



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

NEWS

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Media Contact:
Lisa Dell
Cinema/Chicago Media Relations
lisa@chicagofilmfestival.com

Brie Dorsey
Festival Publicist
bdorsey@mercuryllc.com

PREMIERE-HEAVY INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION
AT 51ST CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
Featuring Two World Premieres, Six North American Premieres

(CHICAGO, September 21, 2015) - The Chicago International Film Festival (Oct 15-29, 2015) announces the lineup for its **International Documentary Competition**, sponsored by SundanceNow Doc Club. Films in the International Documentary Competition are receiving their World, North American, or U.S. Premiere at the Festival. The Netherlands, Poland, UK, China, Ukraine, Denmark, Mexico, Argentina, Germany and Portugal are among the countries represented in this competition.

Highlights of the **International Documentary Competition** include the **World Premieres** of **Syl Johnson: Any Way The Wind Blows**, a Chicago-based portrait of the most sampled artist in hip-hop, and **Motley's Law**, which follows tough-as-nails lawyer - and former Mrs. Wisconsin - Kimberley Motley, the only American allowed to practice law in Afghanistan.

This diverse lineup of official selections includes the multi-award-winning Polish documentary **Call Me Marianna**, which follows Marianna's male-to-female transition as family and friends abandon her along the way; **A Living Fire**, an award-winning tour-de-force documentary of cinematography and sound design; **Time Suspended**, a tender, heartrending portrait of a woman committed to preserving the truths of Argentina's horrible history in the 1970s; and **In the Underground**, a stunning look at coal miners and their families in China.

"These extraordinary and diverse films tell a range of captivating true life tales, but they also reflect the beauty and power of cinema," says **Programmer Anthony Kaufman**. "I can't wait to show them to U.S. audiences for the first time."

The 51st Chicago International Film Festival runs October 15-29, 2015 at the AMC River East. Tickets go on sale Fri, Sept 25, 2015. Photos and media accreditation may be found at ChicagoFilmFestival.com.

INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION FILMS

All films listed will receive their Chicago premiere at the Festival unless otherwise indicated.
Festival screenings will be held at the AMC River East 21 Theater (322 E. Illinois St.).
Program subject to change.

Banana Pancakes and the Children of Sticky Rice

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Country: Netherlands

Director: Daan Veldhuizen

Synopsis: In a lush remote village in northern Laos, tourism is on the rise. But as Western backpackers and new technologies begin to enter the town, the locals are ambivalent. Some are eager to embrace the economic opportunities, while others remain more resistant. A beautifully photographed and complex portrait of East-meets-West, *Banana Pancakes and the Children of Sticky Rice* captures the growing pains of “progress” with wit and subtlety.

- Screening 1: Sat, Oct 17, 6:30pm
- Screening 2: Mon, Oct 19, 3:30pm

Call Me Marianna (Mów mi Marianna)

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Country: Poland

Director: Karolina Bielawska

Synopsis: Her ex-wife won't meet her. Her daughter rejects her. Her mother still calls her “son.” As Marianna transitions from male to female, she is abandoned by her loved ones, alone in a world unwilling to accept her true self. This multi-award-winning documentary is an intensely sympathetic and powerful account of one individual's struggle to gain acceptance—even in the midst of profound physical hardship.

- Screening 1: Wed, Oct 21, 6:15pm
- Screening 2: Thurs, Oct 22, 5:15pm
- Screening 3: Mon, Oct 26, 1:15pm

The Closer We Get

USA PREMIERE

Country: Scotland, UK

Director: Karen Guthrie

Synopsis: Scottish director Karen Guthrie's intimate documentary is a vivid chronicle of her coming to terms with a twofold loss, one past—of her nuclear family shattered years before by her father's departure to Africa—and one present, when her mother, the family anchor, suffers a stroke. Full of surprising revelations, Guthrie's personal story becomes an affecting and resonant look at post-colonialism and the complicated bonds of family.

- Screening 1: Wed, Oct 21, 7:45pm
- Screening 2: Thurs, Oct 22, 3:45pm

In The Underground (Di Ceng Shen Chu [地层深处])

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Country: China

Director: Song Zhangtao

Synopsis: Deep underneath the Earth's surface, Chinese miners blackened with soot work long, dark days with little rest, while the stress and danger of their work increases worries at home. One has a child on the way, but can he maintain the precarious balance of his life and livelihood? Masterfully capturing the claustrophobic environments, *In the Underground* explores the physical and mental toll acutely felt both above and below.

- Screening 1: Sun, Oct 18, 3:30pm
- Screening 2: Mon, Oct 19, 12:00pm

The Living Fire (Zhyva Vatra)

USA PREMIERE

Country: Ukraine

Director: Ostap Kostyuk

Synopsis: "Lives begin and end, but everything goes back to the earth." A tour-de-force of cinematography and sound design, this captivating, award-winning documentary looks at three generations of shepherders in the Carpathian Mountains. While father and son take their flock on their annual journey through the highlands, the 82-year-old widower reflects on his past back home. A sublime look at the cycles of life and the waning of tradition.

- Screening 1: Thurs, Oct 22, 7:15pm
- Screening 2: Sat, Oct 24, 12:00pm

Motley's Law

WORLD PREMIERE

Country: Denmark

Director: Nicole N. Horanyi

Synopsis: This captivating documentary follows tough-as-nails lawyer (and former Mrs. Wisconsin) Kimberley Motley, the only American allowed to practice law in Afghanistan. Motley defends US and European citizens caught in the country's legal and political quagmire, even as she finds herself under threat of assassination. While Motley brazenly chastises Afghani judges on behalf of her clients, she must also balance the needs of her family a world away.

- Screening 1: Tue, Oct 20, 8:00pm
- Screening 2: Thurs, Oct 22, 2:30pm

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.

- Screening 1: Sun, Oct 18, 7:45pm
- Screening 2: Sat, Oct 24, 1:00pm

Time Suspended (Tempo Suspendido)

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Country: Mexico, Argentina

Director: Natalia Bruschtein

Synopsis: For the last 40 years, activist Laura Bonaparte has fought to keep alive the memory of her children, who were "disappeared" by Argentina's military dictatorship in the 1970s. Now Laura's own memory is beginning to fade. **Time Suspended** is a tender, heartrending portrait of a woman committed to preserving the truths of her nation's horrible history, even as they slip from her grasp.

- Screening 1: Mon, Oct 19, 7:15pm
- Screening 2: Wed, Oct 21, 2:00pm

Tough Love (Härte)

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Country: Germany

Director: Rosa von Praunheim

Synopsis: A violent German hustler, his innocent prostitute, and the shared histories of sexual abuse that bind them together: In this stranger-than-fiction romantic docu-drama, German New Wave filmmaker Rosa von Praunheim combines documentary and campy reenactments to tell

the wild tale of Andreas Marquardt, now 59, a man who survived years of pimping, prison, and personal trauma to eventually find true love.

- Screening 1: Tue, Oct, 20, 5:30pm
- Screening 2: Fri, Oct 23, 12:15pm

Volta a Terra

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Country: Portugal

Director: João Pedro Plácido

Synopsis: Daniel, a charismatic young farmer in northern Portugal, is dedicated to the farming methods of his forbearers. But will dreams of love take him away from his homeland? A bitter-sweet coming-of-age story featuring illuminating, hypnotic photography of the Portuguese countryside amid the changing seasons, Volta à Terra is a poetic love song to traditional ways of life.

- Screening 1: Wed, Oct 21, 5:30pm
- Screening 2: Fri, Oct 23, 3:30pm

FESTIVAL PARTNERS

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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 is available at ChicagoFilmFestival.com. Individual tickets go on sale on Friday, Sept. 25, 2015.

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