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NEWS

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## 2015 CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL REVEALS SUPER-SIZED **CITY & STATE** PROGRAM

*HENRY GAMBLE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY, FOR GRACE, and  
SYL JOHNSON: ANY WAY THE WIND BLOWS*  
*Headline Record-Breaking Showcase of Illinois-Made Films*

(CHICAGO, September 4, 2015) - The 51st Chicago International Film Festival is proud to present this year's **City & State** program, sponsored by [Whole Foods Market](#) and [KIND](#) snacks. Running during the Oct 15-29, 2015 Festival, this program of narrative, documentary, and short films celebrates Illinois' rich filmmaking tradition and showcases the best films with Illinois roots. Each Official Selection is eligible for the Chicago Award. **City & State** films are listed below and photos may be downloaded from [here](#).

With the largest number of local film selections to date, this year's **City & State** program is led by three World Premieres: 1) a documentary about Chicago's beloved "Breakfast Queen," 2) a portrait of the most sampled artist in hip hop, and 3) a big-hearted family drama.

"Each year the films in consideration for the Chicago Award get more competitive and we are thrilled to present such a large number of quality locally-produced works," says **Founder & Artistic Director Michael Kutza**. "For the Festival, it's very exciting to showcase this wave of Chicago and Illinois-based filmmaking that cannot be ignored."

The **City & State** program highlights the trendiest Chicago restaurants, a funny and heartbreakingly honest film from Chicagoan [Stephen Cone](#), and an Evanston-set drama with a commanding performance from [Taryn Manning](#) ("Orange is the New Black"). The program also includes the return of local Festival alumni including directors [Bradley Bischoff](#), Joel Benjamin, [Jack C. Newell](#), and [Malik Bader](#), who also stars in Bischoff's **Nomad**.

"The Chicago International Film Festival celebrates excellence in filmmaking from around the world - and in our own backyard. Our Illinois film selections are strong and diverse, with filmmakers creating astounding works within the confines of very low budgets. Several filmmakers are returning with exciting new work while others are having their debut at the Festival," said Chicago International Film Festival **Programming Director Mimi Plauché**.

"I'm excited there is a lot of great local talent at this year's Chicago International Film Festival and our Industry Days program will only further support Chicago's filmmaking scene," adds **Programmer Anthony Kaufman.**

The 51st Chicago International Film Festival runs Oct 15-29, 2015. Festival passes are available for purchase at [ChicagoFilmFestival.com](http://ChicagoFilmFestival.com) or Mon-Fri, 10:00am-6:00pm at 312-332-FILM. \*All programs subject to change.

## FILMS

*All films listed will receive their Chicago premiere at the Festival unless otherwise indicated.*

### **Breakfast At Ina's**

WORLD PREMIERE

Country: USA

Director: Mercedes Kane

Synopsis: Famous for its Heavenly Hots (pancakes topped with fruit compote), Ina's was a Chicago breakfast institution. Every customer received a warm welcome from proprietor and chef Ina Pinkney, the "Breakfast Queen." After 33 years in the restaurant business, Pinkney retired in 2013. Following the restaurant's final month, *Breakfast at Ina's* celebrates a beloved Chicago eatery and a woman who achieved her dream against the odds.

### **Cash Only**

USA PREMIERE

Country: USA

Director: Malik Bader

Synopsis: In this gritty Detroit-set thriller, Elvis Martini (writer-star [Nickola Shreli](#), in a gripping performance) is a single Albanian father and landlord trying to do the right thing. But since he's in debt to both bookies and his daughter's school, Elvis needs to come up with some serious money fast. Chicago director Malik Bader delivers a riveting and assured genre film, complete with rich cultural details and a shockingly gruesome finale.

### **For Grace**

Country: USA

Director: Kevin Pang and Mark Helenowski

Synopsis: After cooking his way through Chicago's top kitchens, renowned Chef Curtis Duffy begins plans for his dream establishment, Grace. A delicious look at what it takes to build one of the world's greatest restaurants, and the complex story of a man forging a new future out of his traumatic past.

### **Henry Gamble's Birthday Party**

Country: USA

Director: Stephen Cone

Synopsis: Henry's turning 17, and he thinks he might be gay. But he's not telling his pastor father, who's throwing him a pool party. Soon, school mates and church friends are spending a sunny, hormonal afternoon together in their swimsuits. Unfolding over the course of one day, this funny and heartbreakingly honest portrait from Chicagoan Stephen Cone explores the intersection between devout faith and burgeoning sexuality.

### **A Light Beneath Their Feet**

Country: USA

Director: Valerie Weiss

Synopsis: In a commanding performance, Taryn Manning ("Orange is the New Black") plays an Evanston mother, wrestling with bipolar disorder and an imminent empty nest. Dedicated daughter Beth has a bright future ahead, but must decide if she will stay near home to care for her unpredictable mom or follow her own path. Emotionally raw and bracingly honest, this coming-of-age drama balances the pull of family obligation against personal aspirations.

### **The Middle Distance**

WORLD PREMIERE

Country: USA

Director: Patrick Underwood

Synopsis: Womanizing workaholic Neil returns to Michigan to reunite with his brother after their father dies. As they try to renovate and sell the family home, their interactions are as chilly as the frost-covered February landscape. But Neil's façade thaws under the glow of his brother's charismatic fiancée. With his feature debut, Chicago writer-director Patrick Underwood crafts a big-hearted romantic melodrama about what it means to rebuild.

### **Open Tables**

Country: USA

Director: Jack C. Newell

Synopsis: Food and conversation abound in this sumptuous comedy from Chicago writer-director-actor Jack C. Newell. Over dinner, friends trade wild stories about relationships, including a woman who falls in love with an amnesiac, a couple who met through their former partners, and an unforgettably sexy trip to Paris. Filmed locally, with improvisational dialogue and a cast plucked from the city's improv scene, *Open Tables* is a smorgasbord of fun.

### **Radical Grace**

Country: USA

Director: Rebecca Parrish

Synopsis: Politically outspoken and unapologetically feminist, the "Nuns on the Bus" protest group rebels against a Vatican-ordered censure by embracing social activism as a form of spiritual practice. An indelible exploration of the evolving views changing the face of Catholicism under the leadership of Pope Francis, Chicago-based filmmaker Rebecca Parrish's uplifting, humanistic documentary is a call for equality that transcends boundaries.

### **Syl Johnson: Any Way The Wind Blows**

WORLD PREMIERE

Country: USA

Director: Rob Hatch-Miller

Synopsis: Velvet-voiced soul singer Syl Johnson struggled for decades before leaving the biz in the 1980s to open a Chicago fried-fish chain. Since then, he's become one of the most-sampled artists in hip-hop. With a lively soundtrack, this buoyant world premiere documentary celebrates one man who can't stop the music.

### Shorts Program: City & State

Funny, quirky, striking, moving, eye-opening... Find your own personal gem in our City & State shorts program featuring fiction, animation, and documentary works from local talent. In **Nomad** (directed by Brad Bischoff), a husband tries to take his wife out for the night, but their guests stand in his way. Discover a forbidden planet in **Chasm** (directed by Joel Benjamin). The documentary **I Am the Passenger** (directed by Todd Lauterbach) attempts to fill a hole in the filmmaker's memory. In **Unknown Unknown** (directed by Ed Flynn) grocery shopping has never felt so off. Old-time radio undergoes an extreme makeover in **Retrocognition** (directed by Eric Patrick). An ominous announcement turns a young woman's world upside down in **Marlene** (directed by Andy Berlin). **Nick Santore** (directed by Jake Zalutsky) documents a bittersweet relationship between a father and his son. **The Same River Twice** (directed by Weijia Ma) infuses childhood memories with life and color. *93 min*

### ABOUT WHOLE FOODS MARKET

Whole Foods Market likes to keep things as local as possible, no matter if it is berries, cheese or artistic expressions. That is why we are excited to sponsor the Chicago International Film Festival's City & State program for the first time this year, and support the creative spirit of Chicago that we love.

### ABOUT KIND SNACKS

What began with just 8 bar varieties in 2004 has grown to over 22 bars and 6 Healthy Grains snackable clusters, and a multitude of new recipes being perfected and refined to our standards in the KIND® kitchen. So whether your snacking style is choosy or adventurous (or a little bit of both), here's something to celebrate: we'll always be thinking up new ways to delight your taste buds and keep your body happy.

### ABOUT FESTIVAL SPONSORS

The 51st Chicago International Film Festival's sponsors include Gold Festival Partners: TIAA-CREF, Columbia College Chicago, Wintrust Community Banks; Official Airline: American Airlines; Headquarters Hotel: JW Marriott Chicago; Silver Festival Partners: Bloomberg, Intersites; Platinum Media Partners: National CineMedia (NCM), JC Decaux, Michigan Avenue Magazine; Gold Media Partners: Time Out Chicago, WTTW11; Bronze Festival Partners: Stella Artois, AARP, Tribune Media; Participating Partners: SundanceNow Doc Club, Whole Foods, Wansas Tequila, Cultivate Studios, Netrix, KIND, OtterBox; Participating Hotels: Public, The Whitehall Hotel, theWit; and Cultural Partners: Consulate General of Argentina in Chicago, Italian Cultural Institute of Chicago, Italian Film Commission. With Foundation and Government support from the National Endowment of the Arts, Alphawood Foundation Chicago, the Illinois Arts Council, and Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events, Richard H. Driehaus Foundation.

### ABOUT CINEMA/CHICAGO

Cinema/Chicago is a not-for-profit arts and education 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 one of the year-round programs presented by Cinema/Chicago, which also include the Chicago International Film Festival Television Awards, CineYouth Festival, INTERCOM Competition, International Screenings Program, and Education Outreach Program. Celebrating its 51st anniversary this year, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival. Learn more at [www.chicagofilmfestival.com](http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com).

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