



Presented by: CinemaChicago
30 East Adams, Suite 800
Chicago, Illinois 60603
Tel: 312-463-9121 • Fax: 312-463-9122
www.chicagofilmfestival.com

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Lisa Dell

Cinema/Chicago Media Relations

lisa@chicagofilmfestival.com

Brie Dorsey

Festival Publicist

bdorsey@mercuryllc.com

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; HEC-TOR with powerhouse actor Peter Mullan (*War Horse*) in his best performance in years; SPARROWS, 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: Franciso 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 bit-sweet 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.

FESTIVAL PARTNERS

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, WBEZ, WTTW11; Bronze Festival Partners: Stella Artois, AARP, Tribune Media; Participating Partners: SundanceNow Doc Club, Whole Foods, Wansas Tequila, Cultivate Studios, Netrix, KIND, OtterBox, Sound Investment, Optimus; 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 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.

#