

# LONELY SEAL

*Stories Aching To Be Told*



**Hammad Zaidi**

**Founder, The Lonely Seal Company Group**

*This is not the story of the companies I built.*

*It is the story of the people who believed in me, the storytellers who trusted me, and the responsibility I feel to help the next generation find its voice.*



**Hammad Zaidi**

*Filmmaker. Founder. Storyteller.*

## Beginnings

In kindergarten, during recess in Kansas, I found a UCLA knit cap buried in the snow. I knew nothing about UCLA.

I had never visited California.

I took it home.



That small discovery became an  
obsession. Years later, UCLA  
became my university.

What looked like an ordinary cap became a direction.

# THE WOODEN ATHLETIC FUND

## Hammad, Lena and Zoe Zaidi Invest in Tomorrow's Champions Today

Hammad Zaidi is passionately committed to UCLA and supporting Bruin student-athletes through the Wooden Athletic Fund. Hammad is a 1994 UCLA graduate, earning his MFA in Film and TV from the UCLA School of Theater, Film and TV. Even though he grew up in Kansas, Hammad became a UCLA fan early in life—while in kindergarten—when he found a UCLA beanie in the snow. The beanie may have made him cognizant of UCLA, but when he started watching basketball games coached by John Wooden, he was smitten. Being accepted into UCLA's graduate program was one of the high points in his life, equal only to his future wife Shahina accepting his marriage proposal and when he became a father to their twin daughters, Lena and Zoe, now 6 years old.

Upon his graduation from UCLA, Hammad founded Lonely Seal Releasing, an international distribution and production company. In 2002, while producing a national public service announcement, endorsed by the White House for the one-year anniversary of 9/11, he found himself scouring New Jersey for a location and getting nowhere. He was saved by a Bruin alum who noticed his UCLA shirt and class ring and—for that reason alone—allowed him to use her home for the shoot. Hammad came to the realization that being a Bruin was more than a common bond; it was a way of life.

Hammad became a member of the Wooden Athletic Fund soon after forming his company in 1997 and contributed to the Pauley Pavilion Renovation Project with a Leadership Gift in 2010. He and Shahina have since upgraded their WAF giving two levels to where they are now members at the Coaches Roundtable level.

*"I have a deep respect for student-athletes, especially those who attend an academically challenging institution like UCLA, and I'm proud to be able to help nurture their growth as academically gifted students and physically gifted athletes. I give to the Wooden Athletic Fund because John Wooden's teachings have always inspired me to strive to be the best person I can be, while I constantly test the limits of what I can achieve."*

**UCLA and the UCLA Athletic Department  
thank the 8,513 Wooden Athletic Fund  
members, including the Zaidis.**



**Invest in Tomorrow's Champions Today**

310.206.5502 | [WoodenAthleticFund.com](http://WoodenAthleticFund.com)

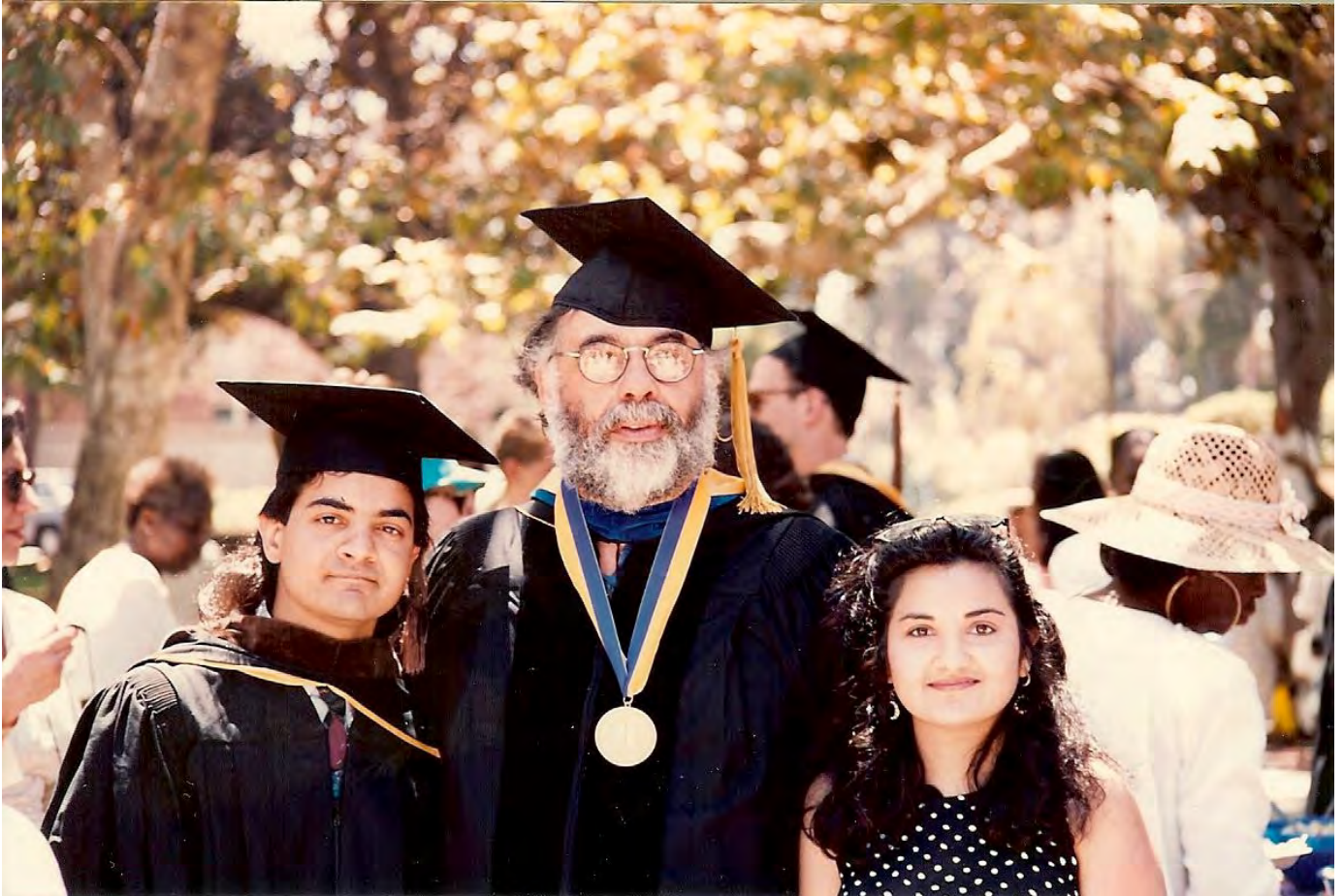


*A childhood story that became a lifelong connection.*

# UCLA

*Some places educate you.*

*Others become part of who you are.*



UCLA strengthened my respect for craft, collaboration, and storytelling. It also proved that an unlikely beginning can become a destination.

# Filmmaker



I am not a businessman who entered film.  
**I am a filmmaker who built companies.**

**Producer.**

**Writer.**

**Director.**

**Distributor.**

**Educator.**

**Festival director.**

*Still a student of film.*

# Festivals

**For nearly three decades, festivals have been my classroom.**

They taught me how filmmakers think. How audiences respond. How communities form, and how one opportunity can change a career.



*The first festival I judged was Flickerfest in Sydney.*

# Journey

|            |                                                             |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1997-1998  | Flickerfest - Juror                                         |
| c. 1999    | Slamdance Fireside Chats - Panelist                         |
| 2005       | Sundance - World Cinema Screener                            |
| 2005       | Lonely Seal Releasing founded                               |
| 2009       | SXSW - Filmmaker Advisor                                    |
| 2009-2010  | Script Accessible created                                   |
| Since 2006 | Cannes / Marche du Film / Priority Cinema Buyer             |
| Since 2018 | Lonely Seal International Film, Screenplay & Music Festival |
| 2024       | Ryz Sports Network                                          |
| 2026       | Lonely Seal Streaming                                       |
| 2026       | Film Bite                                                   |
| 2026       | Story Oasis Fund                                            |
| 2026       | Lonely Seal Impact Fund                                     |



# Discovery

*Every career begins with someone willing to notice.*

That belief has guided my work as a juror, advisor, educator, distributor, and festival director.



**Talent is everywhere.**

**Opportunity is not.**

# Lonely Seal Festival



I built the festival I always hoped to attend.

One where filmmakers felt respected.

One where communication was clear.

One where volunteers understood they were helping  
someone's dream.

One where every guest felt welcome.



# Releasing

*Stories deserve to travel farther.*

We showcase independent cinema worldwide.



**Production.**

**Acquisitions.**

**Distribution.**

*A filmmaker entrusts a distributor with years of work.*

*That trust deserves care.*

# Streaming



*Great stories deserve a home.*

Lonely Seal Streaming extends the life of independent film, animation, television, documentaries, music, and other work deserving discovery.

*Lonely Seal Streaming also serves as a dedicated sister network and channel for selected Lonely Seal Impact Fund projects and fundraising.*

# Story Oasis Fund

*Stories need more than belief. They need support.*

Story Oasis Fund invests in Film, TV, Sports, and related media.



**Development. Production. Acquisition. Distribution.**

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

# Film Bite



*Stories are changing shape.*

Film Bite develops and distributes story-driven vertical films.

**Vertical Film. Mobile-First. Global Reach.**

# Sports



**The Ryz Sports Network is a separate company and is not part of Lonely Seal. It was co-founded by Hammad Zaidi, who serves as Chief Executive Officer (CEO).**

**Ryz Sports Network also works closely with the Lonely Seal Impact Fund on sports and community-impact programs.**

# Lonely Seal Impact Fund

*Stories need more than belief. They need support.*



The Lonely Seal Impact Fund is a nonprofit initiative dedicated to film, sports, and community impact. It supports projects, programs, and partnerships that expand opportunity, amplify underrepresented voices, and use storytelling and sports as forces for positive change.

**Film. Sports. Community Impact.**

*A platform for purpose-driven storytelling and community engagement.*

# Impact

*Sometimes filmmaking is entertainment.  
Sometimes it is remembrance.*

## Champions of Hope



Written, directed, and produced a national PSA for the first anniversary of September 11.

Produced by Hammad Zaidi's Lonely Seal Pictures for the Champions of Hope Foundation.

The White House-endorsed piece was released theatrically by Regent Cinemas on 5,001 screens, and broadcast on major television networks. It was also screened at major arenas, like the Staples Center in Los Angeles and the Pepsi Center in Denver.

## Access

*Opportunity should not depend on whether someone fits the traditional image of a filmmaker.*

Script Accessible is a screenwriting contest that endorses screenwriters with disabilities and stories about disabled characters. It began as a partnership with Slamdance and continued at the Lonely Seal Festival.



# Script Accessible

## Voice



*256 consecutive weekly articles originally published on FilmThreat.com to help filmmakers navigate an industry that rarely explains itself. Written by Hammad Zaidi. All of the articles can now be found on GoingBionic.com*

# Thank You



Thank you for taking the time to get to know me.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hammad Zaidi', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Hammad Zaidi**

Founder

The Lonely Seal Company Group

## Dedication

*Dedicated to every storyteller who has ever wondered  
whether their voice mattered.*

**It does.**

