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7 FILMMAKERS SELECTED FOR THE
FILM INDEPENDENT 2015 PRODUCING LAB

$30,000 SLOAN PRODUCERS GRANT AWARDED TO
THE DUST DIRECTED BY AMANDA BRENNAN AND PRODUCED BY SARAH
DORMAN

KARIN CHIEN, SHEILA HANAHAN TAYLOR, TED HOPE AND TOM RICE TO
MENTOR

Los Angeles (October 27, 2015) — Film Independent, the non-profit arts
organization that produces the Spirit Awards and LA Film Festival, announced
the producers selected for its 15th annual Producing Lab. The 2015 Producing
Lab is supported by Artist Development Lead Funder Time Warner Foundation.
Additional funding is provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the National
Endowment for the Arts. The four-week intensive program is designed to help
filmmakers develop skills as creative independent producers. Producers
participate with a feature length narrative project that they are in the process of
producing. Through the Lab, Fellows develop a strategy and action plan to bring
their current projects to fruition. The Lab also helps to further the careers of the
Producing Fellows by introducing them to film professionals who can advise them
on both the craft and business of independent producing.

This year’s Creative Advisors are Karin Chien (Circumstance, Jack and Diane),
Sheila Hanahan Taylor (Final Destination), Ted Hope (Adventureland, The
Savages) and Tom Rice (Mississippi Grind, The Way, Way, Back). Guest
speakers include previous Film Independent Producing Lab Fellows Rebecca
Green and Laura D. Smith, the producing team behind It Follows and I'll See You
in My Dreams both released this year.
Film Independent also awarded the 9th annual Sloan Producers Grant to the feature film project *The Dust* written and to be directed by Amanda Brennan and produced by Sarah Dorman. *The Dust* received a $30,000 production grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. The grant was awarded on October 23, 2015 at the Film Independent Forum. For the past nine years Film Independent and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation have joined forces to increase the public understanding of science and technology and to challenge stereotypes of scientists, engineers and mathematicians through compelling artist-driven films made by new, independent voices. Past recipients of Film Independent’s Alfred P. Sloan Grants include the Spirit Award nominated *Valley of Saints*, as well as *The Man Who Knew Infinity* starring Jeremy Irons and Dev Patel, which premiered at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival; and Michael Almereyda’s *Experimenter*, starring Peter Sarsgaard and Winona Ryder, which received Film Independent’s inaugural Alfred P. Sloan Distribution Grant.

“At Film Independent we recognize the importance of the creative producer to the vitality of independent film” said Jennifer Kushner, Director of Artist Development. “We are excited to support this group of filmmakers in their commitment to shepherd these meaningful, artist-driven films into being. They are all producers to watch. We are also deeply grateful to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for our dynamic partnership, which allows us to nurture such unique and compelling stories as Amanda Brennan’s *The Dust*. The Sloan Foundation plays an essential role in urging filmmakers to look to the rigorous investigation and groundbreaking discoveries of science as inspiration for narrative fiction film.”

“We are delighted to join with Film Independent in honoring *The Dust*, a poignant, lyrical tale about a young woman grappling with her sexuality in 1930s Oklahoma which pits science, rationality and the latest soil management techniques against fear, ignorance and superstition,” said Doron Weber, Vice President of Programs at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. “Amanda Brennan’s moving screenplay, to be produced by Sarah Dorman, originally received a Sloan Screenwriting Award while she was a student at Columbia University, part of the Sloan film development pipeline that has resulted in fifteen completed feature films over the past four years, including five films from the astonishingly fertile Film Independent Producing Lab—most recently *Experimenter*, *The Man Who Knew Infinity* and *Basmati Blues*. As both Sloan-supported and non-Sloan science films draw increasing audiences and critical acclaim—from last year’s *The Imitation Game* and *Theory of Everything* to this year’s *The Martian* and *Steve Jobs*—it becomes clearer with every new awards season that science and technology offer filmmakers wonderful stories, great characters and a unique approach to understanding and dramatizing the central issues and conflicts of modern life.”

Filmmakers were chosen based on the strength of their submitted script, business plan and creative vision. The Producing Lab is provided free to
accepted producers and upon completion, the producers become Film Independent Fellows, receiving year-round support, including access to Film Independent’s annual film educational offerings and the LA Film Festival.

Recent projects developed through the Producing Lab include Chloé Zhao’s *Songs My Brothers Taught Me* produced by Angela C. Lee and Mollye Asher which premiered in competition at Sundance and Director’s Fortnight at Cannes this year; Joseph Wladyka’s *Manos Sucias* produced by Elena Greenlee and Márcia Nunes, which received the Best New Narrative Director Award at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival; Maryam Keshavarz’s Spirit Award nominated *Circumstance*; Aurora Guerrero’s Spirit Award nominated *Mosquita y Mari*; and Musa Syeed and Nicholas Bruckman’s Spirit Award nominated *Valley of Saints*.

**The 2015 Producing Lab filmmakers and projects are:**

**Title:** The Dust  
**Producer:** Sarah Dorman  
**Logline:** In 1930s Oklahoma, when wheat prices drop and dust storms begin, one girl, at odds with her sexuality, believes she is the cause.

**Title:** Farewell Tour  
**Producer:** Frederick Thornton  
**Logline:** Sentimental 16-year-old Noah searches Kansas City for his AWOL mother.

**Title:** Give Me Liberty  
**Producer:** Drew Houpt  
**Logline:** A naïve immigrant teams up with a Russian thug, breaks the law to save his Alzheimer's stricken Grandpa, forms deep bonds with a diverse group of iconic under-class characters, and finds love in the unlikeliest of places. A raw dark comedy set in Milwaukee.

**Title:** Manuscript  
**Producer:** Alejandro De Leon  
**Logline:** A contemporary thriller about three bright, young New Yorkers with boundless literary ambition who will stop at nothing to get what they want.

**Title:** Moxie  
**Producer:** Christina Sibul  
**Logline:** Set in 1979, MOXIE tells the story of misfit Moxie, 14, sole member of the Social Activist’s club and self-avowed Geek. Abandoned by her divorcing parents, Moxie finds her fit with a college activist and his crowd. But when she gets pregnant by the "Feminist" rebel leader, she learns both love and activism
are more complicated than she thought. MOXIE is a poignant and often funny coming of age story about a girl finding voice in a rapidly changing world.

**Title:** Wannabe  
**Producer:** John Ramos  
**Logline:** During the 1991 Crown Heights Riots, a neurotic Jewish boy and a brash Caribbean girl become the unlikeliest of friends. They must find a way to stay together as everything - their families, the community, and their friendship - falls apart around them.

**Title:** You and me Both  
**Producer:** Carolyn Mao  
**Logline:** Upon the death of their adoptive mother, two Korean American sisters, estranged by the older one’s drug addiction, set out on a road trip to find their birth mother.

**About Film Independent**  
Film Independent is a non-profit arts organization that champions independent film and supports a community of artists who embody diversity, innovation, and uniqueness of vision. Film Independent helps filmmakers make their movies, builds an audience for their projects, and works to diversify the film industry. Film Independent’s Board of Directors, filmmakers, staff, and constituents, is comprised of an inclusive community of individuals across ability, age, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation. Anyone passionate about film can become a member, whether you are a filmmaker, industry professional, or a film lover. Film Independent produces the Spirit Awards, the annual celebration honoring artist-driven films and recognizing the finest achievements of American independent filmmakers. Film Independent also produces the LA Film Festival, showcasing the best of American and international cinema and the Film Independent at LACMA Film Series, a year-round, weekly program that offers unique cinematic experiences for the Los Angeles creative community and the general public.

With over 250 annual screenings and events, Film Independent provides access to a network of like-minded artists who are driving creativity in the film industry. Film Independent’s Artist Development program offers free Labs for selected writers, directors, producers and documentary filmmakers and presents year-round networking opportunities. Project Involve is Film Independent’s signature program dedicated to fostering the careers of talented filmmakers from communities traditionally underrepresented in the film industry. For more information or to become a member, visit filmindependent.org
About The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
The New York based Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, founded in 1934, makes grants in science, technology, and economic performance. Sloan'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.

Sloan's Film Program encourages filmmakers to create more realistic and compelling stories about 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 country - including AFI, Carnegie Mellon, Columbia, NYU, UCLA and USC - 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 Independent's Producing Lab and Fast Track program and has helped develop such film projects as Morten Tyldum’s The Imitation Game, Mathew Brown’s The Man Who Knew Infinity, Michael Almereyda’s Experimenter, Rob Meyer's A Birder's Guide to Everything, Musa Syeed's Valley of Saints, and Andrew Bujalski'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 Payne’s Constellations, a Broadway hit starring Jake Gyllenhaal and Ruth Wilson, Deborah Zoe Laufer’s Informed Consent, co-produced with Primary Stages at the Duke, Lucas Hnath's Isaac's Eye, and Anna Ziegler's Photograph 51, now in London’s West End starring Nicole Kidman.

For more information about the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, please visit www.sloan.org

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