Marjorie Prime Wins Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Feature Film Prize at 2017 Sundance Film Festival

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Winners of Commissioning Grant, Episodic Storytelling Grant and Lab Fellowship Revealed

Park City, Utah â?? At a reception during the 2017 Sundance Film Festival today, the beneficiaries of $60,000 in grants from Sundance Institute and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation were revealed. **Doron Weber**, the Vice President of Programs at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, announced the winners: **Michael Almereyda**â??s *Marjorie Prime* won the Feature Film Prize; **Adam Benic**â??s *Levittown* (Sundance Institute | Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Episodic Storytelling Grant); **Darcy Brislin** and **Dyana Winkler**â??s *Bell* (Sundance Institute | Sloan Lab Fellowship); and **Jamie Dawson** and **Howard Gertler**â??s *Untitled Smallpox Eradication Project* (Sundance Institute | Sloan Commissioning Grant).

The reception was preceded by an all-female panel on women in science and their onscreen portrayals (or lack thereof), with discussion of half a dozen films about women in science that were supported and championed by Sloan, including the hit film *Hidden Figures.* These activities are part of the Sundance Institute Science-In-Film Initiative, which is made possible by a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

Keri Putnam, Executive Director of Sundance Institute (Photo via Sundance.org)

â??Support for these artists and their projects is more timely than ever,â?• said Keri Putnam, Executive Director of Sundance Institute, â??Telling nuanced, human stories about science and technology is the most effective way to drive understanding of the forces that play such a major role in shaping our world today.â?•

â??We are thrilled to partner with Sundance for the 14th year in a row and award the 2017 Sloan Feature Film Prize at Sundance to Michael Almereydaâ??s *Marjorie*

Doron Weber, Vice President at the Sloan Foundation (Photo via Sloan.org)

Prime,â?• said Doron Weber, Vice President at the Sloan Foundation. â??With cool intelligence, wit and poignancy â?? allied to a deft directorial hand and a stellar cast â?? Almereyda explores the emotional landscape of artificial intelligence and dramatizes the emerging impact of intelligent machines on our most intimate human relationships. Sloan is also delighted to award three new screenwriting grants at Sundance focusing on scientists and inventors who helped shape the modern world as part of our â??non-profit movie studio for science â?• and a national development pipeline which has resulted in 20 feature films to date.â?•

Marjorie Prime: Winner of Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize

Marjorie Prime has been awarded the 2017 Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize and will receive a $20,000 cash award from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation at this yearâ??s Sundance Film Festival. 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.

Marjorie Prime / U.S.A. (Director and screenwriter: Michael Almereyda) â?? In the near futureâ??a time of artificial intelligenceâ??86-year-old Marjorie has a handsome new companion who looks like her deceased husband and is programmed to feed the story of her life back to her. What would we remember, and what would we forget, if given the chance? *Cast: Jon Hamm, Geena Davis, Lois Smith, Tim Robbins.*

The jury presented the award to the film for its â??imaginative and nuanced depiction of the evolving relationship between humans and technology, and its moving dramatization of how intelligent machines can challenge our notions of identity, memory and mortalityâ?•

As previously announced, this yearâ??s Alfred P. Sloan jury members are: Heather Berlin, Tracy Drain, Nell Greenfieldboyce, Nicole Perlman and Jennifer Phang.

Previous Alfred P. Sloan Prize Winners include: Ciro Guerra, *Embrace of the Serpent* (2015); Mike Cahill, *I Origins* (2014); Andrew Bujalski, *Computer Chess* (2013); Jake Schreier and 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 and Elena Soarez, *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.*

To support the development of screenplays with science or technology, Sundance Institute and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation provide three different opportunities for screenwriters through a Commissioning Grant, a Lab Fellowship and an Episodic Storytelling Grant. All provide a cash award to support further development of a screenplay and to retain science advisors, along with overall creative and strategic feedback throughout development.

Sundance Institute / Sloan Commissioning Grant

Jamie Dawson and Howard Gertler will receive a $12,500 cash award from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation at this yearâ??s Sundance Film Festival. Previous winnerâ??s include Alex Riveraâ??s *La Vida Robot* and Robert Edwardsâ??s *American Prometheus*.

Untitled Smallpox Eradication Project (U.S.A.) **/ Jamie Dawson** (Writer) and **Howard Gertler** (Producer)
In 1965, the World Health Organization orders a massive operation to eradicate the deadly smallpox virus from the human population. A ragtag band of very different personalities â?? from ashram hippies to tenacious scientists to tactical bureaucrats â?? clash and collaborate as they fight to pull off the impossible.

Jamie Dawson is a New York native and graduate of NYUâ??s Tisch School of the Arts Film Program. He has sold or optioned work to companies such as BCDF Pictures, Manage-ment/Dan Halsted, Formation Entertainment, and Permut Presentations. Projects in development include: *The Rabbit Garden*, his Black List script about controversial author Jerzy Kosinski (*Being There*) with producer David Permut and director Janusz Kaminski; and *Swan Song*, a television series based on the award-winning, cult classic novel by Robert McCammon (*Boyâ??s Life*).

Oscar-nominated producer **Howard Gertler**â??s credits include David Franceâ??s *How to Survive a Plague*, which premiered in competition at Sundance 2012 and was released by IFC Films/Sundance Selects; in addition to the Academy Award nomination, the film collected New York Film Criticsâ?? Circle, Peabody, IFP Gotham, IDA and GLAAD Media Awards. Heâ??s both an IFP/Gotham and Film Independent Spirit Award winner, the latter of which he won for producing John Cameron Mitchellâ??s *Shortbus*, which premiered in the official selection in Cannes and was released worldwide. His upcoming films include John Cameron Mitchellâ??s adaptation of Neil Gaimanâ??s *How to Talk to Girls at Parties*, produced with See-Saw Films, Film4, Ingenious and Screen Yorkshire, to be released by A24 and Studiocanal UK in 2017.

Sundance Institute / Sloan Lab Fellowship

Darcy Brislin and Dyana Winkler will receive a $15,000 cash award from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation at this yearâ??s Sundance Film Festival. Previous winners include Logan Kibbensâ??s *Operator,*

Michael Almereydaâ??s *Experimenter*, and Rob Meyerâ??s *A Birderâ??s Guide to Everything*.

Bell (U.S.A.) **/ Darcy Brislin** (Co-Writer) and **Dyana Winkler** (Co-Writer)
At a pivotal point in history, hearing society began a golden age of communication with the advent of the telephone, while deaf society plummeted into a dark age with the eradication of sign language and spread of eugenics. At the helm of both trajectories stands a single manâ??Alexander Graham Bell. This project was the recipient of the 2016 Sundance Sloan Commissioning Grant.

A Boston native, **Darcy Brislin** studied Art History and French at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. She received an MFA in screenwriting and directing from EICAR, the International Film School of Paris, where she met co-writer Dyana Winkler. Currently based in Los Angeles, Brislin has written screenplays with Sundance award-winning director Ondi Timoner and has a feature film in development entitled *Crown Chasers*, with Maria Bello attached to produce.

Dyana Winkler is a writer, director, producer based in Brooklyn. Her most recent film, a feature-length documentary entitled *United Skates*, is currently in post production and has received awards from the Sundance Institute, New York State Council For the Arts, Fledgling Foundation, Film Independent, Chicken & Egg, IFP, and many more. Winkler met her writing partner, Darcy Brislin, in Paris, France, while completing their MFAs in screenwriting and directing, and discovered their shared passion for casting new light on historical figures. They went on to write their first screenplay *Turing,* and have teamed up for a second time with *Bell*, which was the recipient of the 2016 Sundance Sloan Commissioning Grant.

Sundance Institute / Sloan Episodic Storytelling Grant: *Levittown*

Adam Benic will receive a $12,500 cash award from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation at this yearâ??s Sundance Film Festival.

Levittown (U.S.A.) **/ Adam Benic** (Writer, Creator)
A one-hour drama series about visionary WWII veteran, Lieutenant William Levitt, who on his 40th birthday broke ground on the largest private construction project in American history. Alongside his attorney father and architect brother, Will fights against an antiquated industry to fill the massive postwar housing need, thus building the worldâ??s first mass-produced suburb, Levittown, Long Island.

Adam Benic is a Writersâ?? Assistant on TNTâ??s *Animal Kingdom*, and formerly a Showrunnerâ??s Assistant on Huluâ??s *Shut Eye*, CBSâ??s *Extant*, and a graduate of AFIâ??s MFA Screenwriting program. Adam hails from Long Island, New York where he grew up in a Levitt home.

The Sundance Film FestivalÂ®
The Sundance Film Festival has introduced global audiences to some of the most groundbreaking films of the past three decades, including *Boyhood*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Fruitvale Station*, *Whiplash*, *Brooklyn*, *Twenty Feet from Stardom*, *Life Itself*, *The Cove*, *The End of the Tour*, *Blackfish*, *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*, *Super Size Me*, *Dope*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *sex, lies, and videotape*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Precious* and *Napoleon Dynamite*. The Festival is a program of the non-profit Sundance InstituteÂ®. 2017 Festival sponsors to date include: Presenting Sponsors â?? Acura, SundanceTV, Chase SapphireÂ®, and Canada Goose; Leadership

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Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
The New York based Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, founded in 1934, makes grants in science, technology, and economic performance. Sloanâ??s program in Public Understanding of Science and Technology, directed by Doron Weber, supports books, radio, film, television, theater and new media to reach a wide, non-specialized audience.

Sloanâ??s Film Program encourages filmmakers to create more realistic and compelling stories about scientists, science and technology and to challenge existing stereotypes about scientists and engineers in the popular imagination. Over the past 15 years, Sloan has partnered with some of the top film schools in the countryâ??including AFI, Carnegie Mellon, Columbia, NYU, UCLA and USCâ??and established annual awards in screenwriting and film production, along with an annual best-of-the-best Student Grand Jury Prize administered by the Tribeca Film Institute. The Foundation also supports screenplay development programs with the Sundance Institute, Tribeca Film Institute, the San Francisco Film Society, the Black List, and Film Independentâ??s Producing Lab and Fast Track program and has helped develop such film projects as Morten Tyldumâ??s *The Imitation Game*, Mathew Brownâ??s *The Man Who Knew Infinity*, Michael Almereydaâ??s *Experimenter*, Rob Meyerâ??s *A Birderâ??s Guide to Everything*, Musa Syeedâ??s *Valley of Saints*, and Andrew Bujalskiâ??s *Computer Chess*.

The Foundation also has an active theater program and commissions about twenty science plays each year from the Ensemble Studio Theater and Manhattan Theatre Club, as well as supporting select productions across the country. Recent grants have supported Nick Payneâ??s *Incognito*, Frank Basloeâ??s *Please Continue*, Deborah Zoe Lauferâ??s *Informed Consent*, Lucas Hnathâ??s *Isaacâ??s Eye*, and Anna Zieglerâ??s *Photograph 51*, recently on Londonâ??s West End.

The Foundationâ??s book program includes early stage support for *Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race*, now a major motion picture that was awarded the San Francisco Film Society Sloan Science in Cinema

Prize in 2016.

(Source: Press release courtesy of Sundance Media Relations)

*(Featured photo via zimbio.com)

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