



Presented by: CinemalChicago
30 East Adams, Suite 800
Chicago, Illinois 60603
Tel: 312-683-0121 • Fax: 312-683-0122
www.chicagofilmfestival.com

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Media Contacts:

Alejandro Riera
312.683.0121, x 116
publicity@chicagofilmfestival.com

Nick Harkin/Carly Leviton
Carol Fox and Associates
773.327.3830 x 103/104
nickh@carolfoxassociates.com
carlyl@carolfoxassociates.com

**THE 50th CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
HONORED THE PAST AND CELEBRATED THE FUTURE OF CINEMA**

CHICAGO (October 24, 2014) – In the last 50 years, the Chicago International Film Festival has presented over 10,000 features selected from over 80,000 entries, and has taken place over a period of 100 weeks while audiences have enjoyed over 1.5 million bags of popcorn. The Festival's enduring tradition has demonstrated that everybody loves movies, especially those offering unique visions and stories seen as they were meant to be seen—on the big screen.

The 50th Chicago International Film Festival wrapped up its golden anniversary celebration on **Thursday, October 23** with the Closing Night presentation of **Jean-Marc Vallée's** and **Nick Hornby's** adaptation of Cheryl Strayed's best-selling Book **"Wild,"** starring Reese Witherspoon in an Oscar®-worthy performance.

Official selections at this year's Festival featured 133 narrative films, 19 documentaries and 68 short films from more than 50 countries; 1,500 features were considered, as well as 2,200 short films. The Festival presented the feature debuts of 31 directors from the United States, Chile, Cuba, Hungary, India, Israel, New Zealand, South Korea, and Uruguay, among other countries. It welcomed back works by such acclaimed artists as Alejandro G. Iñárritu, Olivier Assayas, Krzysztof Zanussi, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, and Frederick Wiseman.

In celebration of the golden anniversary, this year featured special presentations of past Festival winners, audience favorites, and cinema classics. More than 20 films were selected as part of this retrospective, including 1971 Silver Hugo winner **"Family Life"** (directed by Krzysztof Zanussi), Lars von Trier's Academy Award®-nominated **"Breaking the Waves,"** and three films which received their World Premiere at past Festivals: Milos Forman's **"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"** (1975), and also Taylor Hackford's **"The Idolmaker"** (1980) and **"White Nights"** (1985). Several longtime Festival friends presented restored special editions of their favorite films and participated in post-screening dialogues with the public, among them director, writer and producer **Oliver Stone** (**"Natural Born Killers: Director's Cut"** and **"Alexander: The Ultimate Cut"**), and documentarian **Michael Moore** (the 25th anniversary restored edition of **"Roger and Me"**).

"The Festival took audiences on a journey through the history of cinema," said Founder and Artistic Director **Michael Kutza**. "We brought back to the silver screen some wonderful classics and celebrated the careers of some old friends like Taylor Hackford, Oliver Stone, Michael Moore, Kathleen Turner, Colleen Moore, and Liv Ullmann. And we also looked forward, as we have done since the beginning, as we introduced audiences to filmmakers unafraid to blaze new trails with their first and second feature films."

"We were thrilled to welcome more than 200 guests to the Festival this year to participate in screenings and events," added Programming Director of the 50th Chicago International Film Festival, **Mimi Plauché**.

“Our audiences embraced the filmmakers and their work, engaging in spirited conversations about the films, their artistic processes, and the cultural contexts of their work.”

Films from Georgia, France, Argentina, Israel, Sweden, Mexico, Greece, Norway, Russia, Ireland and the United States, among other countries, won the Gold and Silver Hugo Awards in the Festival's Competitions: **International Feature, New Directors, Docufest, OUT-Look Competition/Q Hugo Award**, and **Short Film**. The inaugural **Roger Ebert Award**, which will be presented annually to an emerging filmmaker whose film presents a fresh and uncompromising vision, went to Jorge Pérez Solano's "**La Tirisia**" (Mexico).

Filmmakers, actors, producers and special guests from 35 countries participated in post-screening discussions and free public panels, giving Festival audiences an insight into their work and the artistic process. Filmmakers also had the opportunity to mingle with industry insiders, media, and fellow film enthusiasts.

Red Carpet Events

The 50th Chicago International Film Festival once again played host to a wide variety of film artists, some of whose films will compete for such major awards as the Golden Globes® and the Academy Awards® early next year.

The **Opening Night** presentation of veteran actress and Ingmar Bergman collaborator **Liv Ullmann's** latest film, "**Miss Julie**," based on August Strindberg's 1888 naturalistic drama and starring Golden Globe®-award winning actors **Jessica Chastain, Samantha Morton, and Colin Farrell**, on **October 9** at the Harris Theater, turned into a gathering of old friends as Ullmann, Farrell, International Feature Competition Jury president **Kathleen Turner**, and director **Andrew Davis** joined Festival Founder and Artistic Director **Michael Kutza** on the red carpet. The event ended with a post-screening reception at the Chicago Cultural Center where Ullmann, Farrell and Kutza cut into a gigantic, one-of-a-kind 50th anniversary cheesecake provided by **Eli's Cheesecake**, which was served to over 700 guests.

The 50th Chicago International Film Festival honored director **Gina Prince-Bythewood** ("Love and Basketball," "The Secret Life of Bees") with the Festival's **Artistic Achievement Award** and actress **Gugu Mbatha-Raw** ("Belle") with the **Emerging Talent Award** at the **18th Annual Black Perspectives Tribute and Gala**, on **Friday, October 10**. The tribute was followed by a special presentation of Prince-Bythewood's latest film "**Beyond the Lights**."

Other world-renowned artists who walked the Festival's Red Carpet included directors Taylor Hackford, Oliver Stone, Michael Moore, **Gabe Polsky** ("**Red Army**"), **Chuck Workman** ("**Magician: The Astonishing Life and Work of Orson Welles**"), **Justin Simien** ("**Dear White People**"), Krzysztof Zanussi; Kathleen Turner, **Richard LaGravenese** ("The Last 5 Years"), and **Chaz Ebert**.

Special Programs and Conversations

Made possible, in part, through grants from the Swedish Council of America, the American-Scandinavian Foundation and the Finlandia Foundation National, **Spotlight Scandinavia**, the fourth year of the World Cinema Spotlight Program, highlighted the exciting, rich, and diverse range of contemporary cinematic cultures across the five Nordic countries. Twenty feature-length films and a program of eight short films were presented, many of which competed for awards in the International Feature, New Directors, Q Hugo, Docufest, and Short Film Competitions. The lineup included several retrospective screenings of important award-winning films from the Festival's history, including Ingmar Bergman's "**Fanny and Alexander**" and a new digital restoration of Jan Troell's "**Here's Your Life**."

Filmmakers from all five Nordic countries -Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden- attended the Festival to present their films. Visiting filmmakers included director **Niels Arden Oplev** and producer **Thomas Heinesen** ("Speed Walking," Denmark), producer **Lasse Saarinen** ("No Thank You," Finland), scriptwriter **Huldar Breidfjord** ("Paris of the North," Iceland), directors **Helgi Felixson** and **Titti Johnson** ("Vive la France," Sweden), director **Bent Hamer** ("1001 Grams," Norway), director **Ester Martin Bergsmark** ("Something Must Break," Sweden), director **Ronnie Sandahl** ("Underdog," Sweden) and Norwegian actress and director **Liv Ullmann** ("Miss Julie", Norway, UK).

The Festival celebrated the return of a long lost treasure to the silver screen, **“Why Be Good?”** fully restored with the original score. This top box-office draw of 1929 stars Chicago’s own Colleen Moore (1899-1988), not only one of the great comediennes of the silent screen era but also co-founder of the Chicago International Film Festival. Longtime Festival friend, film historian, Charlie Chaplin expert and director of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival, **David Robinson**, explored the origins of Chaplin’s renowned “Tramp” costume 100 years ago in a special program that included a screening of “Kid’s Auto Races at Venice” and the short “The Immigrant”. Film historian and George Cukor/Alfred Hitchcock-expert, **John Russell Taylor** presented restored versions of Cukor’s **“A Star Is Born”** starring Judy Garland and James Mason and Hitchcock’s **“Jamaica Inn.”**

Reaching Out to a Future Generation of Moviegoers

For twenty-four years, the Chicago International Film Festival has welcomed Chicago Public School students to participate in its **Education Outreach Screening Program**. Seven screenings were offered, including documentaries, feature-length narratives, an international shorts program and a screening of **“CineYouth’s Best of the Fest.”** Approximately 2,000 students ranging grades 6-12 from 22 schools attended these screenings.

"We are incredibly proud of the Education Outreach Screenings Program. Part of our long standing, year-round student screening program, the line-up during the Festival introduced students to stories about identity, love and growing up," said Education Program Manager **Rebecca Fons**. "These selected films convey universal themes that students experience in their daily lives, and the screenings challenge students to be engaged audience members as they experience films from other countries and in other languages, sometimes for the first time."

During the 2014-2015 school year, more than 6,000 CPS students and teachers will participate in Cinema/Chicago’s Education Outreach Program. Prior to all Cinema/Chicago Education Outreach Screenings, study guides are provided to prepare educators and students for the content and themes of each film, ensuring that the discussion can take place long after the students have left the theater. With the help of the Cinema/Chicago Education Advisory Committee - made up of youth media professionals and educators - films are chosen that relate to Chicago Public School curriculum, exposing students to films from other cultures, in other languages, and about complex and engaging subjects.

What’s Next

The **51st Chicago International Film Festival** will be held **October 8-22, 2015**.

For the latest information, visit www.chicagofilmfestival.com or follow us on Twitter (@chifilmfest) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/chicagofilmfestival). For images go to www.chicagofilmfestival.com/press/.

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About Cinema/Chicago

Cinema/Chicago is a not-for-profit cultural and educational organization dedicated to encouraging better understanding between cultures and to making a positive contribution to the art form of the moving image. The Chicago International Film Festival is part of the year-round programs presented by Cinema/Chicago, which also include the International Screenings Program (May-September), the Chicago International Television Competition (April), CineYouth Festival (May), Intercom Competition (October) and year-round Education Outreach and Member Screenings Program.