

# Entertainment WEEKLY

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## THE XX FACTOR

It's not news that women are underrepresented in film. Glance at this year's Best Picture nominees; not one features a female protagonist. The Athena Film Festival was created five years ago by the Athena Center at Barnard College and the advocacy group Women and Hollywood to remedy just that. "How do we instigate a cultural conversation about the fact that women's stories are just as important?" asks Melissa Silverstein, the festival's cofounder. In addition to screening movies solely with women in the lead, the festival publishes a gender-specific Black List spotlighting the best unproduced screenplays starring women. The so-called Athena List is already having an impact: 2014 honoree Emily Abt secured a producer for her script *Audrey's Run* and solidified Paula Patton's attachment to the project. "The fact that their award is focused on female protagonists exclusively is really beneficial," Abt says.

The Athena Film Festival has one mission: to make more movies about strong women. —NICOLE SPERLING

### 2015'S ATHENA LIST HONOREES

Silverstein gave EW a sneak peek at this year's three winners, which will be announced on Feb. 7. Coming soon (hopefully) to a theater near you:

***What the World Will Look Like When All the Water Leaves Us***  
Jenny Halper

From a script based on Laura van den Berg's short story, a primatologist's quest to save lemurs in Madagascar puts her in danger.

***Highsmith***  
Eliza Lee

This tale of crime novelist Patricia Highsmith (*The Talented Mr. Ripley*) details her downward spiral when she could not put her name to the iconic lesbian novel *The Price of Salt* during the McCarthy era.

***Dickey Chapelle***  
Margaret Nagle

The *Good Lie* screenwriter tells the true story of war photographer Dickey Chapelle. The boundary-pushing photojournalist ditched the sidelines and went into battle with soldiers.



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