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**BRAND: A SECOND COMING TO OPEN SXSW FILM 2015**  
**Early Fest Highlights Include *Ex Machina*, *Kusama* & *Ibaka***

**Austin, Texas – January 8, 2015** – The South by Southwest (SXSW) Film Conference and Festival is excited to announce the world premiere of Ondi Timoner’s *BRAND: A Second Coming*, a documentary on comedian, author and activist Russell Brand, as its Opening Night Film on Friday, March 13, 2015.

SXSW also divulged a handful of titles to premiere at the 2015 event, showcasing the diverse range of spirited, inspiring topics and filmmaking styles SXSW is known for. Additional films announced include Michael Showalter’s savvy comedy, *Hello, My Name is Doris*, starring Sally Field, award-winning filmmaker Karyn Kusama’s taut thriller, *The Invitation*, Jessica Edwards’ *Mavis!*, a roof-raising celebration of legendary singer Mavis Staples, Grantland Features’ first film, *Son of the Congo*, following NBA star Serge Ibaka’s return to his homeland and directed by Adam Hootnick, *A Brave Heart: The Lizzie Velasquez Story* from director Sara Hirsh Bordo tracing Lizzie’s journey from cyberbullying victim to influential activist, and the North American premiere of Alex Garland’s eagerly-awaited directorial debut, *Ex Machina*, starring Oscar Isaac.

“Firebrand Ondi Timoner’s bold and lively documentary on Russell Brand knocked us out with its humor, insight and raw energy, pulling back the curtain on a truly passionate figure as he grapples with fame, influence and where we are as a 21st century society. We are thrilled for the film to kick off our event and excited to see our audiences embrace it with the same enthusiasm that shines out of Brand himself,” said Head of Film Janet Pierson. “Although we’re still intensely programming our final selections, we couldn’t wait to reveal a glimpse of the great films in store at SXSW Film 2015.”

The complete festival lineup will be announced Tuesday, February 3, with the exception of Midnighter features, which will be revealed with the Short Film Program on Tuesday, February 10. Celebrating its 22nd year, the SXSW Film Conference and Festival will take place March 13 – 21, 2015 in Austin, Texas. For more information, visit [sxsw.com/film](http://sxsw.com/film).

The 2015 SXSW Film Festival will feature:

***BRAND: A Second Coming* (World Premiere)**

Director: Ondi Timoner

*BRAND: A Second Coming* follows comedian/author Russell Brand’s evolution from addict & Hollywood star to unexpected political disruptor & newfound hero to the underserved. Brand is criticized for egomaniacal self-interest as he calls for revolution.

***A Brave Heart: The Lizzie Velasquez Story*** (World Premiere)

Director: Sara Hirsh Bordo

From the producers of the most viewed TEDWomen event of 2013 comes *A Brave Heart: The Lizzie Velasquez Story*, a documentary following the inspiring journey of 25-year-old, 58-pound Lizzie from cyber-bullying victim to anti-bullying activist.

***Ex Machina*** (North American Premiere)

Director/Screenwriter: Alex Garland

Alex Garland, writer of *28 Days Later* and *Sunshine*, makes his directorial debut with the stylish and cerebral thriller *Ex Machina*, starring Domhnall Gleeson, Oscar Isaac and Alicia Vikander.

*Cast: Domhnall Gleeson, Oscar Isaac, Alicia Vikander*

***Hello, My Name is Doris*** (World Premiere)

Director: Michael Showalter, Screenwriters: Michael Showalter, Laura Terruso

An isolated 60-year-old woman is motivated by a self-help seminar to romantically pursue a younger coworker, causing her to stumble into the spotlight of the Brooklyn hipster social scene.

*Cast: Sally Field, Max Greenfield, Beth Behrs*

***The Invitation*** (World Premiere)

Director: Karyn Kusama, Screenwriters: Phil Hay, Matt Manfredi

A reunion of old friends turns into a nightmare when one guest, a haunted man whose ex-wife is among the hosts, begins to fear that the night is part of a terrifying agenda.

*Cast: Logan Marshall-Green, Tammy Blanchard, Michiel Huisman, Emayatzy Corinealdi, Lindsay Burdge*

***Mavis!*** (World Premiere)

Director: Jessica Edwards

Her family group, the Staple Singers, inspired millions and helped propel the civil rights movement with their music. After 60 years of performing, legendary singer Mavis Staples' message of love and equality is needed now more than ever.

***Son of the Congo*** (World Premiere / SXsports screening)

Director/Screenwriter: Adam Hootnick

Serge Ibaka's improbable journey has taken him from the violence of Congo to the top of the NBA. In *Son of the Congo*, Ibaka returns home, hoping his basketball success can help rebuild a country and inspire a new generation to dream of a better life.

In addition to nine full days of film screenings, SXSW Film will ultimately feature over 150 informative and entertaining sessions including previously announced Keynote speakers Mark Duplass, Ava DuVernay and RZA, Featured Sessions, panels, workshops and mentor sessions. The program presents topics that cover the film spectrum. The Film Conference is enhanced by Convergence Programming (open to more than one badge type) which exists at the intersection of Music, Film and Interactive. Popular Convergence tracks include Digital Domain, Future of TV and SXsports.

For more confirmed Film Conference sessions and further details on Convergence Programming, go to [sxsw.com/film/conference/2015-sessions](http://sxsw.com/film/conference/2015-sessions). The final Film Keynote speaker, complete Conference lineup and additional Convergence Programming, will be released on Tuesday, February 17. For more information, visit [sxsw.com/film](http://sxsw.com/film).

Register for a SXSW badge today at [sxsw.com/attend](http://sxsw.com/attend), and join us March 13 – 21, 2015 for unparalleled access to all these sessions, screenings, parties, the SXSW Trade Show and, of course, a creative and inspirational experience that only SXSW can deliver. Be sure to register soon, and gain access to conveniently located hotels. Register by 11:59pm CT on Friday, January 16 and save up to 10% off the walk-up rate.

**About SXSW Film**

Every March, creatives of all stripes gather in Austin to witness, share and inspire the visions that will galvanize the filmmakers and ideas of tomorrow. SXSW Film Conference & Festival champions the vitality, innovation and opportunity that drives the entertainment and media landscape, and boldly tackles the evolution of all aspects of “film” today, down to its very definition. A nexus of discovery and collaborative energy, SXSW Film celebrates the art and business of the possible.

SXSW 2015 is sponsored by Miller Lite, Esurance, AT&T, IFC, Mazda, Monster Energy, McDonald’s and The Austin Chronicle.

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**Press Credentials:** We are accepting applications for 2015 SXSW Press Credentials at [www.sxsw.com/press](http://www.sxsw.com/press). The deadline to apply is Wednesday, February 11, 2015 and walk-up requests will not be granted.

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