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14 PREMIERES IN NEW DIRECTORS COMPETITION
AT 51ST CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
Featuring First and Second-Time Directors from Across the Globe

(CHICAGO, September 9, 2015) - The Chicago International Film Festival (Oct 15-29, 2015) announces the lineup for its New Directors Competition, sponsored by Columbia College Chicago. Films in the New Directors Competition are receiving their World, North American, or U.S. Premiere at the Festival. Argentina, Brazil, China, Denmark, Iceland, Iran, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States are among the countries represented in this competition.

This diverse lineup includes the stunningly composed GREATER THINGS receiving its World Premiere; EMBERS, a thought-provoking sci-fi film having its North American Premiere; HECTOR with powerhouse actor Peter Mullan (War Horse) in his best performance in years; SPARRROWS, a bittersweet coming-of-age story about learning to stand up for yourself; THE MIDDLE DISTANCE from Chicago director Patrick Underwood receiving its World Premiere; and THE THIN YELLOW LINE produced by Guillermo del Toro. Photos may be downloaded from here. "For over 50 years the Chicago International Film Festival has been devoted to the discovery of new voices in filmmaking. This competition truly embodies that spirit," says Programming Director Mimi Plauché. "The New Directors Competition is always very exciting, as it showcases rising talents from around the world."

The 51st Chicago International Film Festival runs October 15-29, 2015. For media accreditation, please click here.

New Directors Competition: first and second feature films
All programs subject to change

Embers
NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE
Country: USA
Director: Claire Carré
Synopsis: After a global neurological epidemic, survivors exist with no long-term memory, left adrift in a world no one can fully remember. A young woman in quarantine yearns for freedom, while two lovers, a young criminal, and an abandoned child struggle for love and connection. Like Memento en masse, this thought-provoking sci-fi film elegantly imagines a world where our past isn't there to guide us.
Greater Things
USA PREMIERE
Country: UK/Japan
Director: Vahid Hakimzadeh
Synopsis: In this stunningly composed meditation on space and human relationships, an adrift Iranian architect, a disengaged Japanese couple, and a Lithuanian mixed martial arts fighter search for connection in modern Japan. From the stylishly designed shops of Tokyo to a minimalist glass suburban home to a mysterious tree house in the woods, Greater Things reveals the strange places we inhabit, and how they can both unite and divide us.

Hector
USA PREMIERE
Country: UK
Director: Jake Gavin
Synopsis: Powerhouse actor Peter Mullan (War Horse) delivers his best performance in years as a homeless man journeying across the UK to reach his relatives for Christmas. First-time director Jake Gavin deftly mines humor and warmth from the seemingly bleak premise, as Hector finds family in the unlikeliest of places. Sometimes, simply putting one foot in front of the other can be its own triumph.

The Here After (Efterskalv)
USA PREMIERE
Country: Sweden
Director: Magnus von Horn
Synopsis: After serving time in juvenile detention, teenager John returns to the strained confines of the home he shares with his father and younger brother. As he attempts to reintegrate into home and school life, the shadow of his violent past haunts him, his family, and their scarred community. Tensions mount until John has no choice but to face the pain he has caused.

The Homecoming (Blóðberg)
USA PREMIERE
Country: Iceland
Director: Björn Hlynur Haraldsson
Synopsis: Self-help author Gunnar’s humdrum routine is shaken when he realizes his son’s new fiancée may be a bit closer to him than they think. He must choose between keeping his secret or protecting his son. A dark, unpredictable “family” comedy ensues, as everyone scrambles to recover their grip on the truth.

Magallanes
USA PREMIERE
Country: Peru
Director: Salvador del Solar
Synopsis: Peruvian actor Salvador del Solar makes a remarkably confident directorial debut with the gripping Magallanes. A misfortune-plagued cabbie (Damián Alcázar) quietly bears the emotional and psychological scars of his military service—but his trauma resurfaces when a woman from his past takes a seat in his taxi. In this unflinching tale of a man’s dangerous quest for redemption, the road to atonement is a bumpy one.
**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.

**Nahid**
USA PREMIERE  
Country: Iran  
Director: Ida Panahandeh  
Synopsis: Nahid, a young divorcée, is allowed to live with her son, but only on the condition that she does not remarry. Hoping to move in with the man she loves, Nahid considers another option called “temporary marriage.” But is this legal loophole a salvation or a curse? Starring A Separation’s Sareh Bayat, this accomplished Cannes Film Festival award winner weighs the rewards of domestic security against the sacrifices of personal freedoms.

**Orphans of Eldorado (Órfãos do Eldorado)**
USA PREMIERE  
Country: Brazil  
Director: Guilherme Coelho  
Synopsis: In this sensual, mythical tale of obsession, a man returns to his hometown by the Amazon, where he resumes a dangerous old affair and begins another one with a woman who seems to emerge and disappear from the river itself. An immersive film that plunges into Oedipal desires and Brazilian legends.

**Red Spider (Czerwony pajak)**
USA PREMIERE  
Country: Poland  
Director: Marcin Koszalka  
Synopsis: In this unconventional, unsettling serial killer film, a gifted young athlete develops a dangerous fascination with brutal murders occurring across Communist-era Krakow. With breathtaking cinematography and striking period detail, renowned cinematographer and documentarian Marcin Koszalka brings the paranoia of the time period to life, forgoing sensationalist violence in favor of a haunting, disquieting look at guilt and madness.

**Road to La Paz (Camino a La Paz)**
USA PREMIERE  
Country: Argentina  
Director: Francisco Varone  
Synopsis: Unemployed and adrift, 30-something Sebastian (Rodrigo de la Serna, The Motorcycle Diaries) takes on work as a private driver almost on a whim. When elderly Muslim client Jalil offers Sebastian a large sum to drive him to La Paz, Bolivia, the two set off on a life-changing 2,000 mile journey. By turns heartwarming and hilarious, this road movie spans generational, cultural, and religious divides on a tour through the South American continent.
**Sparrows**  
USA PREMIERE  
Country: Iceland  
Director: Rúnar Rúnarsson  
Synopsis: Forced to return to the remote village of his childhood to live with his estranged father, teenager Ari has never felt more isolated. While his hard-partying dad and loving but frail grandmother do their best to mend the broken past, local bullies and rough living leave Ari struggling to find his place. Unfolding with pathos and understated emotion, *Sparrows* is a bittersweet coming-of-age story about learning to stand up for yourself.

**The Thin Yellow Line (La delgada línea amarilla)**  
USA PREMIERE  
Country: Mexico  
Director: Celso García  
Synopsis: This hilarious Guillermo del Toro-produced buddy movie follows five men tasked with painting the median line on a lonely rural road. Good-natured male bonding blends with gorgeous landscape cinematography in this thoughtful portrayal of a day's honest work in modern Mexico.

**Underground Fragrance (Di Xia Xiang)**  
USA PREMIERE  
Country: China  
Director: Pengfei Song  
Synopsis: On the rapidly urbanizing outskirts of Beijing, Yong Le spends his days scouring homes scheduled for demolition for furniture to pawn and his nights in the sub-basement of a high-rise apartment building. After an accident blinds him, a nightclub dancer, hoping to secure a day job with a real estate developer, nurses him back to health. Produced by Tsai Ming-Liang, the film adapts his signature meditative social realism, revealing a world in which everyone, literally and figuratively, is looking to move up.

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**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 Program. Celebrating its 51st anniversary this year, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival.
Festival passes are now available. The full festival schedule, including individual ticket information, will be available at ChicagoFilmFestival.com on Monday, September 21, 2015.

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