

# James Velissaris, Founder of Finch Fortress Films, is attacking the gender, and race bias in movies head on

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA, UNITED STATES, January 27, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Finch Fortress films recently funded "My Divorce Party," an upcoming comedy about a woman who has a gathering with her close friends to celebrate her impending divorce. The director and writer, Heidi Weitzer, and producers Desiree Staples, Adrienne Childress, and Geenah Krisht are all women, and the lead roles were cast with all women or black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC).

"We are excited about this film because the filmmakers and cast are extremely high quality and represent a much needed shift in the industry," said [James Velissaris](#), who is a founding partner at Finch Fortress Films. He went on to comment on the film industry as a whole, "For too long, the industry has been dominated by white cisgender men. Finch Fortress Films is striving to find voices and stories that have been historically overlooked."



James Velissaris .

## Impacting Change

James Velissaris explains that in 2011, only 26% of lead roles were women and less than 11% were BIPOC. In 2019, 37% were women, and 28% were BIPOC. These numbers have been trending in the right direction, but capital still needs to be dedicated to helping in this fight. Finch Fortress Films is part of this growing movement to directly make an impact in the film industry.

## The Dropout

The firm is also funding the upcoming independent film, "The Dropout." As Ex Files states, "The

Dropout” is “an R-rated, sex-positive comedy influenced by famous 1967 film ‘The Graduate,’ but told from the perspective of a protagonist inspired by The Graduate’s character Mrs. Robinson [whom musicians Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel named their classic number-one hit song after on the film’s best selling soundtrack].” The writer, director, and producer are all women, and the lead character will also clearly be a strong woman.

[James Velissaris commented](#) on his passion for this upcoming film, “I’m excited to help support the vision of this project. I loved ‘The Graduate,’ but always believed that Mrs. Robinson’s character was left unexplored, despite being the most interesting character in the movie. I also felt that Elaine [Robinson]’s character fulfilled stereotypical gender roles for the entire movie until the end, and even in the end, she can only assert her strength with the aid of a man. I’m very excited for this film to revisit this story from a female perspective, given the complexity and nuance of these characters.”

“My Divorce Party” is in post production and is expected to be released in the summer of 2022.

“The Dropout” is in pre-production and is expected to be released in 2023.

Finch Fortress Films

[James Velissaris formed](#) Atlanta’s Finch Fortress Films to support visionary artists and storytellers across film and television who wanted to create projects that would challenge societal norms and provoke strong emotions. As Velissaris explains it, “I felt [the film industry] portrayals across race, gender and sexual orientation can be, at times, stereotypical representations that don’t allow a diverse set of viewers to see themselves in film. One of our firm’s core missions is to help produce films and television shows that challenge these conventional portrayals.”

Velissaris is black and grew up in the midwest. He understood at a young age the importance the portrayals of young black men in film and television have on society. The branding of black men throughout the 1990’s in the news, film, and television as “thugs” and “gang bangers” has had a lasting impact on how white Americans perceive black men. The steps taken by visionary writers such as Shonda Rhimes of race-blind casting are helping to make progress, and Finch Fortress Films is joining the fight to attack these biases.

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