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**NEWS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **52nd CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES NEW DIRECTORS COMPETITION SELECTIONS**

*Category highlights emerging voices in global filmmaking;  
nearly fifty Shorts selections also announced*

**Chicago (September 14, 2016)** - The Chicago International Film Festival **today announces the films selected for the New Directors Competition category, celebrating first- and second-time feature filmmakers, and the nearly fifty short films selected to screen in a series of seven Short Film programs.** A full list of these newly announced films is below and available at [www.chicagofilmfestival.com](http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com). Tickets go on sale Wednesday, September 21 for Cinema/Chicago members and September 23 for the general public.

Each making their World, North American or U.S. Premiere at the Festival, the films included in New Directors introduce audiences to the world's next great generation of filmmakers. Both *1:54* and *Are We Not Cats*, previously announced, are joined by **the world premieres of *Finals*, an Iranian drama co-written by the late, great Abbas Kiarostami and *Mara'akme's Dream*, about a young Huichol Indian balancing the realities of city life and the mysticism of his people; and *The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki*, recently named Finland's submission to the Academy Awards®.**

This year, the Festival welcomes nearly fifty short films from around the world; presented in seven programs, these films each run less than 40 minutes and highlight the artistry and craft of the form. Featured short films include **Sundance Film Festival winner *Thunder Road***, about a police officer who grieves for his mother with the help of Bruce Springsteen; ***Home of the Brave*, which features the Swedish hometown of a Chicago Blackhawks player** as they prep for a glimpse of the Stanley Cup; and ***Rhapsody*, starring French actor Gérard Depardieu** as a lonely composer who strikes up an unlikely friendship. Including narratives, documentaries, animation, horror and experimental works, the Shorts programs are curated selections of films from across the state and around the world.

**The 52nd Chicago International Film Festival is October 13-27.** A full list of all the films announced today follows; images may be found [here](#). Passes are on sale now at [www.chicagofilmfestival.com](http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com); tickets go on sale Wednesday, September 21 for Cinema/Chicago members and September 23 for the general public. The Festival Box Office, located at AMC River East 21 (322 E. Illinois St) opens beginning September 21, everyday from 12p.m. to 8p.m. Media interested in covering the Festival should apply for credentials at [www.chicagofilmfestival.com/accreditation](http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com/accreditation).

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**NEW DIRECTORS COMPETITION** *Featuring the first and second films from emerging talents.*

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**1:54** -- Dir. Yan England, Canada

High school science geek Tim (Antoine-Olivier Pilon, Mommy) goes out of his way to avoid provoking the local bullies. But when his only friend and crush Francis (Robert Naylor, TV's Arthur) meets tragedy at their hands, Tim decides to take his own revenge. He joins the track team, gunning for the head bully in the 800-meter dash—but all does not go as planned. Academy Award®-nominated director Yan England mixes a thrilling sports saga with a dark drama of adolescent angst.

**Alba** -- Dir. Ana Cristina Barragán, Ecuador/Mexico

In this affecting emotional drama, Alba, a curious if withdrawn 11-year-old girl, is thrown for a loop when her mother falls seriously ill. Against her wishes, the preteen moves in with her reclusive father, a man she's never met before. She must build a relationship with him while navigating the perils of adolescence, from school cliques to first love. We go inside Alba's world through a series of quiet, powerfully felt scenes.

**Amerika Square** -- Dir. Yannis Sakaridis, Greece

An unemployed, disgruntled Greek nationalist in Athens has his world turned upside-down when his apartment building and beloved city park become a home and resting stop for migrants in transit across Europe. There, refugees searching for a new life must navigate the seedier elements of Greek society to survive. Mixing a kinetic visual style with ripped-from-the-headlines storytelling, Amerika Square is an unflinching look at the mass migration economy—where “borders are business.”

**Are We Not Cats** -- Dir. Xander Robin, U.S.

This offbeat, engrossing romance follows a 20-something New Yorker with a curious grooming habit. When he meets an eccentric bald beauty, the two form a strange, inextricable bond, expressing their affections with behavior that gradually becomes more animal-like. With a distinct visual style, which shifts from gritty to magical realism, this raw expression of young love is as sweet as it is bizarre.

**The Dreamer** (El Sonador) -- Dir. Adrian Saba, Peru/France

Sebastian, a young lockpicker, survives the streets with a group of petty thieves, while drifting into his imagination at every opportunity. When gang infighting threatens his life, he dreams of escaping with a newfound love, but is delayed by the promise of one last big job. The Dreamer blends powerfully understated performances and beguiling landscapes in a world of crime, courage, and regret.

**Fado** -- Dir. Jonas Rothlaender, Germany

A young doctor named Fabian departs Berlin for Lisbon to reignite a failed relationship, only to experience an intense, unshakeable jealousy upon arrival. Soon, Fabian is stalking his girlfriend to uncover the truth, though in his frenzied state, he finds it increasingly difficult to distinguish delusion from reality. A twisted love story and a white-knuckle nail-biter, Fado marks the arrival of a striking new cinematic talent.

**Finals** -- Dir. Adel Yaraghi, Iran

In this tightly conceived drama co-written by the late, great Abbas Kiarostami, Farhad, a respected math teacher, is engaged to the mother of one of his pupils. But rather than embrace his new father figure, the angry young student spends his days riding around Tehran on a motorcycle with his rebellious friend, refusing to study—or even sit—for his big final exam. Festival

veteran Yaraghi (Meeting Laila) crafts a tense, intricate domestic drama where layers of class and generational conflict always simmer at the surface.

**The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki** (Hymyilevä mies) -- Dir. Juho Kuosmanen, Finland/Germany

This fresh spin on the underdog sports film, winner of a top prize at the Cannes Film Festival, centers on Olli Mäki, a champion Finnish boxer in the 1960s. After winning the lightweight title in his early 20s, the mild-mannered Mäki becomes an unlikely cultural figure when he's given the opportunity to go head-to-head in the ring with an undefeated American champion. The film's inventive style mimics a vintage black-and-white newsreel.

**Heartstone** (Hjartasteinn) -- Dir. Guðmundur Arnar Guðmundsson, Denmark / Iceland

Observed over the course of two years in a small Icelandic fishing town, best teenage friends Thor and Christian make mischief while one hides his growing feelings for the other. Relying on each other to escape difficult family lives, they find their friendship tested by small-town prejudices and the pains of growing up. Heartstone is an alternately sensitive and exacting story of sexual awakening.

**Hedi** (Inhebbek Hedi) -- Dir. Mohamed Ben Attia, Tunisia / France

A dependable worker and good son, Hedi has spent his life doing exactly what's expected of him. But when he meets a free-spirited dancer at a beach hotel a week before his arranged marriage, Hedi is ready to give up everything he knows. Can he keep up with what the "new Tunisia" holds for him? Produced by the Dardenne brothers (Rosetta), this social-realist drama follows one man's struggle to find his place in a maelstrom of social change.

**Kills On Wheels** (Tiszta szivvel) – Dir. Attila Till, Hungary

In this wildly original dark comedy, two teenage boys living in a facility for kids with disabilities are looking for a way out. When they befriend a gruff firefighter-turned-hitman who enlists them to be his accomplice wheelchair assassins, the lines between reality and fantasy begin to blur. With stellar cinematography, a mix of live action with graphic animation, and a dark sense of humor, Kills on Wheels successfully blends genres as it rolls on to exciting, offbeat places.

**Mara'akame's Dream** (El sueño del Mara'akame) -- Dir. Federico Cecchetti, Mexico

This evocative portrait of Mexico follows Niere, a young Huichol Indian caught between his traditional culture and his youthful ambitions. On a trip to Mexico City with his father, a shaman (or Mara'akame) training his son in the art of spiritual healing, Niere only wants to perform with his rock band. But the young man's dreams guide him down a more spiritual path of self-awakening, as the urban realities of city life blend with the mysticism of his people.

**Santa & Andrés** (Santa y Andrés) – Dir. Carlos Lechuga, Cuba / Colombia

Cuba, 1983. Banned from writing, a dissident gay author has been forced to live in impoverished isolation in the countryside. When officials visit the region, an earnest partisan is assigned to monitor his activity. As she dutifully keeps watch, the two adversaries develop an unlikely friendship that is tested by the time and place in which they live. This unconventional love story beautifully underscores the power of compassion and the value of personal freedom.

**Where I Grow Old** (A Cidade onde Envelheço) -- Dir. Marília Rocha, Brazil/Portugal

Teresa, a young and adrift Portuguese woman, moves to the inland Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte looking for adventure. Her best friend Francisca has already settled happily into her new life in the Americas. But Teresa's visit prompts an unexpected bout of homesickness, and soon both women must decide where home really is. This debut narrative feature captures the small interactions and the melancholy of adrift youth with delicacy and naturalism.

**Wolf and Sheep** -- Dir. Shahrbanoo Sadat, Denmark/Afghanistan

Growing up in a rural Afghan farming village has its charms and challenges. Tasked with herding their clans' livestock, the children find ways to amuse themselves: the girls play-negotiate wedding dowries, while the boys wield slingshots. But a mythical beast haunts the hilltops and threatens their sheep. Guiding an appealing cast of nonprofessional actors with an assured hand, the 26-year-old Shahrbanoo Sadat blends naturalism and surrealism in captivating fashion.

**SHORT FILMS**

**All Rivers Run to the Sea** (*Toate fluviile curg în mare*) -- Dir. Alexandru Badea, Romania

A man struggles to bury his mother and is pit against an unfeeling bureaucracy.

**Among the Black Waves** (*Sredi cheornyh voln*) -- Dir. Anna Budanova, Russia

An ancient legend in which the souls of drowned people become sea animals comes to life.

**Anchorage Prohibited** (*Jin zhi xia mao*) -- Dir. Chiang Wei Liang, Taiwan

An immigrant family is met with hostility as they struggle to care for their infant child.

**Ascension** (*Ascensão*) -- Dir. Pedro Peralta, Portugal

A miracle is willed through the strength of community and the force of a mother's love.

**Balloonfest** -- Dir. Nathan Truesdell, U.S.

A Rust Belt city attempts to reclaim its pride by releasing millions of balloons into the sky.

**Bargain** -- Dir. Chung-Hyun Lee, South Korea

A prostitute's customer gets more than he bargained for.

**Blind Vaysha** -- Dir. Theodore Ushev, Canada

Vaysha can see the future with one eye and the past with another - but is unable to see the present.

**Burning Mountains That Spew Flame** (*Montañas ardientes que vomitan fuego*)

-- Dirs. Helena Girón and Samuel M. Delgado, Spain

A visceral journey into the depths of a volcano uncovers many mysteries.

**Chekhov** -- Dir. Jack Dunphy, U.S.

A secretly recorded phone conversation between the director and his sister, laced with bitter honesty, familial messiness, and complex affections that only siblings can provide.

**Delusion is Redemption to those in Distress** (*O delírio é a redenção dos aflitos*)

-- Dir. Fellipe Fernandes, Brazil

A woman struggles to provide for her family when her housing development is scheduled for demolition.

**Ear, Nose and Throat** -- Dir. Kevin Jerome Everson, U.S.

A woman recounts witnessing a brutal murder while she is being examined by her doctor.

**Estate (Summer)** (*Estate (Sommer)*) -- Dir. Ronny Trocker, France/Belgium

A migrant washed ashore is met with hostility frozen in time.



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**Field Notes** -- Dir. Vashti Harrison, Trinidad and Tobago

*Field Notes* is a contemplative, personal meditation on the cultural ghost myths of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Fox and the Whale** -- Dir. Robin Joseph, Canada

A small fox journeys in search of a whale and encounters the universe.

**Fragments** -- Dir. Carlos Cova, U.S.

An examination of a Bosnian refugee's story, *Fragments* pieces together a child's memories to create a portrait of childhood in a wartorn country.

**Gryla** -- Dir. Tomas Heidar Johannesson, Iceland

An Icelandic folk tale is brought to life as the child-eating monster, Gryla, roams the mountainside.

**Home of the Brave** -- Dirs. Gustav Hugosson and Andreas Nilsson, Sweden

A small Swedish town and home of a Blackhawks player makes painstaking preparations for a glimpse of the Stanley cup.

**HUH** -- Dir. Filip Kojic, U.S.

A man comes to terms with his own mortality.

**I, Destini** -- Dirs. Nicholas Pilarski, Destini Riley

Identity politics and institutional racism are examined through the use of bracing and beautiful animation in *I, Destini*.

**Janus** -- Dir. Sung-Hwan Kim, South Korea

A toxic relationship boils over into frenetic violence.

**Jean Nouvel: Reflections** -- Dir. Matt Tyrnauer, U.S.

Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel walks us through some of his grandest creations.

**Kendall got a rose** -- Dir. Luke Haskard, U.S./U.K.

A married couple with conflicting schedules meets for a rare moment of quiet.

**LostFound** -- Dir. Shakti Bhagchandani, U.S.

A quiet, humble portrait of a day in the life of a Muslim woman.

**Madre** -- Dir. Simón Mesa Soto, Sweden/Colombia

A deeply-felt character drama pulls back the curtain to reveal the agonizing cost of the sex industry.

**Moms on Fire** -- Dir. Joanna Rytel, Sweden

Two pregnant women irreverently discuss the pains and inevitabilities of having a child in this hilarious look at pregnant life.

**MORIOM** -- Dirs. Francesca Scalisi and Mark Olexa, Sweden

A bracing interview exposes the deep-rooted psychological effects of trauma.

**Now: End of Season** -- Dir. Ayman Nahle, Lebanon/Syria

Footage of Syrian refugees is juxtaposed with a phone call from a past war, creating a complex statement on the layered and lingering effects of conflict.

**Of a Few Days** -- Dir. Timothy Fryett, U.S.

Chicago filmmakers observe a funeral home that takes a workaday approach to the business of dealing with death.

**Oh What a Wonderful Feeling** -- Dir. François Jaros, Canada

A truckstop teems with sultry life in this Lynchian look at a mysterious underworld.

**Once Upon a Time in the U.S.S.R.** -- Dir. Mikhail Zheleznykov, Russia

Aliens invade the U.S.S.R. as Cold War era nuclear educational films are repurposed to create a narrative.

**Peripheria** -- Dir. David Coquard-Dassault, France

An abandoned housing development slowly gives way to the wild.

**Pine Tree Villa** (*Eine Villa mit Pinien*) -- Dir. Jan Koester, Germany

A ethereal world composed of lush environments takes center stage as Lion and Bird look to uncover the many mysteries of the Pine Tree Villa.

**Positioning** -- Dir. Anne Beal, U.S.

The exquisitely animated *Positioning* takes a biting look at gender roles.

**Pronouns** -- Dir. Michael Paulucci, U.S.

A young Chicago slam poet boldly struggles to exclaim their identity.

**Recursion** -- Dir. Joel Benjamin, U.S.

An astronaut adrift in space time comes to terms with his own existence.

**Rhapsody** -- Dir. Constance Meyer, France

A lonely man (G rard Depardieu) living in an apartment complex strikes up an unlikely friendship with a small baby.

**Red Folder** -- Dir. Ben Kallam, U.S.

A young African-American student roams his school's hallways when sent on a revealing errand.

**Shmevolution** -- Dir. Nolan Downs, U.S.

The evolution of a strange creature satisfyingly unfolds in a bizarre landscape.

**Shot** -- Dir. Amelia Scott, U.S.

Compiling found-footage of police brutality, *Shot* examines and amplifies publicly available video to create an essential portrait of modern violence.

**Superbia** -- Dir. Luca Toth, Hungary/Czech Republic/Slovakia

*Superbia* is a surreal animated vision of a society where men and women play very different roles.

**The Committee** (*Kommitt n*) -- Dirs. Gunhild Enger and Jenni Toivoniemi, Finland/Norway/Sweden



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A committee forms to commission a work of art to commemorate the little-known shared border between Sweden, Finland, and Norway.

**The Face of Ukraine: Casting Oksana Baiul** -- Dir. Kitty Green, Australia

A casting call peers past fiction and reminds us of the human cost of war.

**The Nude** -- Dir. Brian Zahm, U.S.

A nude artist's model waxes poetic in this satirical look at ego in the art world.

**The Puppet Man** -- Dir. Jacqueline Castel, U.S.

A killer stops by a bar after hours in this John Carpenter-scored nod to slasher films of the 1980s.

**They Charge for the Sun** -- Dir. Terence Nance, U.S.

Human beings must live underground in fear of the harmful rays of the sun in this socially-poignant dystopian future.

**Third Timothy** -- Dir. Julian Walker, U.S.

Two young boys attempt to sell Holy Water door-to-door.

**Thunder Road** -- Dir. Jim Cummings, U.S.

A man grieves over the death of his mother with the help of Bruce Springsteen.

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**About Cinema/Chicago**

Cinema/Chicago, the presenting organization of the Chicago International Film Festival, is a year round not-for-profit arts and education organization dedicated to fostering better communication between people of diverse cultures through the art form of the moving image. In addition to the annual Festival, the organization presents a number of film-centric programs throughout the year, including the International Screening Program, the Chicago International Television Festival, CineYouth Festival, the Education Program and Members Film Screening Series. Celebrating its 52nd edition October 13-27, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival.

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