Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize Awarded to Computer Chess at 2013 Sundance Film Festival

Sundance Institute / Alfred P. Sloan Lab Fellowship Also Announced

Park City, UT — Sundance Institute today announced the winner of the Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival, as well as the recipient of the Alfred P. Sloan Lab Fellowship, presented through the Sundance Institute Feature Film Program.

These activities, as well as a panel at the Festival, are part of the Sundance Institute Science-in-Film Initiative, which is made possible by a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. 2013 marks the 10th Anniversary of the Alfred P. Sloan Science in Film initiative, which supports the development and exhibition of new independent film projects that explore science and technology themes or that depict scientists, engineers and mathematicians in engaging and innovative ways. The initiative includes the Sundance Institute / Alfred P. Sloan Commissioning Grant, and a recipient for 2013 will be announced soon.

“We are delighted to recognize Andrew Bujalski’s quirky, original film, Computer Chess as this year’s winner and to add it to our impressive ten year list of Sloan Sundance winners,” said Doron Weber, Vice President, Programs at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. “Coupled with Nicole Kassel’s Screenwriting Lab fellowship for a script based on Barbara Kingsolver’s ‘Prodigal Summer’ and a Commissioning Grant for another exciting science screenplay that we will announce shortly, it is clear that the 10-year partnership between Sloan and Sundance continues to set a new standard for science and technology films.”

Said Keri Putnam, Executive Director, Sundance Institute, “The Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize recognizes projects grounded in the exploration of math, science and technology. Advances in these fields are constantly altering our world, and we are proud to be able to provide an outlet for artists developing scripts pursuing these critical themes.”

Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize

Computer Chess, directed and written by Andrew Bujalski, has been awarded the 2013 Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize and will receive a $20,000 cash award by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation at this year’s Sundance Film Festival. Now in its tenth year, the Prize is selected by a jury of film and science professionals and presented to outstanding feature films focusing on science or technology as a theme, or depicting a scientist, engineer or mathematician as a major character.

Computer Chess is an existential comedy about the brilliant men who taught machines to play chess — back when the machines seemed clumsy and we seemed smart. The cast includes Patrick Riester, Myles Paige, James Curry, Robin Schwartz, Gerald Peary and Wiley Wiggins. The jury presented the award to the film for its "off-beat and formally adventurous exploration of questions of artificial intelligence and human connections, unfolding during an early computer chess tournament."
Previous Alfred P. Sloan Prize Winners include: Jake Schreier, Christopher Ford, Robot & Frank (2012); Musa Syeed, Valley of Saints (2012); Mike Cahill and Brit Marling, Another Earth (2011); Diane Bell, Obselidia (2010); Max Mayer, Adam (2009); Alex Rivera, Sleep Dealer (2008); Shi-Zheng Chen, Dark Matter (2007); Andrucha Waddington, The House of Sand (2006); Werner Herzog, Grizzly Man (2005), Shane Carruth, Primer (2004) and Marc Decena, Dopamine (2003). Several past winners have also been awarded Jury Awards at the Festival, including the Grand Jury Prize for Primer, the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award for Sleep Dealer and the Excellence in Cinematography Award for Obselidia.

Andrew Bujalski
Andrew Bujalski was born in Boston in 1977 and studied film at Harvard’s Department of Visual and Environmental Studies. He wrote and directed the films Funny Ha Ha, Mutual Appreciation, and Beeswax. His first three films all appeared on the New York Times’s “Best of the Year” lists. He types 89 words per minute.

As previously announced, this year’s Alfred P. Sloan jury members are:

Jon Amiel
After studies in English literature, Jon Amiel graduated from Cambridge University and ran the Oxford and Cambridge Shakespeare Company, which often toured the USA. He became the Hampstead Theatre Company's literary manager and began directing there, relocating to the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Amiel joined the BBC as a story editor, studied television directing and did TV work through the late 1970s and early 1980s, scoring attention in 1985 with The Silent Twins (1985), an unforgettable recreation of the tragic “silent twins” June and Jennifer Gibbons, who spoke only to each other.

After international acclaim for The Singing Detective (1986), Amiel's feature film debut, Queen of Hearts (1989), premiered at Cannes, was named Best First Film at the Montreal Festival and won the Birmingham Festival's Best British Feature Film Award. Amiel's Tune in Tomorrow... (1990), based on Mario Vargas Llosa's "Aunt Julia And The Scriptwriter," won the Deauville Festival's Prix Publique. He followed with the period drama Sommersby (1993), the thriller Copycat (1995), The Man Who Knew Too Little (1997) and moved into action-adventure with Entrapment (1999) and The Core (2003).

Paula Apsell
As Director of the WGBH Science Unit and Senior Executive Producer of the PBS science series NOVA, Paula Apsell has overseen the production of hundreds of acclaimed science documentaries, including such distinguished miniseries as The Fabric of the Cosmos with Brian Greene, Origins with Neil deGrasse Tyson, Making Stuff with David Pogue and the magazine spin-off NOVA scienceNOW. NOVA is the nation’s most watched science series, a top site on pbs.org, and recipient of every major broadcasting honor, including the Emmy®, the Peabody®, and the duPont-Columbia Gold Baton. Paula has won numerous individual awards and has served on many boards including the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History. She was recently journalist in residence at UC Santa Barbara’s Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics.

Darren Aronofsky
Academy Award® Nominated Director Darren Aronofsky was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. His most recent film, Black Swan, won Natalie Portman the Academy Award® for Best Actress and received four other nominations, including Best Picture. The film received scores of other accolades, appeared on over 200 critical Top Ten lists, and swept the 2011 Independent Spirit Award with wins for Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress and Best Cinematography. Prior to Black Swan, Darren directed The Wrestler. The film premiered at the Venice Film Festival where it won the esteemed Golden Lion making it only the third American film in history to win this grand prize. He also directed The Fountain, starring Hugh Jackman and Rachel Weisz, and Requiem for a Dream, which was named to over 150 Top Ten lists. Darren’s first feature, π, won the Director’s Award at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival and an Independent Spirit Award for Best First Screenplay. He is currently at work on Noah, based on the biblical story of Noah’s ark. Among his honors, the American Film Institute gave Darren the prestigious Franklin J. Schaffner
Alumni Medal, the Stockholm Film Festival presented him the Golden Horse Visionary Award, and he has won three Independent Spirit Awards.

Scott Z. Burns
Scott Burns is a screenwriter, director, and producer. He wrote the original screenplay for *Contagion*, directed by Steven Soderbergh, starring Matt Damon, penned the screen adaptation of Soderbergh’s *The Informant!* and co-wrote the Academy Award® winning *Bourne Ultimatum*, directed by Paul Greengrass. He was a producer on *An Inconvenient Truth*, the Academy Award® winning documentary, for which he received the Humanitas Prize and the Stanley Kramer Award from the Producers Guild of America. Scott recently completed production on *Side Effects*, a psychological thriller, slated for release in early 2013. It stars Jude Law, Rooney Mara, Catherine Zeta Jones and Channing Tatum and is again directed by Steven Soderbergh with Scott writing and producing along with Greg Jacobs and Lorenzo Di Bonaventura. Currently, Scott is writing *The Library*, a stage play based on the 1999 shootings at Columbine High School with Steven Soderbergh directing and Kennedy/Marshall producing. The play is under development at the Public Theater in New York City. Scott began his career in advertising and was part of the creative team responsible for the original “Got Milk?” campaign. His advertising work has been recognized by the Clio Awards, the Cannes Film Festival, and the New York Film Festival.

Dr. André Fenton
Dr. André Fenton, is a neuroscientist, biomedical engineer and entrepreneur working on three related problems: how brains store information in memory; how brains coordinate knowledge to selectively activate relevant information and suppress irrelevant information; and how to record electrical activity from brain cells in freely-moving subjects. André and colleagues identified PKMzeta as the first memory storage molecule, a discovery identified by Science, the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s journal, as one of the ten most important breakthroughs in all the science reported in 2006. Recordings of electrical brain activity in André’s lab are elucidating the physiology of cognitive dysfunction in schizophrenia. It was recently discovered that preemptive cognitive training during adolescence changes the brain sufficiently to prevent the adult brain dysfunction and cognitive impairments that arises from brain damage during early life in a schizophrenia-related animal model. André is a Professor of Neural Science at New York University’s Center for Neural Science. He founded Bio-Signal Group Corp., which is developing an inexpensive, miniature wireless EEG system for functional brain monitoring of patients in emergency medicine applications and other clinical scenarios.

Dr. Lisa Randall
Dr. Lisa Randall studies theoretical particle physics and cosmology at Harvard University where she is Frank J. Baird, Jr., Professor of Science. Her research connects theoretical insights addressing puzzles in our current understanding of the properties of matter, the universe, and space. Dr. Randall is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and is the recipient of many awards and honorary degrees. Professor Randall was included in Time Magazine’s “100 Most Influential People” of 2007, was among Esquire Magazine’s “75 Most Influential People of the 21st Century,” and was one of 40 people featured in “The Rolling Stone 40th Anniversary issue” in 2008. Dr. Randall's two books, *Warped Passages* (2005) and *Knocking on Heaven's Door* (2011) were featured on the lists of New York Times 100 Most Influential Books. Her ebook, *Higgs Discovery: The Power of Empty Space*, was published last summer.

**Sundance Institute / Alfred P. Sloan Lab Fellowship**

**Prodigal Summer** (U.S.A.)
Nicole Kassell (co-writer/director)

*Prodigal Summer*, co-written by Barbara Kingsolver and based her on best selling novel, weaves together three utterly unexpected love stories through the course of one summer in southern Appalachia. In this extravagant ode to the natural orders of biology and the human spirit, the forces of life, death and procreation connect every life that inhabits the lush landscape.
Nicole Kassell is an MFA graduate of NYU’s Film Program. Her first feature, The Woodsman, premiered in competition at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival and went on to receive numerous accolades including a CACAE (art house award) at the Directors’ Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival; The Jury Prize at the Deauville Film Festival; a Humanitas nomination; and The Satyajit Ray Award at the London Film Festival. In addition, Kassell was nominated for a Gotham Award (Breakthrough Director) and Independent Spirit Award (Best First Feature) and was recognized by Variety as one of ten "directors to watch." Her latest feature, A Little Bit of Heaven, stars Kate Hudson, Gael Garcia Bernal, and Kathy Bates. Kassell has continued to write and direct film and episodic television. She lives in New York City with her husband and two children.

Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
Founded in 1934, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation is a non-profit philanthropy that makes grants in science, technology and economic performance. This Sloan-Sundance partnership forms part of a broader national program by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to stimulate leading artists in film, television, and theater; to create more realistic and compelling stories about science and technology; and to challenge existing stereotypes about scientists, engineers, and mathematicians in the popular imagination. Over the past decade, the Foundation has partnered with some of the top film schools in the country — including AFI, Carnegie Mellon, Columbia, NYU, UCLA, and USC — and established annual awards in screenwriting and film production and an annual first-feature award for alumni. The Foundation has also started an annual Sloan Feature Film Prize at the Hamptons International Film Festival and initiated new screenwriting and film production workshops at the Hamptons and Tribeca Film Festival and with Film Independent. As more finished films emerge from this developmental pipeline—four features were completed this year, with half a dozen more on deck—the foundation has also partnered with the Coolidge Corner Theater and the Arthouse Convergence to screen science films in up to 40 theaters nationwide. The Foundation also has an active theater program and commissions over a dozen science plays each year from the Ensemble Studio Theater, Manhattan Theatre Club and Playwright Horizons.

The Sundance Film Festival®
A program of the non-profit Sundance Institute®, the Festival has introduced global audiences to some of the most ground-breaking films of the past two decades, including sex, lies, and videotape, Maria Full of Grace, The Cove, Hedwig and the Angry Inch, An Inconvenient Truth, Precious, Trouble the Water, and Napoleon Dynamite, and through its New Frontier initiative, has showcased the cinematic works of media artists including Isaac Julien, Doug Aitken, Pierre Huyghe, Jennifer Steinkamp, and Matthew Barney. The 2013 Sundance Film Festival® sponsors include: Presenting Sponsors – HP, Acura, Sundance Channel and Chase Sapphire PreferredSM, Leadership Sponsors – DIRECTV, Entertainment Weekly, FOCUS FORWARD, a partnership between GE and CINELAN, Southwest Airlines, Sprint and YouTube; Sustaining Sponsors – Adobe, Canada Goose, Canon U.S.A., Inc., CÎROC Ultra Premium Vodka, FilterForGood®, a partnership between Brita® and Nalgene®, Hilton HHonors and Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts, Intel Corporation, L'Oréal Paris, Recycled Paper Greetings, Stella Artois® and Time Warner Inc. Sundance Institute recognizes critical support from the Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development, and the State of Utah as Festival Host State. The support of these organizations will defray costs associated with the 10-day Festival and the nonprofit Sundance Institute's year-round programs for independent film and theatre artists. www.sundance.org/festival

Sundance Institute
Founded by Robert Redford in 1981, Sundance Institute is a global, nonprofit cultural organization dedicated to nurturing artistic expression in film and theater, and to supporting intercultural dialogue between artists and audiences. The Institute promotes independent storytelling to unite, inform and inspire, regardless of geo-political, social, religious or cultural differences. Internationally recognized for its annual Sundance Film Festival and its artistic development programs for directors, screenwriters, producers, film composers, playwrights and theatre artists, Sundance Institute has nurtured such projects as Born into Brothels, Trouble the Water, Beasts of the Southern Wild, Amreeka, An Inconvenient Truth, Spring Awakening, Light in the Piazza and Angels in America. Join Sundance Institute on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.
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For images go to http://www.sundance.org/images