Electronic and/or emerging avenues for marketing and programming will also be used – including streaming/web and social media.

We have many past, and potential future, academic and cultural partners with whom we will engage. Those with whom we already have a track record include – The Schomburg

Center for Research in Black Culture (see Letter of Commitment from Kevin Young, Director of the Schomburg Center), Jazz at Lincoln Center, The National Jazz Museum in Harlem, San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center, The Houston Museum of Contemporary Art, The Lycée Français, New York Public Libraries, The New School, Rutgers University, and many others.

Potential partners (Distributors, Sales Agents, Film companies, supporters of independent production), all of whom we've contacted, some of whom we have already worked with, include: (b) (4)

*The Case of the Three-Sided Dream* will serve as a template for our current production. We will use and expand upon these entities—

- World Premiere at SXSW film festival, one of the largest and most respected film festivals in the world.
- Multiple other festivals across the globe – IDFA (Amsterdam), Soundtrack Cologne (where we won Best Documentary), Pan African Film Festival LA (also won Best Documentary), Filmfest Tucson (also won Best Documentary), New Orleans, Salem, Carmel, Big Sky in Montana, Full Frame in Durham, N.C., Melbourne, Raindance in London, and on.
- Reviews in major national and international publications
- Limited theatrical release – 'Arthouse' cinemas across the country, such as Alamo Drafthouse in multiple national locations, Upstate Films in Rhinebeck, NY, Tinker Street Films in Woodstock, NY, and many others.
- Programming in schools, cultural institutions and museums, (including Q&A with the director) at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Lycée Français, Houston Museum of Contemporary Art, Yerba Buena Center San Francisco, and multiple branches of the NYPL).
- Streaming worldwide on multiple services.

We anticipate a wide, enthusiastic audience and global distribution for *Sun Ra from Saturn*. This is the product of the director Adam Kahan's growing reputation, built up over the last twenty years, as an engaged creator of compelling content on what some argue is America's greatest cultural contribution to the world - Jazz.

L.) Project evaluation: For Production only.

M.) Fundraising Plan—

We will return to funding resources with whom we have relationships and/or previously been successful:

- NYSCA (funded *The Case of the Three-Sided Dream*).
- Catapult Film Fund (funded *Sunset and the Mockingbird*, Adam Kahan co-director and co-recipient of grant).
- Kickstarter (three previous successful campaigns/films funded).
- Rooftop Films (have previously partnered on programming, fundraising and resources).

- Creative Capital
- NYFA
- Private investors (have sustained multiple previous films).
- Cultural institutions and nonprofits who support Jazz, including but not limited to: JALC, The Schomburg Center, Jazz Foundation of America, National Jazz Museum in Harlem.
- We will also receive in-kind support from the estate of Sun Ra.

We intend to submit a request for production funds to the NEH in one of the next two fundraising cycles.

N.) Work Plan (See Attachment 4 for a month-by-month schedule)

During the six-month development phase, the production team will create a Proposal and full production Budget for (b) (4)

This will involve completion of the full 60-minute documentary script, a detailed plan, architecture and creation of the project's website, ongoing consultation with Humanities Advisors and related outreach activities with the multiple communities that this project touches —music, jazz, arts, African American, Chicago's avant-garde jazz community, New York City's East Village, and the neighborhood of the 'Sun Ra home' in Philadelphia.

Our goals during the development period are: to conduct preliminary interviews with key scholars, musicians, Arkestra members and journalists; to probe further into the extensive if not exhaustive Sun Ra archives (music, film, written, physical and online, worldwide) for research with primary source materials. We will create a short trailer for use in fundraising; and, with this, we hope to find institutional partners, including a key partner such as WNET or WGBH or another PBS affiliate along with a major jazz venue, including Jazz at Lincoln Center. These institutions will serve as a partner or co-sponsor for our documentary.

O.) Organization Profile:

[NYFA to complete online]


The New York Foundation for the Arts was created in conjunction with the New York State Council on the Arts in 1971. The non-profit organization interprets its mission as empowering artists at critical stages in their creative lives. NYFA supports artists not only in New York City but nationwide. Its programs include cash grants, entrepreneurial training, on line resources for professional opportunities, and fiscal sponsorship. NYFA has supported a diverse roster of artists including fifteen MacArthur Genius Awards, eight Pulitzer Prizes, five Tonys, four Oscars, two National Book Awards as well as a poet Laureate.

P.) Social media and audience-generated content.

We will generate content for social media, but we are not seeking audience-generated content. Audiences can of course interact with our social media posts, as they normally would in any social media setting, and our social media sites will be administered by



Kahan, who will monitor posts and address any issues should they arise. The Sun Ra community is generally a positive force who seek to celebrate and proliferate Sun Ra's legacy. We do not foresee any negative issues with hate-speech or the like. We are also in close contact with social media managers for living jazz musicians and, should the need arise, we will involve such an individual. Our likely choice will be (b) (4)



## **SUN RA FROM SATURN TREATMENT**

Adam Kahan 7.27.20

Our film's principal language is music. Music will buoy and underline a great deal of the film experience. The soundtrack will display Sun Ra's varied original compositions and re-imaginings of earlier work while presenting a selective history of jazz and the bandleader's sui generis musical and existential quests. Sun Ra also had multiple other identities: flamboyant individualist, eclectic lecturer, space traveler, Egyptologist, a founder of Afrofuturism. We'll explore these personae to suggest the creative range of a truly sui generis artist.

Sun Ra (ne Sonny Blount 1914-1993) was a prodigy, sight-reading music at six. At ten, he boldly frequented a white-owned music store, copying Big Band arrangements and transposing the keys for multiple instruments. Born in Birmingham, Alabama, he experienced the rebuffs of institutional segregation, including being ordered to stand at the local library's back door while a black aide delivered the requested book. From birth a contrarian, Sonny began his contentious relationship to the Christian religion and other orthodoxies early, skirmishes that continued throughout his life.

Using photographs of Sun Ra and archival footage of segregated early 20<sup>th</sup> century Birmingham, we'll hear: He was a studious, inwardly directed child, and also colossally ambitious, aspiring to be "the one pure-hearted person on this planet, with no ulterior motives, pure of heart." [We believe that desire never deserted him.] He read widely, kept a detailed diary and delighted in intellectual challenges. He cultivated eccentricity, often strolling the Birmingham streets in a sheet and sandals like a latter-day Socrates. Medical records indicate he had one undescended testicle, which led to a serious hernia problem and even a threat of medical castration. Our scholars believe he was celibate. At one point he told an interviewer, "I have never been able to think of sex as part of my life." Years later this played out in an extraordinary innovation when he put together his Big Band, The Arkestra. [see below Sun Ra's strict policies about his band members' relationship to alcohol, drugs and sex.]

Archival film footage of the elegant pencil-mustachioed Fletcher Henderson and his band as narration continues: Still a teenager, Sonny Blount became the great Fletcher Henderson's rehearsal piano player and sometime arranger. Original animation fills the screen as we listen to a 1940s recording of the Henderson original, "Yeah Man," a tune that, as we'll hear, Sun Ra recorded numerous times with different groups. [We'll also revisit Sun Ra's "Interplanetary Music" in order to suggest how, in a talented composer's mind, a musical setting provides almost unlimited opportunities for reinterpretation].

Drafted in 1941 Sonny Blount reacted characteristically: he requested Conscientious Objector status, which led first to imprisonment then to a work camp in Pennsylvania. During the ordeal he addressed protest letters to the U.S. Army, President Roosevelt and the FBI, bluntly articulating his pacifist beliefs. As a Christian, he opposed fighting and killing of any kind. He also vehemently rejected the assumption that black men could be



used for cannon fodder. Finally granted Four-E status, he joined the ranks of a small number of African-American pacifists, including A. Philip Randolph, Jean Toomer, Bayard Rustin and 200 members of the Nation of Islam.

In 1946 the forty-two year old Sonny moved to Chicago, where he rejoined Fletcher Henderson's Big Band at the hugely popular nightclub, The Club De Lisa, which had its own basement casino, a hydraulically controlled dance floor and seated 1000 people. Animation, photos and possibly footage of the De Lisa as narration evokes a 1940's evening's entertainment. We see the elaborate staging and formally dressed white folks dancing to Henderson's liquid rhythms. In the North, too, there were calculated insults to black people: at the De Lisa when the white female dancers moved on stage, a curtain was lowered so that the black musicians could not watch their routines.

For five years Sonny's musical education continued with "The Father of Swing," from whom, among many lessons, he learned "how to attack notes." We'll hear such "attacks." Introduce footage and sounds of jazz master Coleman Hawkins trying to play a Sonny Blount original. "The Hawk" complimented Sonny by saying: "He's the only person who wrote a song I couldn't play." This was not a matter of one-upmanship, but rather evidence of Sonny Blount's demanding tonal explorations and his obsession with pushing the sonic envelope, characteristics that became even more pronounced once he recruited his big band "instrument."

We'll use headlines and photographs from a leading black newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, to suggest the World War II era's political and social discourse. Chicago was a hotbed of radical black thought. Montage of the contending ideas including open air preaching and debates in Washington Park among the Garvey-ites, Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam, Communists, Socialists and Trade Unionists, all of whom contend how best to assure the future well-being of the black community. We see the titles of Blount's pamphlets:

"Is the White Race Going to Be Destroyed by God?"

"Everything Started in Egypt"

"Black People are Myths"

We'll introduce Sonny's arms' length involvement in the Civil Rights movement as well as his conflicts with Black Power advocates, whom he dismissed as politically naïve. His analysis:

"Man has failed, spirituality, educationally, governmentally."

As he pledged as a youngster, through his music and his thought, Sonny Blount, aka Sun Ra, would continue to work conscientiously to help rectify the human condition.

The Arkestra:

His apprenticeship served, he was ready to develop and deploy the band as both “his personal instrument and the testing ground for his experimental impulses.” The 14-piece group was to be an “ark,” reflecting its leader’s bible studies and hope for a redemptive experience not only for himself but for his band members as well. “His people,” as he called them, needed discipline and precision through the study of science and math, languages and certain significant books. The Arkestra leader quipped that in choosing musicians he was “picking out some people in the Selective Service of God.” He declared:

“Being black, you don’t get no jobs unless you’re a freak or something.”

Elaborate, colorful outfits reflected his playfulness and showmanship, but the costuming also reflected Sonny’s fierce pride in being black. The band’s exuberant, eclectic garb could unveil black culture’s roots in African tribal dress or improvised space suits could reflect cosmic exploration. The Arkestra’s performances could begin in darkness then, as the lights came up, the band would dance or twirl or bunny-hop with their instruments in tow. The music could be exotic, down-home, hip, archaic, familiar, eccentric, or freaky, sounds that came at the audience in overlapping waves. Almost as important as the music was Sun Ra’s commitment to forging his own somewhat utopian black community.

Sun Ra loved to talk, his subjects involved a staggering range of subjects. He peppered his talks with conundrums, jokes, puns, anagrams. He wrote declamatory poetry that was often incorporated into performances, poetry praised by Amiri Baraka and denigrated by jazz critic Nat Hentoff. (We’ll hear portions of at least two poems, including “not for earth alone” and “I am instrument.” Poems will be accompanied by original animation created by our artists/animators.) Ra lectured worldwide at multiple universities, including over 20 hours of recorded lectures at U.C. Berkeley. We’ll excerpt some of Ra’s comments on etymology, astronomy, numerology, biblical exegesis. He insisted that Egypt created the world’s first civilization to further underpin black contributions to world culture. The Bible needed a new translation to emphasize its living relevance to black life.

Space was another obsessive and timely interest, another effort to reconfigure himself so as to escape the confines of life on earth. When in 1968 the U.S. space program reached the moon, the Arkestra leader applauded.

“He kept the Sixties going for over three decades!”

To his musicians Sun Ra was father figure and, often, a stern taskmaster. Instead of succumbing to the stereotypes of black male behavior, particularly among jazz musicians, Ra invented an alternative—a musical family whose members didn’t drink, take drugs and, at least in the band’s communal homes, deemphasized sex. Amazingly given the nature of the injunctions, the discipline largely worked. The Arkestra became perhaps the world’s only clean-living jazz band, its 12 or 14 members living and playing together for four decades, surviving shoe string budgets and jarring relocations from

Chicago to New York City to Philadelphia.

New York City:

Sun Ra became a fixture in the anarchic East Village cultural experiment, a melting pot of Hell Angels, Orthodox Jews, Puerto Ricans, Ukrainians and many other ethnicities. In the 1960s in New York City the Arkestra's experimental impulses and theatrical flair meshed well with the countercultural phenomenon like "Happenings." Ra's band landed a weekly Monday night gig at Slugs', the venturesome East Village club that was home to many of the era's theatrical and sonic avant-garde experiments. [Archival footage and animation will suggest something of the range of East Village cultural experimentation.] Monday provided the weekly break for most jazz clubs, so musicians would often stop by to catch Ra and his Arkestra. A few of the most prominent of "jazz royalty" were regulars at Slugs', including John Coltrane, Thelonius Monk, Charles Mingus and Barry Harris. Coltrane, who had started as a Be-bop saxophonist, began to explore mysticism and avant-garde music in part because of Sun Ra's example. And young Pharoah Sanders first played saxophone with the Arkestra, before being lured away by Coltrane to become a fixture in his new mystical exploration of the music. A leading patron of jazz, the Baroness Nica De Konigswater, once commented that Ra's music was "too far out." Monk replied, "Yeah, but it swings." The aural ferment on Monday night helped many jazz players expand the musical vocabulary.

In 1968 Philadelphia became the final home of The Arkestra. The band was so committed to the neighborhood that members set up a grocery store as a convenience for themselves and the local community. The original house, 5626 Morton Street in Germantown, is an acknowledged jazz shrine and still houses Marshall Allen who, at 95, leads the band. In the near future we'll film an interview with Marshall Allen in the communal home.

Sun Ra and his band had established themselves as a leading musical ensemble, too far out for some but attracting a huge coterie of enthusiastic followers that invited Ra for performances and lectures around the globe. By the 1980s Sun Ra was a world citizen, and the visuals in our film—archival footage, film, television broadcasts, photos, animation and graphics— will mirror the perspectives of artists of several of the nations where the Arkestra performed.

We'll investigate Sun Ra's impact on musicians of his era and beyond. We'll listen/see the work of Olatunji, Yusef Lateef and, briefly again, John Coltrane. In his lifetime Sun Ra composed over 1000 tunes. Perhaps most remarkably, since Sun Ra's 1993 death the Arkestra has continued to thrive, and tour the world over. In March 2020 at New York City's Town Hall director Adam Kahan and writer Robert Seidman attended their most recent, but by no means last performance. The latest incarnation of the Arkestra is led by Marshall Allen, an original band member who, along with the many other decades-long tenured members, is very much the keeper of the torch.

When asked by an interviewer about his work, Sun Ra replied:

“I use music as a medium to talk to people. . . If you can listen, then you might get some understanding. . . Some think it is jazz, but that is just a disguise. My music builds myth, and bridges across the infinite universe.”

Today Sun Ra’s living legacy, The Arkestra, continues to attract yet another generation of fans, followers, scholars and musicians interested in celebrating the music, history and culture of black America and, specifically, the genre known as jazz. Sun Ra’s impact on the universe of music and ideas has, twenty-seven years after his death, not diminished. In fact, his presence is as vital and prescient in 2020 as it was throughout his unique, productive career.

## SUN RA FROM SATURN

### DESCRIPTION OF WORK SAMPLES

Adam Kahan 7.27.20

Work Sample 1.

***The Case of the Three-Sided Dream*** full film (completed work).

*The Case of the Three-Sided Dream* is project Director Adam Kahan's 87 minute feature documentary on multi-instrumentalist Rahsaan Roland Kirk. *Dream* had its world premiere at the SXSW film festival in 2014 and was commercially released worldwide in 2016. The film won three Best Documentary awards and made multiple Top Ten Music Documentary lists. It continues to play worldwide - streaming, in theatres, educational and cultural institutions. *Dream* is often referred to in this application.

Link: (b) (4)

Password: (b) (4)

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Work Sample 2.

**Buster Williams with Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt** - animated excerpt from the feature documentary, *Buster Williams Bass to Infinity*.

An excerpt from project Director Adam Kahan's newly finished film (commercial release planned for 2021). This (the second part of a three-part animated story within the feature) is Buster's introduction to life on the road with legendary jazz musicians, Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt. Buster was 18, right out of high school, and received a thorough, and thoroughly unconventional, education. The animation is by the talented Matt Smithson who will lead our animation and design team for *Sun Ra from Saturn* (see Matt's CV and commitment letter). This also serves as an example of our project's use of animation as both an integrated passage in our documentary and as a breakout piece which can play on its own. This particular excerpt was highlighted as a "Staff Pick" on Vimeo.

Link: <https://vimeo.com/238956868>

Password: (none, this link is public)

## **SUN RA FROM SATURN WORK PLAN**

Adam Kahan 7.31.20

### Start, May 2021:

Producer/Director Adam Kahan and Writer/Producer Robert Seidman will work with Humanities Advisors on refining our approach. We will conduct preliminary interviews in order to narrow down the very rich field of ready, willing and qualified candidates interested in this project. We will select as on-camera presences those who best articulate Sun Ra's complex story: who speak comprehensively about jazz history, Ra's encyclopedic recall of past compositions, the musician's aural sophistication and impressive combinatory powers. We'll also explore Sun Ra's interest in the dynamics of performance as well as his intellectual range. We will create a rough production schedule and start the work of securing crew for filming.

### June/July:

We will continue our preliminary interviews with key scholars, Arkestra members, and a range of other musicians, jazz historians and scholars. All interviews will be transcribed. These interviews will help us finalize the film's major themes and the content of the website. We'll visit sites in Birmingham, Chicago, New York and Philadelphia where Sun Ra played and resided. In addition to interviews, we will conduct outreach with Arkestra members and the Philadelphia neighborhood where Arkestrans have resided for the past half-century. Among the Arkestra members with whom we are partnering is the 95-year-old Marshall Allen, the last remaining original member.

### August/September:

Director Kahan will work closely with artist Matt Smithson, our lead animator, in order to determine look/style/feel of our animated segments. Smithson will provide style frames and motion tests for review and approval. We will start editing the trailer. We will also re-work our NEH proposal and film script. Drafts will be sent out for intensive review by our scholars. We will refine and finalize our comprehensive website plan and outreach proposal. We will continue approaching and engaging institutions, including universities, colleges and high schools, and other potential partners.

### October:

We will finalize our trailer. Writer Seidman will continue to revise the treatment/script for the sixty-minute film, consulting with Kahan, Szwed, Adler, Nelson, Tate, Corbett and other scholars. In mid- to late-June Seidman/Kahan will submit final version of the script to our scholars for review. We will launch our website, and draw up a further detailed production budget. We will secure our editor and other production and post-production crew for our film. These elements will be submitted as part of the proposal for Production funding to the NEH.

## SUN RA FROM SATURN BIBLIOGRAPHY/DISCOGRAPHY

Adam Kahan 7.31.20

### Biographies:

John F. Szwed, *Space Is the Place* (Pantheon, First Edition, 1997). There is also a DaCapo Press edition.

Graham Lock, *Bluetopia, Visions of the Future and Revisions of the Past in the Work of Sun Ra, Duke Ellington and Anthony Braxton* (Duke University, 2000).

John Corbett, Anthony Elms, Terri Kapsalis, *Traveling the Spaceways: Sun Ra, the Astro Black and other Solar Myths* (University of Chicago, 2010).

Thomas Stanley, *The Execution of Sun Ra* (Wasteland Press, 2014).

Paul Youngquist, *A Pure Solar World: Sun Ra and the Birth of Afro-futurism* (University of Texas, 2016).

### Books on Sun Ra's Poetry and Prose (Selective):

John Corbett, *The Wisdom of Sun Ra: Sun Ra's Polemical Broadsheets and Streetcorner Leaflets*.

John Corbett, *This Planet is Doomed: The Science fiction Poetry of Sun Ra*;

Brent Hayes Edwards, *Epistrophies: Jazz and the Literary Imagination*

John Sinclair, *Sun Ra: Interviews and Essays*

John Sinclair, *Sun Ra's Prophetica*

James L. Wolf and Hartmut Geerken, *Sun Ra: The Immeasurable Equations*

### On Ra's artwork:

John Corbett, Anthony Elms, Terri Kapsalis, *Pathways to Unknown Worlds: El Saturn and Chicago's Afro-Futurist Underground, 1956- '68*

John Corbett, *Sun Ra & Ave Aton: Space, Interiors and Exteriors*

A book on his film, *Space Is the Place*, 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Discography: Robert L. Campbell supplies 22 pages of discography (pp. 427-44). The selective list includes over 1000 recordings. The film was produced in 1972, released in 1974.

Discography: Robert L. Campbell and Christopher Trent, *The Earthly Recordings of Sun Ra*

Children's book: Chris Raschka, *The Cosmo Biography of Sun Ra*

Discography: In John F. Szwed's biography of *Sun Ra, Space Is the Place*, Robert L. Campbell supplies 22 pages of discography (pp. 427-44). The selective list includes over 1000 recordings.

**SUN RA FROM SATURN  
BIOS, RESUMES AND LETTERS OF COMMITMENT**

Adam Kahan 7.31.20

Humanities Advisors:

(Full resumes and letters of commitment follow.)

**Bill Adler** - Writer, historian and record producer. His collections are housed in the Cornell University Library, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

**John Corbett** - Writer, musician, radio host, teacher, record producer and gallery owner. Art Institute of Chicago. Works published by Duke University Press.

**Gary Giddins** – Writer, journalist, historian. Works published by Da Capo Press, University of Minnesota, Norton, Little Brown, The New York Times.

Professor **Alondra Nelson** – Scholar, writer. President of the Social Science Research Council and Harold F. Linder Chair in Social Science at Princeton University's Institute for Advanced Study.

**Thomas Stanley** – Ethnomusicologist, writer. George Mason University.

**John F. Szwed** – Anthropologist, writer, musician. Works published by Da Capo Press, The Village Voice, The Washington Post.

**Greg Tate** - Musician, writer. Works published by The New York Times, The Washington Post, Artforum, Rolling Stone, VIBE.

**Paul Youngquist** – Professor of English, writer. University of Colorado at Boulder. Works published by Palgrave Macmillan, University of Minnesota, Pennsylvania State University Press, University of Texas Press.

Other partners:

**Irwin Chusid** – Executor, Estate of Sun Ra.

**Kevin Young** – Director, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.



# BILL ADLER

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## FILM

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### Writer/Producer

*VH1* | 2004

"And You Don't Stop: 30 Years of Hip-Hop,"  
(Five-part documentary series)

### Producer/Host

2017

"Too Old to Die Young: Ice-T" (Short)

### Producer/Host

2017

"Too Old to Die Young: Russell Simmons" (Short)

### Talking Head

c. 2000-2019

• I was interviewed on camera in more than 30  
music documentaries

## RADIO

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### Host of Jazz & Free-Form Programs

*WCBN, Ann Arbor* | 1971-1976

### Substitute Host, "Kaleidophone" Jazz Program

*WDET, Detroit* | 1973-1976

### Fill-In DeeJay

*WABX, Detroit* | 1975

### Fill-In DeeJay

*WBCN, Boston* | Spring 1975

### Producer & Host

*WBCN, Boston* | June-December 1979

"The Adler Report"

(Series devoted to profiles of musicians)

• Subjects included B.B. King, Bootsy Collins,  
Paul Kantner, Jimi Hendrix, disco music, & Mitch Ryder

## JOURNALISM/CRITICISM

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### Contributing Music Editor

*Ann Arbor Sun* | 1973-1976

### Freelance Writer: reviews

*down beat* and *High Times* | 1975-1977

### Pop Music Critic

*Boston Herald* | 1978-1980

### Freelance Writer: Feature Stories & Reviews

*Rolling Stone*, *Village Voice*, *People*,  
*New York Daily News*, *American Film*,  
*High Fidelity*, and *Jazz* | 1980-1984

### Freelance Writer: Feature Stories & Reviews

*Vibe*, *Rolling Stone*, *Red Bull Music Academy*,  
*Huffington Post*, *Smithsonian Magazine*  
2000-2020

## BOOKS

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### Author

*New American Library* | 1987

(Reissued by Consafos Press, 2002)

"It's Like That: The Rise of Run-DMC"

### Co-Author

*Collins Design*, 2008

"DEFinition: The Art & Design of Hip-Hop"

### Co-Author

*Rizzoli*, 2011

"Def Jam: The First 25 Years of the Last Great Record Label"

## Bill Adler's Letter of Commitment

Dear Adam,

Walt Whitman may have contained multitudes, but Sun Ra contained galaxies. He was, to start, a consummate musician – a pianist, composer, arranger, and bandleader – whose career spanned half a century and who was hailed over and over again as an avant garde, latter day Duke Ellington. But he was also a poet, a philosopher, a prophet, a skeptic about received wisdom, and an icon of Black Liberation, warmly received all over the world even as he remained sometimes painfully obscure in America. Cosmologically speaking, Ra's interest in the planets beyond Earth predated John Glenn's trip to the moon by decades, although the musician's take on the Space Age had nothing to do with the Cold War. Ra wasn't blasting off from Earth to land on the moon, he had descended to Earth from Saturn, a benevolent and highly evolved ambassador from another planet bearing a message of peace and harmony. As for Ra's personal life, it was as idiosyncratic and complex as his work. He was a lifelong bachelor who installed himself as "the father of a motherless family," namely the members of his band, who he discouraged from having girlfriends or wives. In sum, Sun Ra is both a very well known and long celebrated icon of 20<sup>th</sup> Century music *and* a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. This paradox makes him as compelling a subject for a serious documentary as there has ever been.

Me, I've been a music lover all my life. Indeed, the only thing that connects all of the various kinds of work I've done – radio deejay, critic and journalist, publicist, biographer, label executive, gallery owner, documentarian, and archivist – has been my love of music. I can still hear my father singing me to sleep as a toddler with "The Girl That I Marry," which had been a big hit for Frank Sinatra in 1946. In the early Sixties, the deejay working the roller rink at Detroit's Jewish Community Center kept us skating with all the great hits coming out of New Orleans and Motown. But it wasn't until the Beatles exploded in 1964, when I was 12, that I became a fanatical devotee of local radio.

I first read Ra's name as a teenaged subscriber to *down beat* magazine. I first heard his music in the form of the MC5's cover version of "Starship" in 1969. I first heard Ra and the Arkestra in performance when they closed one of the shows at the Ann Arbor Blues & Jazz Festival in 1972. Later that same year I was watching the Arkestra tear it up at a hotel in downtown Detroit when a particularly funky track moved one of my fellow concert goers to jump up and start doing the dance that had grown out of Carl Douglas's "Kung Fu Fighting." Was I confused by this juxtaposition of "jazz" and "funk?" Hell, no. The walls separating these forms had been coming down for years by then, and I admired Ra as an architect of the fluid new order.

I finally wrote about Ra in December of 1978 when – as the *Boston Herald's* pop music critic – I reviewed the Arkestra's show at Boston's Modern Theatre. I described Ra himself as looking "for all the world like a Buddha shaped Jimi Hendrix, playing organ behind his back as he twirled in slow circles during a solo called 'Interstellar Lowways' and then pausing only long enough to interpolate a couple of majestic variations on 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow.'"

I was never directly affiliated with Sun Ra, but it's fair to say I've often been *Ra adjacent*. In the summer of 1973, I started working as the fill in deejay for Kenny Cox, the urbane and

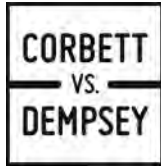
genial host of “Kaleidophone” on radio station WDET, Detroit. A pianist and composer who recorded for Blue Note as the head of the Contemporary Jazz Quintet in the late Sixties, Cox was very much a modernist, having studied with Barry Harris as a young man. But even as a notably forward looking professional jazz musician, he continued to revere Bud Powell and Art Tatum. Now, in retrospect, Cox’s devotion to Tatum in particular reminds me of Ra’s devotion to Fletcher Henderson.

Towards the end of ’73, I began writing about music for *The Ann Arbor Sun*, an underground weekly whose founder and editor in chief was John Sinclair. As noted in John Szwed’s indispensable biography of Ra, Sinclair booked the Arkestra more than once onto bills for the annual Ann Arbor Blues & Jazz Festival. Sinclair happened to be a fan not only of Ra’s music, but of his entire cosmology; he saw music as the leading edge of a cultural and political revolution.

I moved to New York in 1980. Not long afterwards, my friend Gary Kenton introduced me to Harry Duncan. The two of them had met when Kenton, working in the mid Seventies at Warner Brothers Records, persuaded the label to re sign Captain Beefheart, who was then being managed by Harry. Half a dozen years later, Harry was running Slim’s nightclub in San Francisco, a venue that hosted the Arkestra many times. Harry, in turn, introduced me to Hal Willner, who also became a good friend. It was Willner, who worked in television for decades, who booked the Arkestra onto “Saturday Night Live” and, years later, onto David Sanborn’s “Night Music.” And it was also Hal, in his frequent role as a record producer, who recruited the Arkestra to record their own version of “Pink Elephants on Parade” for his Disney tribute, “Stay Awake.” At the Mouth Almighty spoken word record label during the Nineties, we released two albums produced by Hal. One was a tribute to Edgar Allan Poe, who happened to be a favorite of Ra, too. (Come to think of it, I wonder if Hal tried to recruit Ra for the Poe album.)

I’m pretty sure it was also Harry who introduced me to Ornette Coleman and his son (and manager) Denardo. In 1985 I began working as Ornette’s publicist, a job I did on the side for many years. I mention Ornette, of course, because in many ways he and Ra were fellow travelers. I also did p.r. for the Last Poets as a group and for Umar Bin Hassan as a solo artist. Later, at Mouth Almighty in 1997, we had the honor of releasing the Poets’ “Time Has Come.” What and who connects the Last Poets to Sun Ra and his Arkestra? The cause of Black Liberation and Amiri Baraka, who was a great champion of both crews.

Otherwise, I’ve done all kinds of work that can be said to have prepared me for this project. I wrote and produced a five part documentary series entitled “And You Don’t Stop: 30 Years of HipHop” for VH1 in 2004, on which project I met Bob Seidman. I’ve been interviewed on camera in over 30 music documentaries over the past couple of decades. I’ve assembled several music related archives comprised mostly of press clippings and photos. (One is now at Cornell University, another at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African American History and Culture.) I met John Szwed when he asked me to go into my files to make a copy of a story he himself had written about Sun Ra (and then misplaced) for use in his Sun Ra biography. And Bob Seidman started thinking it might be a good idea to recruit me for this project after I loaned him all of the materials in my Sun Ra files. I stand ready to serve.



John Corbet (b) (6)

### **Education**

Northwestern University, Department of Radio, Television, Film, PhD, 1994

Brown University, Semiotics, BA (honors), 1986

### **Teaching**

Adjunct Associate Professor, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1988-2015

Chair, Exhibition Studies, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2001-2002

Chair, Sound, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1997-1998

### **Selected Curation**

Corbett vs. Dempsey Gallery, co owner, co founder (2004 present)

*Dusty Groove II: Space is a Diamond*, co curated with Josiah McElheny and Jim Dempsey, Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, 2018

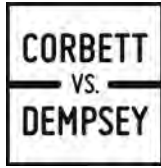
*3 D Doings: The Imagist Object in Chicago Art, 1964-1980*, co curated with Ian Berry and Jim Dempsey, Tang Museum of Art, Syracuse Springs, NY, 2018

*Monster Roster: Existential Art in Postwar Chicago*, co curated with Jim Dempsey, Jessica Moss, and Richard Born, Smart Museum, Chicago, 2016

*Extensions Out*, regular musical series at the Art Institute of Chicago (2014-2017)

*Calling Planet Earth: The Graphic Cosmos of Sun Ra and El Saturn Records*, Rice University Media Center, Rice University, Houston, 2014

*Loose Booty*, co curated with Christopher Wool, The Art Institute of Chicago, 2014



*Nation Time*, co curated with Christopher Wool, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2013

*Peter Brötzmann: Graphic*, Rice University Media Center, Rice University, Houston, 2013

*Touch & Go: Ray Yoshida and his Spheres of Influence*, co curated with Jim Dempsey, Sullivan Galleries, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago (2010)

*Sun Ra & El Saturn*, co curated with Terri Kapsalis, Tilburg, Netherlands (2008)

*Pathways to Unknown Worlds: Sun Ra, El Saturn and Chicago's Afro Futurist Underground*, 1995-1968, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, 2006, co curated with Anthony Elms and Terri Kapsalis; traveled to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2009) and the Durham Art Guild, Durham (2009)

*Sun Ra Sundays* (film series, co curated with Jim Dempsey), Gene Siskel Film Center (2003)

*JazzFest Berlin*, Artistic Director, Berlin, Germany, 2002

*Empty Bottle Festival of Jazz & Improvised Music* (annual music festival, co curated with Ken Vandermark) (1997-2005)

*Empty Bottle Jazz Series* (weekly concerts, co curated with Ken Vandermark) (1996-2005)

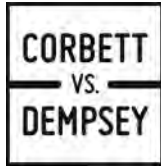
### **Books**

*Pick Up the Pieces: Excursions in Seventies Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, April 2019, in press)

*Vinyl Freak: Love Letters to a Dying Medium* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017)

*A Listener's Guide to Free Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016)

*Microgroove: Further Forays into Other Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015)



*Pathways to Unknown Worlds: Sun Ra, El Saturn Records and Chicago's Afro Futurist Underground, 1951 1968*, co edited with Anthony Elms and Terri Kapsalis (Chicago WhiteWalls, 20 0)

*Traveling the Spaceways: Sun Ra, The Astro Black and Other Solar Myths*, co edited with Anthony Elms and Terri Kapsalis (Chicago WhiteWalls, 2007)

*The Wisdom of Sun Ra*, edited and introduced (Chicago WhiteWalls, 2006)

*Extended Play: Sounding Off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein* (Durham Duke University Press, 1994)

#### **Selected Recent Publications**

"Hotter Colder The Counterintuitive Paintings of Charline von Heyl," in *Snake Eyes* (Hamburg Deichtor Hallen Internationale Kunst und Photographie, 20 8)

"Made of the Ceiling a Wall On Poetry, Paintings, and Improvised Music," *Poetry Magazine* (March 20 8)

"Sun Ra in Sin City," *Lapham's Quarterly* (Fall, 20 7)

Monthly reviewer, *Down Beat* ( 1990 20 8)

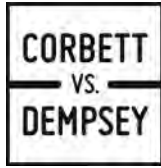
#### **Films**

*Hairy Who and the Chicago Imagists*, writer, associate producer, music consultant, Pentimenti Productions (20 4)

#### **Selected Productions**

Corbett vs Dempsey CDs (70 titles produced to date), 2007 present

Corbett vs Dempsey exhibition catalogs and monographs, series of book and pamphlet publications ( 20 titles produced to date), 2005 present



The Unheard Music Series (subdivision of Atavistic Records, Chicago), historical CDs, DVDs, and books (65 titles produced in total), 998 20 2

Corbett vs. Dempsey John Corbett • 2156 W. Fulton Chicago 60612 • (b) (6)

July 31, 2020

Dear Adam Kahan,

I am writing to confirm my commitment to work in an advisory capacity with you on the film *Sun Ra from Saturn*. The project is incredibly timely as Sun Ra's global visibility is rising; recent interest in Afro Futurism at major museums including the Smithsonian and the Berkeley Museum of Art, both of which have exhibitions planned, as a powerful sign. I have been involved in work on Sun Ra since the mid 1980s, including several interviews and numerous articles, three discrete book publications including a collection of his early writings, and the salvage of an enormous cache of his materials which my wife and I archived and gave to the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library and which are now housed in their Special Collections. Most recently, my art gallery, Corbett vs. Dempsey, has commenced official representation of the non music side of the Sun Ra Estate.

I look forward to a fruitful collaboration on this long overdue undertaking!

Warmest  
John Corbett



## Gary Giddins

### Bio/Resume

Forty years ago, critic Martin Williams called Gary Giddins “probably the most impressive journalist ever to have written about music.” Born in New York, Giddins graduated from Grinnell College in Iowa. In 1972, he became a regular contributor to the *Hollywood Reporter* and *Downbeat*. A year later, he joined the *Village Voice*, where he introduced his jazz column “Weather Bird,” which ran for 30 years and received six ASCAP Deems Taylor Awards for Excellence in Music Criticism.

Giddins has contributed cultural essays to *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *The Nation*, *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Jazz Times*, among other publications. His writing on film includes a column about film directors for the Director’s Guild of America’s *DGA Quarterly*, and one on DVDs for *The New York Sun*. His first book, *Riding on a Blue Note*, appeared in 1981, and was followed by *Rhythm a Ning*, *Faces in the Crowd*, and influential studies of Charlie Parker (*Celebrating Bird*, winner of the American Book Award) and Louis Armstrong (*Satchmo*), which he adapted into documentary films for PBS. He shared a Peabody Award for his work on the film *John Hammond: from Bessie Smith to Bruce Springsteen*, a Grammy Award for liner notes to *Sinatra: The Voice*, and a 1987 Guggenheim Fellowship.

In 1986, Giddins and the pianist composer John Lewis founded the American Jazz Orchestra in residence at Cooper Union, presenting jazz repertory concerts through 1992—some three dozen concerts involving Benny Carter, Dizzy Gillespie, Tony Bennett, Muhal Richard Abrams, Gerry Mulligan, Henry Threadgill, Bob Brookmeyer, Jimmy Heath, and David Murray. For Duke Ellington’s centenary, the AJO revived such major works as *Harlem* and *Black, Brown and Beige*.

In 1998, Giddins’s *Visions of Jazz* received the National Book Critics Circle Award, the only work on jazz to win a major American literary prize. In 2001, he was featured in Ken Burns’s *Jazz*. That year he published the first volume of his groundbreaking biography of Bing Crosby, *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams, the Early Years*, which won the Ralph Gleason Music Book Award and the ARSC Award for historical sound research; *Bing Crosby: Swinging on A Star, the War Years* appeared in 2018, winning a second ARSC prize. In 2003, he received the lifetime achievement award from the Jazz Journalist's Association; His other books include *Weather Bird*, *Natural Selection: Gary Giddins on Comedy, Film, Music, and Books*, the widely used textbook *Jazz* (with Scott DeVeaux), and *Warning Shadows: Home Alone with Classic Cinema*.

Giddins has lectured widely here and abroad, and taught at Columbia University, University of Pennsylvania, and Rutgers University. In 2008, he began a nine year affiliation with the CUNY Graduate Center, serving for five years as Executive Director of the Leon Levy Center for Biography. During that time, he conducted public conversations with major jazz figures including Sonny Rollins, Cassandra Wilson, Jason Moran, Joshua Redman, Joe Lovano, and Ron Carter, and writers such as Richard Holmes, David Levering Lewis, Hermione Lee, Robert K. Massie, E. L. Doctorow, Geoffrey C. Ward, Patricia Bosworth, Brenda Wineapple, and Kai Bird. Richard Schickel wrote of Giddins, “We see our culture more clearly because of his force, intelligence and alertness to overlooked detail.” Giddins, who is presently completing a biography of George Gershwin, lives in New York with his wife Deborah Halper.



Adam Kahan (b) (6)

**From:** "GaryGiddins" (b) (6) **Subject:** Sun Ra **Date:** July 15, 2020 at 2:16:58 PM EDT  
**To:** <Adam Kahan (b) (6)> **Cc:** "Robert Seidman" (b) (6)

Adam Kahan Project Director, "Sun Ra from Saturn" Wed, Jul 15, 2020 at 2:23 PM

Dear Adam,

Bob Seidman asked me to write you to express my enthusiasm for the film you are producing about Sun Ra. It's a film that needs to be made, one that I would very much like to see. As you know, there is a great deal of footage of Sun Ra, most of it performance art; the biographical material tends to be half-serious and half-whimsical. His story is not generally known. To paraphrase *Animal Farm*, every jazz musician's story is unique, but some are more unique than others. The fact that Sun Ra made his first major impression in jazz as a fifty-year-old free jazz savant with a strange name and an even stranger interplanetary mythology has obscured the richness of a musical journey that began in the 1930s, the era of swing and big bands, and later involved most of the black musical idioms rife in postwar America. He combined sophisticated modernism with doo wop, free jazz with big band pop, and traditional orchestration with synthesizers, while following the Ellington template of creating a school of musicians who dedicated their lives to his communal vision of music-making. He was his own music industry,

producing, designing, and distributing recordings for decades before he was "discovered." How he kept going I'm still not certain, but he waited out the neglect to storm the dominion of avant-garde jazz, which he anticipated, and managed to hold together his Arkestra when several celebrated bandleaders found the economics of leading a big band to be impossible. At the same time, he proved himself a master showman, a phrase that doesn't usually win plaudits in the rarified precincts of jazz. Nearly 30 years after his death, his origin on the planet Saturn seems curiously insightful and relevant, for how were blacks treated in the New World from the time they disembarked in shackles from slave ships if not as aliens? His commune gave life to a metaphor: its members were Saturn Americans, and make what you will of their dress, their lingo, their music, their dancing (he almost always had dancers on his programs), they were sui generis. Significantly, like jazz itself, he established his tribe in various places, each the background for a new phase of his music, from Chicago to New York to Philadelphia to Berkeley, in addition to world tours and festivals. Getting to the nub of how the Alabama-bred Herman Blount remade himself as a cosmic traveler is a tale worth telling.

Best wishes for the success of *Sun Ra from Saturn*, Gary Giddins

**ALONDRA NELSON**  
Harold F. Linder Professor  
School of Social Science  
Institute for Advanced Study  
Einstein Drive  
Princeton, NJ 08540  
anelson@ias.edu

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**EDUCATION**

Ph.D.	New York University, American Studies	2003
M.Phil.	New York University, American Studies	1998
B.A.	University of California at San Diego, Anthropology ( <i>magna cum laude</i> ; elected to Phi Beta Kappa)	1994

**SELECTED ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS**

2019-	Harold F. Linder Chair and Professor of Social Science, Institute for Advanced Study
2017-	President, Social Science Research Council
2013-2019	Professor, Department of Sociology and Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality, Columbia University
2014-2017	Dean of Social Science, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Columbia University
2009-2013	Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Columbia University
2003-2009	Assistant Professor, Departments of African American Studies and Sociology, Yale University

**SELECTED OTHER ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS**

2020-	Board of Trustees, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
2020-	Board of Directors, American Association for the Advancement of Science
2020-	Board of Directors, Russell Sage Foundation
2019-	Advisory Board Member, Obama Presidency Oral History Project
2018-	Board of Directors, The Teagle Foundation
2018-	Board of Directors, Center for Research Libraries
2017-	Board for African-American Affairs, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello
2016-	Board of Directors, Data and Society Research Institute

**SELECTED FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS AND HONORS**

2020	Elected as a Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences
2020	Elected as a Member of the American Philosophical Society
2020	Morison Prize in Science, Technology, and Society, MIT
2018	Elected as the 2019 Ernest Burgess Fellow, American Academy of Political and Social Science
2008	Poorvu Family Award for Distinguished Interdisciplinary Teaching, Yale University
2007	Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Diversity Fellowship
2006-2007	Career Enhancement Fellowship for Junior Faculty, Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
2006-2007	Fellow, International Center for Advanced Studies, New York University
2006-2007	Non-Resident Fellow, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute, Harvard University

**SELECTED PUBLICATIONS**

**BOOKS**

2016	<b>Alondra Nelson.</b> <i>The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation after the Genome.</i> (Beacon Press). Arabic translation published in 2017 (Jadawel Press).
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**Selected Awards and Honors:** Finalist, 2017 Hurston/Wright Legacy Award for Nonfiction;  
Selected as a Favorite Book of 2016, *Wall Street Journal*.

- 2011 **Alondra Nelson**, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (University of Minnesota Press).

**Selected Awards and Honors**

2013 Mirra Komarovsky Award, *Eastern Sociological*; 2012 Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Award from the Race, Gender and Class Section of the American Sociological Association; 2012 Association for Humanist Sociology Book Award

**SELECTED EDITED BOOKS AND ACADEMIC JOURNAL ISSUES**

- 2018 **Alondra Nelson**, The Social Life of DNA: Racial Reconciliation and Institutional Morality, 2017 BJS Lecture and Symposium, *British Journal of Sociology*. (Responses by Yulia Erogo, James R. Jones, Aaron Panofsky, Jenny Reardon, and Adam Rothman).
- 2016 **Alondra Nelson**, coeditor (with Alfredo Morabia), Special Section on the Black Panther Party's health activism, *American Journal of Public Health*.
- 2012 Keith Wailoo, **Alondra Nelson**, and Catherine Lee, eds. *Genetics and the Unsettled Past: The Collision of DNA, Race and History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press).
- 2002 **Alondra Nelson**, editor, Afrofuturism--Special Issue of *Social Text* (Duke University Press).
- 2001 **Alondra Nelson** and Thuy Linh Tu, eds. *Technicolor: Race, Technology, and Everyday Life* (New York: NYU Press).

**SELECTED INTERVIEWS**

- 2020 Nehal El-Hadi, An Interview with **Alondra Nelson**, *The Believer*, January/February.
- 2017 Misha Angrist, Q&A with **Alondra Nelson**, *Genome Magazine*, March 30.
- 2016 Claire Richard, "Des Tests Pour Retrouver Ses Racines: La sociologue américaine **Alondra Nelson** a étudié la façon dont les Afro-Américains s'en emparent pour repenser leur identité," *L'Obs (Le Nouvel Observateur)*, September 7.
- 2015 Franck Freitas, "Les Black Studies face aux sciences et techniques. Entretien avec Alondra Nelson," *Poli 10 (Techno Racismes) Politique de L'Image*

**SELECTED INVITED SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS**

American Association for the Advancement of Science Plenary Lecture  
Bellwether Lecture, Oxford University  
*British Journal of Sociology* Lecture, London School of Economics  
David Rogers Policy Colloquium Lecture, Weill Cornell Medical College  
Davis Lecture in the Social Sciences, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University  
Dean's Distinguished Lecture, Harvard Chan School of Public Health  
John P. McGovern Lecture, Yale University  
Elting Morison Prize and Lecture, MIT  
Mossman Lecture, McGill University  
Marion Thompson Wright Lecture, Rutgers University

**SELECTED PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

4S, Society for Social Studies of Science  
American Association for the Advancement of Science  
American Historical Association  
American Sociological Association  
Association of Black Sociologists



**Alondra Nelson, President**

Tel: (b) (6) | E-mail: [nelson@ssrc.org](mailto:nelson@ssrc.org)

July 26, 2020

Adam Kahan  
Director, *Sun Ra from Saturn*

Dear Mr. Kahan,

I am delighted to write a letter of my commitment to serve an advisor on your film project *Sun Ra from Saturn*.

Sun Ra reigns as one of the most impactful, creative artists and intellectuals of the last century. His pathbreaking career laid a cornerstone for the political and aesthetic field now termed "Afrofuturism"—a genre I've been examining in my work for more than two decades. Sun Ra is a key figure for scholars like me of the sociocultural implications of science and technology, vividly demonstrating how these imaginaries emerge out of the Black radical, artistic, and southern traditions.

Sun Ra is more relevant today than ever and your project is both timely and important.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alondra Nelson".

Alondra Nelson, Ph.D.  
President  
Social Science Research Council

Harold F. Linder Professor  
IAS | Institute for Advanced Study

**Social Science Research Council**

One Pierrepont Plaza, 15th Floor | Brooklyn, NY 11201 USA | Tel: 212-377-2700 | Fax: 212-377-2727 | [www.ssrc.org](http://www.ssrc.org)

## Education

Ph D Ethnomusicology (2009) University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland  
M A , Musicology (2003) University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland  
B A , Psychology (1981) Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island

## Teaching

**Lecturer** (2017–present) George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, School of Art's (sound art/critical theory/writing)

**Assistant Research Professor** (2015–2017) GMU, Fairfax, Serious Game Institute/Computer Game Design Program

**Assistant Professor** (2006–2015) George Mason University, School of Art

Designed and taught 4-credit-hour core studio course in sound art and digital audio production Taught degree requirements in writing and critical theory Supervised grad students and taught graduate seminars in research methods and theory

**Lecturer** (2003–2006) George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, Department of Art and Visual Technology

Designed and taught ethnographic lecture course exploring hip hop as a comprehensive cultural system

**Lecturer** (2004) University of Maryland, College Park

Designed and taught an honors undergraduate that surveyed radical musical subcultures of the African Diaspora

## Publications

### Books

2014 - *The Execution of Sun Ra The Mysterious Tale of a Dark Body Sent to Earth to Usher in an Unprecedented Era of Cosmic Regeneration and Happiness*, Wasteland Press, Louisville, KY

1998 - *George Clinton and P-Funk An Oral History*, coauthored with David Mills, Larry Alexander, and Aris Wilson, Avon Books, New York, NY

### Dissertation

2009 - *Butch Morris and the Art of Conduction*, UMD, College Park, Lawrence Witzleben, adviser

### Articles and Chapters

2017 – “*Improvisation and Social Aesthetics (Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice)*” book review in Music Reference Services Quarterly, online, 21 Dec 2017

2016 – “Alter Destiny, Free Black Music, and the Temporal Culture of the Maroons” ed by Rasheedah Phillips, Essay in *Black Quantum Futurism*

2014 – “*Art of Immersive Soundscapes*” ed by P Minevich, E Waterman, and J Harley” Review in Music Reference Services Quarterly, Volume 17, Issue 4, 2014

2012 - “Laughs Last The Bevis Griffin Story” Interview and feature in *Yoyo/so4*, Eds Latasha Nevada Diggs, Greg Tate, et al

2008 - “Play Jankunu Play The Garifuna Wanaragua Ritual of Belize” Review in *Yearbook of Traditional Music*, Volume 40, Winter

2008 - “What the Spirit Knows” [on HR, Bad Brains] in *Signal to Noise*, issue No 51, Winter

2006 - “Six is Nine, Now What? New Media, New Minds, New Beings” chapter in *Live Movies A Field Guide to New Media For the Performing Arts*. Eds Kirby Malone and Gail Scott White

2006 - “My Black Pages” [on Greg Tate, Burnt Sugar] in *Signal to Noise*, No 40

2003 - “Prime Conductor” [on Butch Morris] in *Signal to Noise*, issue No 30

2000 - “Jazz Pianist Cecil Taylor Interviewed” in *Seconds*, issue No 5001

2000 - “Drummer in the Balance” [on William Hooker] in *Signal to Noise*

2000 - “Father and Sun” [on Sun Ra and David S Ware] in *The Washington City Paper*

1999 - “Hey, Wir Waren Mal Befreundet” [on George Clinton] in *Du*, Zurich

1992 - “Reggae Inna Dancehall” [on converging urban musical culture in Jamaica and North America] in *The Washington Post*

### Recording (Liner) Notes

- 2016 - "Light The Early Years 1975-1989" William Hooker 4-disc box set on No Business Records
- 2011 - "Symphony of Souls" Jason Kao Hwang on Mulatta Records
- 2009 - "Mama's House - Live" Ethnic Heritage Ensemble on Katalyst Entertainment
- 2005 - "The Gift Live at Sangha" William Hooker, Jason Hwang, and Roy Campbell on Bmadish Records (also executive producer)

### Creative Writing/Poetry

- 2002 - "Dr Jack" and "The Minstrel" in *Beyond the Frontier African American Poetry for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Ed E Ethelbert Miller, Black Classics Press
- 1992 - "Put your Tongue in It" in *Erotique Noire/Black Erotica*, Eds Miriam Decosta Willis, Reginald Martin, and Roseann P Bell, Anchor Books

### Lectures and Presentations

- 2019 - "Black Artists Retreat 2019 Sonic Imagination" Park Avenue Armory hosted by Theaster Gates
- 2019 - "Red Summer" Reb Bull Academy performance hosted by Moor Mother at B R I C , Brooklyn
- 2018 - "Art as Actionable Tool" Participant in panel hosted by Clarice Smith Center for the Performing Arts
- 2017 - "New Forms/New Paths" Artist talk hosted by Johns Hopkins University, Digital Media Center
- 2016 - "Fringe at the Library" Performance/lecture series sponsored by DC Libraries
- 2015 - "Affect and Myth" Sun Ra-based book talk for performance art open house hosted by Spark Contemporary Art Space, a student-run gallery at Syracuse University
- 2015 - "To Pluto" public gallery talk shared with anthropologist Lisa Messeri in discussion of the cultural and scientific significance of exoplanetary bodies, hosted by Sediment Arts in Richmond, Virginia
- 2015 - "Sun Ra Astro Black Mythology & Black Resistance" keynote speaker for scholarly symposium hosted by University of Chicago and the Logan Center for the Arts
- 2014 - "JAZZforum Sun Ra in Century 21" monthly series hosted by Felix E Grant Jazz Archives, Learning Resources Division, University of the District of Columbia
- 2014 - "Parallax Future(s) in Art and Design, Ideology, and Philosophy" University of Cincinnati, sonified live installation presented in conjunction with the International Žižek Studies Conference
- 2013 - "21<sup>st</sup> Century Sonic Culture and the Necessity of the Anti-Predator Drone" Performance and lecture, University of South Carolina, Columbia
- 2012 - "Ghost Dance Generation" Performance and lecture, ArchiTEXTure Conference Composing and Constructing in Digital Spaces North Carolina State University, Raleigh
- 2011 - "*Language* (sic) at the End of Time" George Mason University Center for Consciousness and Transformation Brown Bag series
- 2011 - "It's After the End of the World" An examination of Sun Ra as post-cultural text, keynote address for GMU Office of Diversity Programs and Services' African American Heritage Month
- 2010 - "Homage to Jean Genet" Pre-performance talk with pianist Matthew Shipp, *La Maison Francaise* - Embassy of France in Washington, D C
- 2010 - "Bring the Noise The Political Phenomenology of Sound and Music" Washington D C Historical Society
- 2010 - "Pedro Bell and the Visual Culture of P-Funk" 21st Annual James A Porter Colloquium on African American Art, Howard University
- 2009 - "Meta-Instruments and the Mining of Musicality" Paper presented at Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology's annual conference, University of Richmond
- 2009 - "Hip Hop at the End of Time" Montgomery College, Rockville Campus Keynote Speaker for *The Gathering* - annual campus-wide event hosted by the Dept of Music and Student Life
- 2008 - "Blackadelic 68" Washington D C Historical Society, Multi-media presentation on the conjunction of cultural expression and political resistance, part of a program of events commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King
- 2008 - "Chocolate-Coated, Freaky, and Habit Forming" Led two gallery talks and served as academic consultant for exhibit of African-American visual artists exploring the funk aesthetic of the 70s H&F Fine Arts Gallery, Mt Rainier, Md

- 2008 - "Don't Shoot the Messenger Hip Hop in America, Challenging Stereotypes and Sharing Truths" Campus community forum organized by GMU chapter of the NAACP
- 2004 - "Life after Hip Hop" The Black Family Reunion Celebration sponsored by the National Council of Negro Women, National Mall, Washington, D C
- 2004 - "Garifuna Music in the Central American Nation of Belize" Africa in the Schools series sponsored by The International Center for Transcultural Education
- 2003 - "Avant Garde Jazz and the African Ideal" Smithsonian Associates' JazzAfrica program, National Museum of African Art, Washington, D C
- 1995 - "Necessity is the Mothership of Invention" Association for Recorded Sound Collections, U S Library of Congress, Washington, D C
- 1994 - "Introduction to Sun Ra" Jazz on Film Series, U S Library of Congress, Washington, D C

### Performance

- Bushmeat Sound System**, Solo synthesis, effects, and sampling (2005–)
- Mind Over Matter Music Over Mind**, Electronic duo (2004–)  
(performed at John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2009)
- Bushmeat Airways**, Electronic duo (2015–2017)
- Slut Walk**, Electroacoustic trio (2011–2013)
- This Bag is Not a Toy**, Electroacoustic trio (2006–2010)  
(Featured Leo Svirsky)
- Noumenal Lingam**, Large ensemble performing original librettos (1993–2005)

### Recordings

- 2019 – "Blacks' Myths II" wrote and performed poetic additions to afrofutur-themed duo recording on Atlantic Rhythms
- 2018 – "Ungovern," End Family Separation, benefit for Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES), on Fuzzy Panda Recordings
- 2014 - "Eghrareh Kafar," District of Noise\*, Vol VII
- 2013 - "Trayvon on Trial" with Bobby Hill and Luke Stewart, District of Noise\*, Vol VI
- 2012 - "Miami Vice" with Erica Fallin and Alex Braden, District of Noise\*, Vol V
- 2010 - "Sooner or Later" with Bobby Hill and Luke Stewart, District of Noise\*, Vol III
- 2009 - "Dosimeter/Dance of Organless Bodies" with Mark Cooley, District of Noise\*, Vol II
- 2008 - "The Banjo Lesson" with Mind Over Matter Music Over Mind District of Noise\*, Vol I
- 2005 - "The Gift Live at Sangha" executive producer for William Hooker, Jason Hwang, and Roy Campbell, Jr on BMadish Records/CD Baby
- 2003 - "Barking Dog, Laughing Squirrel" with Noumenal Lingam, accompanies end-titles for *Kingpin (Producer's Cut)* released as 3-disc DVD set by NBC/Bravo

\* *District of Noise* is a serial compilation featuring experimental sound artists from the Washington, D C area

\*\* Numerous small-run cdrs and downloadable albums have been generated in support of Dr Stanley's solo and ensemble work; these are available on Bandcamp but are *not* listed

### Video/Film

- 2013 - "The Scholars" Interviewed about Sun Ra book project by scholar-activist E Ethelbert Miller, studios of WUDC, University of District of Columbia
- 2009 - "Turquoise Beads" Recorded soundtrack for film by Lili White that combines footage of the ruins at Chaco Canyon with scenes of New York after 9/11/01
- 2007 - "Stranger Bernie Worrell On Earth" On-screen appearance as quoted source in documentary film on P-Funk and Talking Heads keyboardist, Directed by Philip Di Fiore
- 2003 - "Barking Dog, Laughing Squirrel" Original electroacoustic composition used as backing music for the end-titles to *Kingpin* – a dramatic miniseries produced and aired by NBC/Bravo

### Installations

- 2011 - "Three Gates in the East" Soundscape installed as part of Sacred Reflections, a juried show sponsored by P G County Arts and Humanities Council at the David C Driskell Center for the Arts, UMD, College Park



- 2006 - "Duration" Aural sculpture exploring intersections between perpetual warfare and Henri Bergson's ideas on consciousness and time, Johnson Center Gallery, GMU
- 1996 - "Bagha Gypsy" Libretto commissioned as tribute to jazz trumpeter Don Cherry by District Curators, performed by Noumenal Lingam at Freedom Plaza

## Service

- 2017/18 - Praxis of Resistance, volunteer scholar-in residence at Rhizome-DC, curating performances and moderating duologs with 5 artists around the theme of artistic practice as socio-political resistance
- 1987/present - WPFW-FM, Volunteer on-air music programmer since 1987 Most recently weekly host of *Bushmeat's Jam Session*
- 2013/15 - *Technoculture*, Member of editorial board for online scholarly journal
- 2011 - Member of advisory committee for "911 Arts Project" sponsored by Smith Center for Healing and the Arts Coordination of multi-venue, region-wide commemoration, including supervision of sound art installations
- 2008 - Keynote speaker at Harper Park Middle School's Black History all-school assembly Placed popular music culture within a broad historical context and encouraged my young audience to listen to all types of music Leesburg, VA
- 2008 - Judge in the Math and Science Olympics at Draper Elementary School Draper is a charter school serving an under-resourced community in Washington, D C
- 2007 - Final review panelist for the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities' Hip Hop Community Arts Initiative Reviewed and made funding recommendations for over 50 community-based grants
- 1997 - Transparent Productions (1997-) Founding member of volunteer collective that has presented over 200 improvised and avant garde jazz concerts since its inception, including, but not limited to, performances by Kahil El Zabar, David Murray, Joe McPhee, Wadada Leo Smith, Bill Cole, Andrea Parkins, Matthew Shipp, Myra Melford, Fred Ho, Ken Vandermark, William Parker, Sunny Murray, Choying Drolma, Charles Gayle, Karen Borca, Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre, Christian Marclay, Toshi Makihara, Taylor Ho Bynum, Billy Bang, Jason Kao Hwang, Peter Brötzmann, Sam Rivers, and Frank Lowe

## Awards/Grants

- 2003 - Driskell Center for the Study of the African Diaspora Curriculum Development Grant competition, funded an undergraduate honors seminar exploring radical musical subcultures of the African Diaspora (subjects included in this survey included Ornette Coleman, Sun Ra,
- 2001 - Driskell Center for the Study of the African Diaspora Research Travel Grant, used to conduct ethnographic research on Belizean popular music

## Technical Competencies/Software

Audacity	MAX/MSP	CorelDraw	HTML/CSS
ProTools	FISH/SHBOBO	Ultimaker 2+	Ableton Live
Reason	PhotoShop	AutoCad	

## Websites

- 1) Dr Stanley in recent Washington Post article  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/in-the-heart-of-an-empire-in-decline-blacks-myths-try-to-spark-another-big-bang/2019/09/05/8da39532-cfec-11e9-8c1c-7c8ee785b855\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/in-the-heart-of-an-empire-in-decline-blacks-myths-try-to-spark-another-big-bang/2019/09/05/8da39532-cfec-11e9-8c1c-7c8ee785b855_story.html)
- 2) Institute of Cosmic Play/Planetary Research Assemblage – social media-based collaborative community  
[https://www.chonghapeterlee.com/?fbclid=IwAR0WfK9gsB4\\_kQuzC\\_lbovXTBDdhnwExb8avGEO\\_PV6\\_zm5FrO\\_c-vstygo](https://www.chonghapeterlee.com/?fbclid=IwAR0WfK9gsB4_kQuzC_lbovXTBDdhnwExb8avGEO_PV6_zm5FrO_c-vstygo)
- 3) Review of *The Execution of Sun Ra*  
[http://www.citypaper.com/arts/books/bcp-thomas-stanleys-new-book-the-execution-of-sun-ra-blasts-off-with-free-jazz-philosopher-20141201.0.513087\\_story](http://www.citypaper.com/arts/books/bcp-thomas-stanleys-new-book-the-execution-of-sun-ra-blasts-off-with-free-jazz-philosopher-20141201.0.513087_story)
- 4) George Mason's student newspaper on Dr Stanley's contributions to the campus community  
<http://gmufourthestate.com/2015/04/02/art-professor-let-go-against-colleague-and-student-objections/>
- 5) Dr Stanley on WHUT's ARTICO  
<https://youtu.be/u5NPQ1ZuoPc?t=13m10s>
- 6) Washington Post coverage of *Praxis*  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/music/at-rhizome-thomas-stanley-is-opening-ears-and-broadening-brains/2017/11/15/6356cd9e-c4c2-11e7-aae0-cb18a8c29c65\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.d0cdc0bc8374](https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/music/at-rhizome-thomas-stanley-is-opening-ears-and-broadening-brains/2017/11/15/6356cd9e-c4c2-11e7-aae0-cb18a8c29c65_story.html?utm_term=.d0cdc0bc8374)
- 7) Dr Stanley performing at Kennedy Center  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWxtz5BnUU>

Adam Kahan

(b) (6)

Adam,

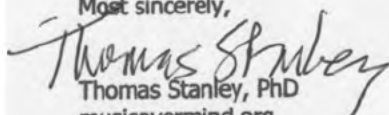
I am quite excited to connect with you and your project. Sun Ra has been near the center of my work within music since first hearing his music in the early 80s. In the fall of 2014, I published a book exploring the life and work of jazz iconoclast Sun Ra. Neither biography nor ethnography, *The Execution of Sun Ra* attempts to organize the late jazzman's idiosyncratic theories about time and music into a dynamic reading of his life as a very particular disturbance within the waters of culture. My book has provided occasion for numerous public events. Chief among these was the well-attended *Along Came Ra* centennial celebration which culminated in a rousing Lincoln Theater concert by the Sun Ra Arkestra (joined by the late Bernie Worrell). I was also invited to be the featured presenter for the University of the District of Columbia's Jazz Forum (October 2014) and to deliver the keynote address at the University of Chicago's *Sun Ra Symposium* (May 2015). In October of 2015, my band Mind Over Matter Music Over Mind opened for The Arkestra under the direction of Marshall Allen at Baltimore's historic Otto Bar.

My life as servant of sound and listening has been focused where music and audio culture are most engaged in reinvention. Sound, being little more than vibrating air, is inherently malleable and unstable. Hip hop, free jazz, electroacoustic music – their material and social permutations – have been the core of my practice as an activist, scholar, and artist.

Ken Burns' *Jazz* tome did a huge disservice to the most courageous chapter of that music's bold legacy. By minimizing the socio-historical significance and artistic fearlessness of the avant garde he skews the story of African American classical music in a disturbingly homogenous direction. Nowhere is this conspicuous erasure more suspicious than in the failure to even mention Sun Ra's flamboyant half-century of dense contributions during this 19-hour opus.

Arkestra member Jac Jackson once told me that Sun Ra was thirty years ahead of his time and certainly the late maestro's profile has only mushroomed since he left us in 1993. My book is one of many examples of the serious Sun Ra scholarship that has emerged in that time, but there have been no new documentary films of note since Robert Mugge's *Sun Ra: A Joyful Noise* in 1980 and Frank Cassenti's *Mystery, Mr. Ra* (1984). There is something about the way that Sun Ra's music synthesized Past and Future that provides an inspirational example for a generation of humans whose lofty progress appears to be floundering in the grip of a leaden past. I think Mr. Kahan's project offers the potential to bring within reach that magical spark of myth splendor with which Sun Ra stared down war, racism, and even old age and mortality. I will do all that I can to support *Sun Ra from Saturn*.

Most sincerely,

  
Thomas Stanley, PhD  
musicovermind.org

**John Szwed**  
abbreviated Bio/Resume

John Szwed is an anthropologist, musician, and writer who has taught anthropology, African American studies, film studies, music, and performance studies at New York University, the University of Pennsylvania (where he was Professor of Folklore Studies and Director of the Center for Urban Ethnography), Yale University (where he was John M. Musser Professor of Anthropology, African American Studies and Film Studies), and Columbia University (where he was Professor of Music and Jazz Studies, Director of the Center for Jazz Studies, and currently is Adjunct Senior Research Scholar).

He has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Fellowship, a Grammy Award, and grants from the Mellon Foundation, the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Science Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. He currently serves as a member of the Educational Advisory Board of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, and the editorial boards of *Jazz Perspectives* (Rutgers University) and *Epistrophe: La Revue du Jazz* (French online publication).

His books include *Space Is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra* (1997), *So What: The Life of Miles Davis* (2002), *Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded the World* (2010), *Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth* (2015), *Crossovers: Essays on Race, Music, and American Culture* (2005), *Jazz 101* (2000), *After Africa: Slave Culture in 17th, 18th, and 19th Century British West Indies* (1983), *Afro-American Folk Culture: An Annotated Bibliography of Materials from North, Central and South America* (1978), *Discovering Afro-America* (1974), *Black America* (1970) and *Afro-American Anthropology: Contemporary Perspectives* (1970).

Szwed wrote on music, dance, and performance for *The Village Voice* from 1979 to 2006 and has published articles in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Boston Phoenix*, *Hartford Courant*, *Jazz Magazine*, *Musician*, *Jazz and Pop*, *Jazz Review*, *Bookforum*, *The Wire*, and *Spin*. As a writer and performer for television and radio, he worked on the *Sun Ra Centenary*, (BBC Radio 4), *Brother from Another Planet: The Sun Ra Story* (BBC TV), *American Routes* (Public Radio International), and Terry Gross's *Fresh Air* (National Public Radio).

As performer and adviser for films, his projects include *The Sun Ra Repatriation Project* (1998), *Paris is Burning* (1990), *Say Amen, Somebody* (1982), and Tennessee Williams's *The Loss of a Teardrop Diamond*. As a record producer, he did Rashied Ali, Myra Melford, Joe McPhee, et al., *The October Revolution in Jazz* (Evidence Records) and Borah Bergman, Anthony Braxton, and Peter Brötzmann, *Eight by Three* (Mistry Records).

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**Szwed NEH letter**

1 message

**John Szwed** (b) (6)

Sat, Jun 13, 2020 at 1:02 AM

Reply-To: John Szwed (b) (6)

To: (b) (6)

Cc: (b) (6)

Adam Kahan,  
Project Director  
"Sun Ra from Saturn"

Dear Adam,

I'm very happy to say that I'd like to join your efforts to create the film, "Sun Ra from Saturn." As the only biographer of Sun Ra, how could I resist a chance to be involved with writers and filmmakers as distinguished as you and Robert Seidman? Incidentally, though I may have written the only life history of Ra, as I note in the new edition of *Space is the Place* there have been seven books on Ra in the last fifteen years and hundreds -- yes, hundreds -- of articles in print and online about Ra as father of Afro Futurism, as black modernist, poet, artist, jazz composer, philosopher, science fiction author, and the like. That's a lot of words on the man, and he was a man of words, but he and his Archestra were visual and sonic above all, and a new film on them is just in time.

So, yes, count me in. It's an exciting idea and its time is now.

Best,  
John Szwed

Attached: Szwed bio

## **Greg Tate**

### Abbreviated Bio/Resume

Greg Tate is a writer, musician and cultural provocateur who lives and thrives atop Harlem's Sugar Hill.

Tate has been visiting professor of Africana Studies at Brown University, the Louis Armstrong Visiting Professor at Columbia University's Center for Jazz Studies. He won a United States Artists Fellowship in 2010.

His books include:

*Flyboy in the Buttermilk: Essays on Contemporary America.* (Simon & Schuster, 1992.)

*Everything But the Burden: What White People Are Taking from Black Culture.* (Broadway Books, 2003).

*Midnight Lightning: Jimi Hendrix and the Black Experience.* (Lawrence Hill Books, 2003).

*Flyboy 2: The Greg Tate Reader.* (Duke university Press, 2016).

*James Brown's Body and the Revolution of the Mind.* (Riverhead Press, 2019).

Tate's 1986 essay, "Cult-Nats Meet Freaky Deke (Village Voice Literary Supplement), is frequently excerpted and used in college and university classrooms. The essay has been praised for attacking "that bastion of white supremacist thinking, the Western art world." He has published in *The New York Times*, *Down Beat*, *Essence*, *Jazz Times*, *Rolling Stone*, *VIBE* and *Artforum*.

His improvisational ensemble, Burnt Sugar, varies in size from 13 to 35 musicians. In 2004 Tate described the group as "a band I wanted to hear but could not find."

Tate is currently finishing work on *Beast Mode: Iconic Gods and Monsters of the Bloodthirsty Black Atlantic and Beyond* for publication by Farrar, Strauss and Giroux in 2021.

From the desk of Greg Tate

(b) (6)

May 22, 2020

ATTN: Adam Kahan

Dear Adam,

This letter is written to express my commitment to working on your film project in development, *Sun Ra from Saturn*, as a contracted advisor. Sun Ra is an artist I've had a near lifetime of appreciation for as a concert-goer, avid album listener, musician/composer/bandleader, writer and Afrofuturist creative.

Your film, about Rahsaan Roland Kirk, *The Case of the Three Sided Dream*, was an exceptional documentary about another genre-defying boundary-obliterating musical hero of mine, and giant of the music variously known by us ardent devotees as jazz/The Music/ Black Classical Music/ Great Black Music Ancient And To The Future.

Your proposal to focus intensely on Ra's musical origins, artistic sophistication and cultural impact promises to provide a unique and potent contribution to the already notable Ra film oeuvre.

Looking forward to discussing storytelling concepts and angles with you in the near future.

Much obliged,  
Greg Tate

**Paul Youngquist**  
paul.youngquist@colorado.edu

**EMPLOYMENT**

Professor of English  
University of Colorado Boulder (2009-present)

Professor of English  
Penn State University, University Park (1988-2008)

**EDUCATION**

Ph.D., University of Virginia (1988)

**PUBLICATIONS**

**Books:**

*A Pure Solar World: Sun Ra and the Birth of Afrofuturism.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016.

Reviews: *Downbeat*, *The Wire*, *Rain Taxi*, *Vice.com*, *PopMatters*, *Literary Hub*, *The Austin Chronicle*, *Public Seminar*, *The Free Jazz Collective*, *thedustygroove*, *Jazz Right Now*, *Correspondences*, *Motown Review of Art*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Booklist*

Honors: Marfield Prize for Arts Writing (finalist), Colorado Book Award (finalist), Prose Award for Music and the Performing Arts (honorable mention), Woodward Pope Award for criticism (CU English Department)

*Cyberfiction: After the Future.* New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2010.

*Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

*Madness and Blake's Myth.* University Park: Penn State Press, 1990.

**Scholarly Edition:**

Marcus Rainsford. *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. With Grégory Pierrot.

**Essay Collections (editor):**

*Race Romanticism and the Atlantic.* Burlington: Ashgate Press, 2013.

*Gorgeous Beasts: Animal Bodies in Historical Perspective.* University Park: Penn State



University Press, 2012. With Joan B. Landes and Paula Young Lee.

**Selected Special Issues (editor):**

“Essays in Honor of Colonel Frank Lumsden.” *Social and Economic Studies*. Spring 2018. With Frances Botkin.

“Black Romanticism.” *Studies in Romanticism*. Spring 2017. With Joel Pace.

**General Editor:**

*Romantic Circles* (<https://romanticcircles.org/>): a refereed scholarly Website devoted to the study of Romantic-period literature and culture.

**Selected Articles:**

“Introduction.” *Social and Economic Studies* 67.1 (2018): 1-6.

“Life After Empathy: On Philip K. Dick and *Blade Runner 2049*.” *The Paris Review—The Daily*. <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2017/10/23/life-after-empathy-on-blade-runner-2049/>

“Black Romanticism: A Manifesto.” *Studies in Romanticism* 56 (2017): 3-14.

“Remembering Queen Nanny.” *small axe salon* 21 (February 2016)  
<http://smallaxe.net/wordpress3/discussions/2016/03/01/sx-salon-21-february-2016/>.

“In the Wake.” *Cultural Critique* 90 (2015): 148-58.

“Stats of Exception: *Watchmen* and Nixon’s NSC.” *Postmodern Culture* 23.2 (2013)  
[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern\\_culture/v023/23.2.youngquist.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern_culture/v023/23.2.youngquist.html).

**Selected Book Chapters:**

“Maps Without Territories: Disappearing Trelawney Town.” *Romantic Cartographies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (forthcoming).

“Accidental Histories.” *Theorizing Fieldwork*. Eds. Shalini Puri and Deborah Ann Castillo. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2016.

**RECENT AWARDS AND GRANTS**

Center for Humanities and the Arts Special Event Grant, 2019  
Boulder Faculty Assembly Excellence Award, 2018  
Woodward Pope Award, Department of English, 2018  
Kayden Award, CU, 2012





University of Colorado **Boulder**

12 June 2020

Adam Kahan  
Project Director  
*Sun Ra from Saturn*

Dear Mr. Kahan,

I am delighted to write this letter of commitment to participate in pre-production and possible production of a filmed *Sun Ra from Saturn*. I've published a book on Sun Ra, *A Pure Solar World: Sun Ra and the Birth of Afrofuturism*, that mixes biography with cultural history to show how important a musician and an activist he was. A major avant-garde innovator, Sun Ra also used his music as a means for social transformation. His vision of a better world for blacks feeds a theme more pertinent now than ever. He's a towering artist and poet, a figure who deserves more and deeper regard than he gets. I have hoped for some time that the right filmmaker would sense the importance of bringing Sun Ra's music and message to a wider—and younger—audience. *Sun Ra from Saturn* would do just that. It's an important project, and I would be honored to be part of it.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Youngquist'.

Paul Youngquist  
Professor of English



Irwin Chusid

*exclusive representation: Sun Ra LLC*  
PO Box 6258 • Hoboken, New Jersey 07030 USA  
(b) (6) • Irwin@SunRa.com

2 JULY 2020

To: Adam Kahan

Dear Adam,

Sun Ra LLC, comprised of the lawful heirs and rights beneficiaries of the late Sun Ra (Herman Poole Blount), hereby extends our cooperation and support for your film project, *Sun Ra from Saturn*.

Advancing Sun Ra's legacy is important to us. His music brings joy and his messages were intended to foster enlightenment.

We will extend the resources at our disposal in order to help achieve the success of your project.

It's been a pleasure speaking with you during the development of the project, and we look forward to our further engagement.

Sincerely,

Irwin Chusid



515 Malcolm X Boulevard  
New York, NY 10037  
917 275-6975  
schomburg.org

July 27, 2020

Adam Kahan, Project Director

(b) (6)

Re: *Sun Ra From Saturn*

Dear Adam,

It is with great interest that I write regarding the proposed documentary project on the life and significance of the incomparable composer and musician, Sun Ra.

The film, *Sun Ra From Saturn*, for which you and Robert Seidman seek National Endowment for the Humanities funding, is aptly timed and offers great synergy with the Schomburg Center. As we prepare to enter our 95th anniversary year, we are keenly attuned to the need to document the past and chart the future, as did Sun Ra, who was truly an early Afrofuturist.

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture is the proud repository of numerous Sun Ra items. The Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books division holds *The Wisdom of Sun Ra* collection of early self-published tracts by Sun Ra, recently exhibited; our Moving Image and Recorded Sound division holds AMI including legendary a bums. In fact, our [Teen Curators](#) program, focused this year on Afrofuturism and Afrosurrealism, inspired by Sun Ra. Their culminating show, now online due to coronavirus closure, [Nonlinear Pendulums: Voyage Through Infinite Blackness](#), is the fifth such curatorial project by our high school students.

Throughout their year-long curriculum, Teen Curator students read Sun Ra's writings; watched the 1974 homage to science fiction movies, *Space Is the Place*; listened to Sun Ra albums and to *The Ark and the Ankh*, the 1966 conversation between Sun Ra and Henry Dumas; and were inspired by Sun Ra's album covers for their hand-drawn artwork in the exhibition.

In 2015 we presented the Afrofuturism exhibition, *Unveiling Visions: The Alchemy of the Black Imagination*, with its closing leading into our Annual Black Comic Book Festival, held each January during Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend. The festival is a must see event for science fiction fans, Afrofuturists, and comic book creators and collectors alike, amassing nearly 7,000 people over two days. Most recently, in celebration of Black Futures Month 2020, we partnered with CUNY on digital events and a panel discussion, [Afrofuturism](#).

The music and words of Sun Ra remain guide posts along the path in African Diaspora studies and collections. We look forward to the documentary, and sincerely hope the Schomburg Center will be one of the destinations to share the Sun Ra experience in the near future.

Sincerely,

Kevin Young  
Director

Media Team:

**Adam Kahan** - Producer/Director, (Project Director and applicant).

**Kali Holloway** - Senior Producer.

**Robert Seidman** - Writer/ Producer.

**Jen Fineran** – Editor.

**Matt Smithson** - Lead Animator/Graphic Designer.

**Prudence Arndt** - Archival Producer.

**Adam Kahan**, Producer/Director.

Director/Producer and musician Adam Kahan has been celebrating, studying, playing and proliferating Jazz music for over two decades. He has produced and directed multiple documentaries of artists and musicians. On film he has profiled visual artists Andres Serrano, Fred Tomaselli and Urs Fischer. His 2016 documentary *The Case of the Three-Sided Dream*, on multi-instrumentalist Rahsaan Roland Kirk, won three “Best Documentary awards (Pan African Film Festival, L.A., Soundtrack Cologne, Germany, and Tucson Filmfest, AZ.) His latest film, *Buster Williams Bass to Infinity*, which focuses on bass player, composer, Buddhist and citizen of planet earth Buster Williams, was called “one of the finest music documentary we have seen” by The London Jazz News. In his ongoing film documentation, Kahan has created content that includes interviews, history and music from many jazz immortals, including Herbie Hancock, Benny Golson, Sarah Vaughan, Nancy Wilson and Charles Mingus.

Kahan serves currently as Director of post-production for AMC Networks across their five brands—AMC, IFC, WETV, Sundance TV and BBC America, and is also a working musician who composes and plays regularly both in New York and abroad.

He has attended dozens of performances of Sun Ra’s Arkestra, both with Sonny as leader and after his death.

**Kali Holloway**, Senior Producer.

Kali Holloway is Senior Director of the Make It Right Project, a national initiative dedicated to removing Confederate monuments and rebalancing U.S. history. A frequent contributor to *The Daily Beast*, Holloway writes a monthly column for *The Nation*. She has written for *The Guardian*, *Salon*, *TIME*, *Huffington Post*. She co-curated the New York City Metropolitan Museum of Art’s 2017 summer performance and film series “Theater of the Resist.” She was the outreach director on the PBS’ documentary *The New Public*; Director of Outreach and Audience Engagement for the HBO documentary *Southern Rites* and the Emmy-nominated film *Brooklyn Castle*; and Outreach Consultant on the award-winning documentary *The New Black*. Currently Holloway is producing *Sunset and the Mockingbird* about jazz pianist Junior Mance. She was the speechwriter for a New York City Commissioner and Deputy Director of Communications for the New York State court system.

**Robert Seidman, Writer/Producer.**

Robert Seidman is an accomplished novelist and screenwriter. His novel, *Moments Captured* (Overlook Press, 2012), was named as one of the six best books of the year by “Metro.” Robert wrote *One Smart Indian*, published by G.P. Putnam and Sons in 1977 and by Overlook Press in paper, 1979. With Don Gifford, Robert Seidman is co-author of *Ulysses Annotated: An Annotation of James Joyce’s Ulysses* (University of California Press, 2nd Revised Edition, 1988.) Robert’s film credits include *Billy Strayhorn: Lush Life*, a 90-minute documentary about the composer and arranger that aired nationally on public television in 2007. *Lush Life* won the Writers’ Guild Award for Best Documentary Script, a George Foster Peabody Award, and an Emmy for Best Documentary. Robert co-wrote the Academy Award short-listed and Emmy-nominated documentary film *A Life Apart: Hasidism in America*. He wrote *In Our Time*, the final show in the television series *Art in the Western World* and *Wallace Stevens: Man Made Out of Words*. He served as Creative Consultant to *Riding the Rails: Teenage Hobos in the Great Depression*, nominated for an Academy Award. Robert also has scripted feature-length documentaries on Margaret Mead, Samuel Beckett and Gordon Parks. Each of those films received major funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. His most recent film, *Joseph Pulitzer: Voice of the People*, was one of six films nominated as Best Documentary Script by the Writers Guild of America East in 2019.

**Jen Fineran, Editor.**

Editor Jen Fineran has two “Outstanding Editing” Emmy nominations: *AI WEIWEI: NEVER SORRY* (IFC Films) and *TAKE YOUR PILLS* (Netflix). Jen’s recent work includes *MADE IN BOISE* (directed by Beth Aala and produced by Beth Levison) which aired in 2019 on PBS’ Independent Lens; Jon Schienberg’s *COLOSSUS* (First Run Features), a rare look into the aftermath of deportation and separation; *THE BRINK* (as story consultant, Magnolia Pictures), Alison Klayman’s fly-on-the-wall documentary exposing Steve Bannon’s efforts to mobilize and unify far-right parties; and Adam Kahan’s *BUSTER WILLIAMS BASS TO INFINITY*.

Jen established Gypsy Camp Studios Inc. in 2005 just as technology was making a virtual edit studio possible. Her work can be seen on streaming services, on TV, in theaters and at film festivals such as Sundance, SXSW, HotDocs and Berlin International Film Festival. Jen’s first film job was assistant editing on Ruth Leitman’s southern gothic documentary *ALMA*. Since then Jen has edited a slew of documentaries including Emily Kassie’s Academy Award-winning *I MARRIED MY FAMILY’S KILLER*, about love and intermarriage in post-genocide Rwanda.

**Matt Smithson, Lead Animator/Graphic Designer.**

Matt Smithson is a Director, Animator, Designer and Artist. From 2006-2017, he worked under the name Man vs. Magnet, during which time he served varied clients – commercial, non-profit, cultural, and those with social justice missions. Some of those clients include – IBM, Showtime, Samsung, MTV, The Girl Effect, UNESCO and the Ford Foundation. From humorous, craftily cut animations, to uplifting films, Matt creates with a unique style that attracts global clients. He was recognized in 2009 with a ‘Young Gun’ award from Director’s Art Club, and his work was displayed at the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York as part of the “Why Design Now?” Triennial Exhibition. Matt will lead our film’s graphic design (motion, print, web and social), be our chief animator, and provide creative direction for both the film and a team of designers with whom we will be collaborating.

**Prudence Arndt**, Archival Producer.

Prudence Arndt has worked on dozens of documentaries as an archival producer over the last 25 years. She has developed an intimate knowledge of the resources available for locating historic material, and she has established relationships with key archives throughout the world. Recent work includes a film about Alice Walker for American Masters, HBO's *I Knew It Was You* about John Cazale, and the proposal for *Rediscovering Kate Carew*, 1890-1901. Carew was a pioneering female cartoonist and interviewer for *The World* during its heyday under Joseph Pulitzer. Prudence worked for Spike Lee on *Major League Baseball and Civil Rights*, with Eugene Jarecki on *Why We Fight*, and with Chris Bell on *Bigger, Stronger, Faster*. Prudence has taught in the graduate film program at Hofstra University and at the Columbia University School of Journalism.

8/5/2020

Gmail - Senior Producer Letter of Commitment to Sun Ra from Saturn



Adam Kahan (b) (6)

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## Senior Producer Letter of Commitment to Sun Ra from Saturn

1 message

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Kali Holloway (b) (6)  
To: Adam Kahan (b) (6)

Wed, Aug 5, 2020 at 3:27 PM

Hi Adam,

It's been great having our ongoing conversations about *Sun Ra from Saturn*—I think the film is timely and necessary and I'm super excited to be a part of it. Sun Ra is a seminal figure in so many areas—from Afro-futurism, to experimental indie rock, to far too much jazz innovation to sum up with a single genre term. In this historic cultural moment, as we revisit and pay long-overdue homage to black creators and thought leaders, a documentary about the incredible life and contributions of Sun Ra is rendered yet more urgent. He was an immense and singular talent, and I am happy to serve as a Senior Producer on *Sun Ra from Saturn* to help give this film the life it deserves. Looking very forward to getting further into development and pre-production.

Thanks,  
Kali Holloway  
Producer, [Sunset and the Mockingbird](#)  
Senior Producer, *Sun Ra From Saturn*  
Co-curator, Theater of the Resist [at the MET Museum](#)  
Senior Director, Make It Right Project  
Senior Fellow, [Independent Media Institute](#)



## Matt Smithson

(b) (5)

[matt@igorandvalentine.com](mailto:matt@igorandvalentine.com) work: [www.igorandvalentine.com](http://www.igorandvalentine.com) personal: [www.smithmattson.com](http://www.smithmattson.com)

### Experience

Director at Curious Pictures	2006-2012
Director at Nottoscale	2006-2018
Director at Blacklist / Psyop	2014- Present
Partner at Igor + Valentine	2017- Present

### Exhibitions

#### *Animation (Group):*

"Kinetic Escapes"	2018	Brooklyn, NY
Animation Nights New York "Best of Fest"	2018	Brooklyn, NY
"Wassaic Project"	2011	Wassaic, NY
"Why Design Now?" National Design Triennial	2010	Cooper-Hewitt, NYC
"Bare Bones: A One Night Stand"	2010	Envoy Enterprises, NYC
"Psychedelica"	2009	Lumen Eclipse, Harvard Square MA

#### *Fine Art (Group):*

2018 She Said, He Said	2018	Welcome Gallery, VA
2017 Artist Exchange	2017	Welcome Gallery, VA

### Education

MFA, Motion Graphics- SCAD, GA	2006
BFA, Studio Art - College of Charleston, SC	2003

### Awards

ADC Young Guns 7 Recipient	2009	Art Directors Club, NYC
One Show Design Silver Pencil	2009	The One Show, NYC
Webby Award: Non/Profit Educational	2009	Webby Awards, NYC

### Recent Press

'Lemons to Lemonade' Feature	2018	Motionographer
Buster Williams 'Bass to Infinity'	2018	Vimeo Staff Pick
Motion Poems 'Undersong'	2015	Vimeo Staff Pick





Matt Smithson

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

E [matt@igorandvalentine.com](mailto:matt@igorandvalentine.com)

[igorandvalentine.com](http://igorandvalentine.com)

[smithmattson.com](http://smithmattson.com)

06 30.20

Dear Adam Kahan,

I am committed and excited to work on your documentary project 'Sun Ra from Saturn'. The animation for this project can be so expressive and unique and I look forward to collaborating with you on developing animation that pays homage to Sun Ra, his music, and his style. This seems like a great project and I look forward to being involved!

Sincerely,

Matt Smithson

# GYPSY CAMP STUDIOS

JEN FINERAN, EDITOR

DOCUMENTARY FILM WEB

## CREDITS

### DOCUMENTARIES & FEATURES

#### Flower Punk (2019 - Editor - Doc NYC)

Directed by Alison Klayman, produced by Ryot Films

Winner: Best Short, Miami Film Festival

#### Made In Boise (2019 - Editor - Independent Lens)

Directed by Beth Aala, produced by Beth Levison

Woodstock Film Festival: Best Editing Nominee

#### The Brink (2019 - Consulting Editor - Magnolia Pictures)

Directed by Alison Klayman, produced by Marie Therese Guirgis

#### Buster Williams: Bass to Infinity (2019 - Editor)

Directed by Adam Kahan, produced by Three Sided Productions

#### This Changes Everything (2018 - Additional Editing)

Directed by Tom Donohue, produced by Creative Chaos

#### Colossus (2018 - Editor - Fuse)

Directed by John Schienberg, produced by Tommy Rand

#### Take Your Pills (2018 - Editor - Netflix)

Directed by Alison Klayman, produced by Motto Pictures

Outstanding Emmy Nomination

#### Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman (2017 - Co-Editor - Discovery)

Directed by Susan Froemke and John Hoffman,

produced and co-directed by Beth Aala

Sundance Premiere

#### The Invisible World (2016 - Editor, Director, Producer)

A short doc by Jen Fineran

Winner: Best Short Doc, Tallgrass Film Festival

Winner: Best Short Doc, International Filmmaker Festival Berlin

#### Everybody Knows... Elizabeth Murray

(2016 - Editor - Producer - American Masters)

Directed by Kristi Zea; produced by Jen Fineran, Madeline

Warren and Caroline Goodman-Thomases

#### Design Disruptors (2016 - Editor and Co-Director)

Produced and directed by Matt D'Avella, co-directed by Jen

Fineran, and produced by InVision Films

#### The 100 Years Show (2015 - Editor - Netflix)

Directed by Alison Klayman, featuring Carmen Herrera

Winner: Best Editing, Doc Utah

#### I Married My Family's Killer (2014 - Editor + Producer - CBC)

Directed + Produced by Emily Kassie, produced by Jen Fineran

Winner: Student Academy Award

#### Every Three Seconds (2014 - Editor - First Run Features)

Directed by Daniel Karslake, Produced by HR Mendoza

#### Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry (2012 - Editor - IFC Films)

Directed and produced by Alison Klayman

Winner: Special Jury Prize, Sundance Film Festival

Emmy Nominee: Outstanding Editing, Outstanding Arts & Culture Programming

#### All of Me (2013 - Co-Editor - Independent Lens/ITVS)

Directed by Alexandra Lescaze

Winner: Best Documentary, Austin Film Festival

#### Who's Afraid of Ai Weiwei (2011 - Co-Editor - Frontline)

Produced and directed by Alison Klayman, executive produced

by Ken Dornstein for Frontline

#### A Powerful Noise (2008 - Editor + Co-Producer)

Produced by Scott Thigpen, directed by Tom Cappello,

Executive produced by Sheila C. Johnson

#### Rene & I: From Auschwitz to America (2007 Additional Editing)

Directed by Gina Angelone

Best Doc Feature, River Run International Film Fest

#### Confederacy Theory (2001 - Editor - Independent Lens)

Produced and directed by Ryan Deussing,

Executive Produced by Gill Holland

Best Doc Feature, Atlanta Film Festival

#### Waste (2000 - Editor, Post Super - Tribe Video)

Directed by Tony Pasquale

JEN FINERAN, EDITOR

(b) (6)

■ 917-586-2282 ■ [jen@gypscampstudios.com](mailto:jen@gypscampstudios.com)



(b) (6)

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www.gypsyncampstudios.com

National Endowment for the Humanities  
400 7th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20506

July 1, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

With this letter, I am confirming my commitment as editor to SUN RA FROM SATURN, directed by Adam Kahan.

Adam approached me about working on the project in early 2018. I plan to formally join this project once funding is secured. I have edited documentaries for 20 years including such noteworthy films as MADE IN BOISE (Independent Lens 2019), BASS TO INFINITY (2019), TAKE YOUR PILLS (Netflix 2017), AI WEIWEI: NEVER SORRY (IFC Films 2012) and the Student Academy-Award winning I MARRIED MY FAMILY'S KILLER (2014). I am excited and thrilled to add SUN RA FROM SATURN to that list. Adam is a thoughtful and creative director and I trust that he will create a powerful film. Adam has a keen understanding of music and storytelling which makes the collaboration incredibly special.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. As part of the key production crew, I am grateful for your consideration of SUN RA FROM SATURN for NEH funding.

Sincerely,



Jen Fineran



The New York Foundation for the Arts is not attaching a copy of a federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement, because the applicant institution is going to claim the federal de minimis and has never had a federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement.

We are pleased to confirm that Adam Kahan's film project *Sun Ra from Saturn*, is being fiscally sponsored by the New York Foundation for the Arts.

The New York Foundation for the Arts is a public foundation established by the New York State Council on the Arts in 1971. The Foundation's broad purpose is to work with the arts community throughout the country to develop and facilitate programs in all disciplines.

The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) corporation; under Internal Revenue Service regulations it qualifies as tax-exempt. All grants, in-kind donations and other contributions should be made payable to the New York Foundation for the Arts, and accompanied by a cover letter specifying the purpose or restrictions, if any, of the grant. Any contributions of cash, securities, or materials made to the Foundation on behalf of *Sun Ra from Saturn* are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law. The Foundation is prepared to provide you with financial accounting of the contributed funds.

**New York Foundation for the Arts**

20 Jay Street, Suite 740 | Brooklyn, NY 11201

Phone: 212 366 6900 | Fax: 212 366 1778

Internet: [www.nyfa.org](http://www.nyfa.org)

## RESEARCH &amp; RELATED BUDGET - Budget Period 1

OMB Number: 4040-0001

Expiration Date: 12/31/2022

ORGANIZATIONAL DUNS: (b) (4)

Enter name of Organization: New York Foundation for the Arts

Budget Type: ☒ Project ☐ Subaward/Consortium

Budget Period: 1 Start Date: 05/01/2021 End Date: 11/30/2021

## A. Senior/Key Person

Prefix	First	Middle	Last	Suffix	Base Salary (\$)	Months			Requested Salary (\$)	Fringe Benefits (\$)	Funds Requested (\$)
						Cal.	Acad.	Sum.			
Mr.	Adam		Kahan		(b) (6)				(b) (6)	0.00	(b) (6)
Project Role: PD/PI											
Ms.	Kali		Holloway		(b) (6)				(b) (6)	0.00	(b) (6)
Project Role: Senior Producer											
Mr.	Robert		Seidman		(b) (6)				(b) (6)	(b) (6)	(b) (6)
Project Role: Writer/Producer (Writer's Guild)											
Ms.	Prudence		Arndt		(b) (6)				(b) (6)	0.00	(b) (6)
Project Role: Archival Producer											
Mr.	Matt		Smithson		(b) (6)				(b) (6)	0.00	(b) (6)
Project Role: Animation/Design Director											

Additional Senior Key Persons:

Add Attachment

Delete Attachment

View Attachment

Total Funds requested for all Senior Key Persons in the attached file

Total Senior/Key Person

47,000.00

**B. Other Personnel**

Number of Personnel	Project Role	Months			Requested Salary (\$)	Fringe Benefits (\$)	Funds Requested (\$)
		Cal.	Acad.	Sum.			
	Post Doctoral Associates						
	Graduate Students						
	Undergraduate Students						
	Secretarial/Clerical						
8	Humanities Advisors				2,400.00	0.00	2,400.00
1	Jennifer Cox, Director of Photography (with equipment)				(b) (6)	0.00	(b) (6)
1	Mark Maloof, Production Sound (with equipment)				(b) (6)	0.00	(b) (6)
1	Production Assistant				1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00
1	Jennifer Fineran, Editor (home studio)				(b) (6)	0.00	(b) (6)
12	Total Number Other Personnel					Total Other Personnel	20,900.00
Total Salary, Wages and Fringe Benefits (A+B)							67,900.00

**C. Equipment Description**

List items and dollar amount for each item exceeding \$5,000

Equipment item	Funds Requested (\$)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Additional Equipment: <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="button" value="Add Attachment"/>	<input type="button" value="Delete Attachment"/>
<input type="button" value="View Attachment"/>	
Total funds requested for all equipment listed in the attached file	<input type="text"/>
Total Equipment	<input type="text"/>

**D. Travel**

	Funds Requested (\$)
1. Domestic Travel Costs ( Incl. Canada, Mexico and U.S. Possessions)	1,000.00
2. Foreign Travel Costs	
Total Travel Cost	1,000.00

**E. Participant/Trainee Support Costs**

	Funds Requested (\$)
1. Tuition/Fees/Health Insurance	
2. Stipends	
3. Travel	
4. Subsistence	
5. Other <input type="text"/>	
<input type="text"/> Number of Participants/Trainees	Total Participant/Trainee Support Costs



F. Other Direct Costs		Funds Requested (\$)
1. Materials and Supplies		
2. Publication Costs		
3. Consultant Services		
4. ADP/Computer Services		
5. Subawards/Consortium/Contractual Costs		
6. Equipment or Facility Rental/User Fees		
7. Alterations and Renovations		
8. Website construction		2,500.00
9.		
10.		
Total Other Direct Costs		2,500.00

G. Direct Costs	Funds Requested (\$)
Total Direct Costs (A thru F)	71,400.00

H. Indirect Costs			
Indirect Cost Type	Indirect Cost Rate (%)	Indirect Cost Base (\$)	Funds Requested (\$)
NYFA 5%	5.00		3,570.00
Total Indirect Costs			3,570.00

Cognizant Federal Agency  
(Agency Name, POC Name, and POC Phone Number)

I. Total Direct and Indirect Costs	Funds Requested (\$)
Total Direct and Indirect Institutional Costs (G + H)	74,970.00

J. Fee	Funds Requested (\$)

K. Total Costs and Fee	Funds Requested (\$)
Total Costs and Fee (I + J)	74,970.00

L. Budget Justification			
(Only attach one file.)	1234-justification.pdf	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment
			View Attachment

## RESEARCH & RELATED BUDGET - Cumulative Budget

		Totals (\$)
<b>Section A, Senior/Key Person</b>		47,000.00
<b>Section B, Other Personnel</b>		20,900.00
Total Number Other Personnel	12	
<b>Total Salary, Wages and Fringe Benefits (A+B)</b>		67,900.00
<b>Section C, Equipment</b>		
<b>Section D, Travel</b>		1,000.00
1. Domestic	1,000.00	
2. Foreign		
<b>Section E, Participant/Trainee Support Costs</b>		
1. Tuition/Fees/Health Insurance		
2. Stipends		
3. Travel		
4. Subsistence		
5. Other		
6. Number of Participants/Trainees		
<b>Section F, Other Direct Costs</b>		2,500.00
1. Materials and Supplies		
2. Publication Costs		
3. Consultant Services		
4. ADP/Computer Services		
5. Subawards/Consortium/Contractual Costs		
6. Equipment or Facility Rental/User Fees		
7. Alterations and Renovations		
8. Other 1	2,500.00	
9. Other 2		
10. Other 3		
<b>Section G, Direct Costs (A thru F)</b>		71,400.00
<b>Section H, Indirect Costs</b>		3,570.00
<b>Section I, Total Direct and Indirect Costs (G + H)</b>		74,970.00
<b>Section J, Fee</b>		
<b>Section K, Total Costs and Fee (I + J)</b>		74,970.00



Sun Ra from Saturn

Budget Justification (and budget spreadsheet)

Adam Kahan 8.10.20

- Our three Senior/Key personnel are Adam Kahan (producer/director), Kali Holloway (senior producer) and Robert Seidman (writer/producer).
  - We are paid on a flat, agreed upon rate, which is commensurate with our experience and compensation on similar projects in the industry.
  - We will meet regularly over the six month development period to partner on –
    - further planning, development, research, further writing (treatment, narrative, fund raising), creative approach and other considerations, production planning (including but not limited to shoots), post production planning (including but not limited to editing of the trailer), engagement with our Humanities Advisors, construction of our website, design considerations, social media approach and considerations, engagement and outreach with multiple community partners, and more.
- Prudence Arndt, our archival producer/researcher, estimates a minimum of 5 days of work on our project, and very possibly/likely will work closer to 10 days total. This is based on her previous work (see her bio included in this application). Her billing rate is (b) (6) per day.
- Matt Smithson, our design director and lead animator, will produce style frames for the animation as well as for titles and graphics for the film, and do some motion tests which we will use in creation of the film's trailer. Matt's billing rate is (b) (6) per day. We estimate that he will work 5 days during the development period of this film.
- We estimate 5 shoot days during development. These will be for exploratory/preliminary interviews.
  - Our principal crew for these shoots – Jennifer Cox (Director of Photography) and Mark Maloof (Production Sound), each come with their own equipment, their billing rates (Jennifer at (b) (6) per day, and Mark at (b) (6) per day) provide for such. We also estimate \$200 per day for a PA on those shoot days, which is standard in the industry.
  - We estimate 2 3 shoot days at Sun Ra's former home in Philadelphia, where we will interview multiple musicians from the Arkestra, including Marshall Allen and Elson Nascimento. We also plan on shooting interviews with writers (and Humanities Advisors to this film) Garry Giddins and John Szwed (both in the New York area). Other experts to be interviewed during the development period are still be decided upon (we will choose from those in the New York area, for the immediate development phase).
  - We estimate \$200 per shoot day, for lunch for the crew (4 people), gas, tolls and parking.
- Editor Jen Fineran will work for an estimated three weeks in her home studio on a 'work in progress' video for the film and/or trailer, and other promotional materials needed during the development period. Her fee is (b) (6) per week (industry standard).

- We will continue to partner with our eight Humanities Advisors. Each will receive the NEH minimum \$300 stipend during the development phase of this project.
- For website construction and design, we will partner with Jimmy Fisher, who designed websites for Adam Kahan's previous films, including *The Case of the Three Sided Dream*. His flat fee of \$2500 is based on 10 days of work at (b) (6) per day. Jimmy's work can be seen here <https://www.jimmy-fisher.com/work.html>.
- The Writer's Guild will be paid their standard 20% of Robert Seidman's fee. This amounts to (b) (6).
- NYFA is electing the de minimis rate at 5%, as our fiscal sponsor (\$3570).



# SUN RA FROM SATURN Development Budget

Applicant Institution NYFA  
Project Director Adam Kahan  
Project Grant Period 5/1/21 through 11/1/21

[click for Budget Instructions](#)

	Computational Details/Notes	(notes)	Year 1 5/1/21 11/1/21	NOTES			Project Total
<b>1. Salaries &amp; Wages</b>							
Producer/Director - Adam Kahan	flat	%	(b) (6)	%			(b) (6)
Senior Producer - Kali Holloway	flat	%	(b) (6)	%			(b) (6)
Writer/Producer - Robert Seidman	flat	%	(b) (6)	%	Script, narration, planning.	%	(b) (6)
Archival Producer/research - Prudence Arndt	5 days @ (b) (6) per day	%	(b) (6)	%		%	(b) (6)
Animation/Design Director - Matt Smithson	5 days @ (b) (6) per day	%	(b) (6)	%	Style frames, design, motion graphics tests.	%	(b) (6)
<b>1.1 Salaries &amp; Wages (exploratory/production)</b>							
Director of Photography - Jennifer Cox (with equipment)	5 days @ (b) (6) per day	%	(b) (6)	%	Shoot days include preliminary/exploratory interviews in Philadelphia, at our subject's former residence, and various locations in New York. Interviews with musicians and scholars.	%	(b) (6)
Production Sound - Mark Maloof (with equipment)	5 days @ (b) (6) per day	%	(b) (6)	%	as per above	%	(b) (6)
PA	5 days @ \$200 per day	%	\$1,000	%	as per above	%	\$1,000

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Editor - en Fineran (home studio @ no cost	3 weeks @ (b) (6) per week	%	(b) (6)	%	editing of trailer and/or promotional/further fundraising materials.	%	(b) (6)
<b>2. Fringe Benefits</b>							
Writer's Guild	20% Robert Seidman's fee		(b) (6)				(b) (6)
							\$0
<b>3. Consultant Fees</b>							
Consultants and Humanities Advisors	8 @ \$300 each, flat		\$2,400				\$2,400
<b>4. Travel</b>							
Gas, tolls, meals	5 sdays @ \$200 per day		\$1,000		For shoot days listed above. Travel by car - New York and Philadpelphia. With Director of photography, Production Sound and PA.		\$1,000
							\$0
<b>5. Supplies &amp; Materials</b>							
<b>6. Subawards</b>							
							\$0
<b>7. Other Costs</b>							
website	flat	%	\$2,500	%		%	\$2,500

continues on next page


<b>8. Total Direct Costs</b>	<b>Per Year</b>		<b>\$71,400</b>		<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$71,400</b>
<b>9. Total Indirect Costs</b>							
<b>a. Rate</b>							
<b>b. Federal Agency</b> NYFA 5%	<b>Per Year</b>		<b>\$3,570</b>		<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$3,570</b>
<b>Effective Period</b> 05/01/21 - 11/01/21							
<b>10. Total Project Costs</b>	(Direct and Indirect costs for entire project)						<b>\$74,970</b>
<b>11. Project Funding</b>	<b>a. Requested from NEH</b>						
	Outright						\$74,750
	Federal Matching Funds						\$0
	<b>TOTAL REQUESTED FROM NEH:</b>						<b>\$74,970</b>
	<b>b. Cost Sharing</b>						
	Applicant's Contributions						\$0
	Third-Party Cash Contributions						
	Third-Party In-Kind Contributions						\$0
	Project Income						\$0
	Other Federal Agencies						\$0
	<b>TOTAL COST SHARING:</b>						<b>\$0</b>
<b>12. Total Project Funding</b>							<b>\$74,970</b>

Total Project Costs must be equal to Total Project Funding ----> ( \$74,970 #### ?  
Third-Party Contributions must be  
greater than or equal to Requested Federal Matching Funds ----> ( \$0 ≥ \$0 ?