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CENTERPIECE AND CLOSING NIGHT FILMS ANNOUNCED 53RD CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Acclaimed Actress **Greta Gerwig**'s Directorial Debut, ***Lady Bird***, to be Featured as
Centerpiece Film

Guillermo del Toro's Golden Lion-Winning ***The Shape of Water*** Caps Festival,
with Tribute to Actor **Michael Shannon**



Lady Bird



The Shape of Water

CHICAGO - The 53rd **Chicago International Film Festival** today announces the two films slated for the Festival's Centerpiece and Closing Night: Greta Gerwig's solo directorial debut, ***Lady Bird***, to be screened on Wednesday, October 18; and the Closing Night presentation, Guillermo del Toro's ***The Shape of Water***, which was recently honored with the Golden Lion at the 2017 Venice Film Festival, with a special tribute to star **Michael Shannon**, an actor with deep Chicago roots.

"The Festival has a longstanding tradition of not only showcasing first features by emerging directors but also the filmmaking debuts of celebrated actors, from Alan Rickman and Faye Dunaway to Liv Ullman and, more recently, William H. Macy," said **Artistic Director Mimi Plache**. "We are excited to add

Greta Gerwig to this list with her funny and bittersweet portrait of a girl learning to become a young woman as she negotiates life's thornier issues of love, friendship and independence."

"We're also thrilled to present the most recent work of one of the Festival's favorite auteurs Guillermo del Toro as our Closing Night film," added **Festival Founder and CEO Michael Kutza**. "Mr. del Toro has been a long-time friend of the Festival. We paid Tribute to del Toro's creative genius when we honored him at the 46th Festival. *The Shape of Water* is a stunning work that gorgeously combines a delicate love story with a Cold War spy thriller woven together by a magical thread."

"The Festival finale will include a tribute to Michael Shannon, an actor who first started out in Chicago theater and has now achieved international recognition," said Plauché. "Over the years, we have showcased Michael's immense talents, starting in 1997 with the Chicago-made features *The Ride* and *Chicago Cab*. In between, we presented his first collaboration with director Jeff Nichols, 2006's *Shotgun Stories*. And he was last at the Festival in 2013 with John McNaughton's *The Harvest*. It is fitting that we celebrate his outstanding talents in the city that helped to shape his creative process as an actor."

Centerpiece Film:

Lady Bird -- Dir. Greta Gerwig, U.S.

Greta Gerwig (*Francis Ha*) arrives as a bold new cinematic voice with her directorial debut, excavating both the humor and pathos in the turbulent bond between a strong-willed teenage girl (Saoirse Ronan) and her opinionated mother (Laurie Metcalf). Set in Sacramento, in 2002, amid the shifting economic landscape, ***Lady Bird*** is an affecting look at the relationships that shape us, the beliefs that define us, and the beauty of a place called home. *93 min.*

Greta Gerwig has rapidly emerged as one of Hollywood's most engaging actresses. Gerwig was last seen in *20th Century Women* and received a Critics' Choice Award nomination in the category of Best Supporting Actress. Last year, Gerwig also starred in Pablo Larrain's *Jackie*, Todd Solondz's *Wiener-Dog*, and Rebecca Miller's romantic dramedy *Maggie's Plan*. In 2015, Gerwig co-wrote and starred in *Mistress America*, which premiered to rave reviews at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. Gerwig's previous collaboration with Baumbach, *Frances Ha*, earned her Golden Globe and Broadcast Film Critics Association Award nominations in the category of Outstanding Lead Actress in a Motion Picture, Musical or Comedy. The film, also earned an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Feature. Gerwig first received critical acclaim for her breakout role in *Greenberg*, which marked her first collaboration with writer/director Noah Baumbach. Her performance earned her several nominations including a Gotham Award nomination for Breakthrough Performance and an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Female Lead. Other film credits include Barry Levinson's *The Humbling*, Woody Allen's *To Rome With Love*, *Arthur*, *No Strings Attached*, Whit Stillman's comedy *Damsels in Distress*, and Fox Searchlight's *Lola Versus*. A darling of the independent film scene, Gerwig's prior credits include Ti West's "art-house horror film" *House of the Devil*, the Duplass brothers' genre-bender *Baghead*, Joe Swanberg's *Hannah Takes the Stairs* as a writer and actress, and *Nights and Weekends* which she co-wrote and co-directed.

Closing Night Film:

The Shape of Water -- Dir. Guillermo del Toro, U.S.

From master storyteller Guillermo del Toro comes ***The Shape of Water***, an otherworldly fairy tale set against the backdrop of Cold War-era America circa 1962. In the hidden high-security government laboratory where she works, lonely Elisa (Sally Hawkins) is trapped in a life of isolation. Elisa's life is changed forever when she and co-worker Zelda (Octavia Spencer) discover a secret classified

experiment. But the facility's single-minded authoritarian, Richard Strickland (Michael Shannon), threatens to stand in the way of her happiness. Rounding out the cast are Richard Jenkins, Doug Jones and Michael Stuhlbarg. *English, ASL with subtitles. With in-person tribute to Michael Shannon. 123 min.*

About Michael Shannon, Recipient of Artistic Achievement Award

Academy Award-, Golden Globe- and Tony Award-nominated actor **Michael Shannon** has worked with the industry's most respected talent and treaded the boards in notable theaters around the world, including in Chicago, A Red Orchid (where he is an ensemble member, Lookingglass and Steppenwolf.) Shannon most recently was seen in Bart Freundlich's *Wolves* and can also be seen in Werner Herzog's thriller, *Salt and Fire*. Later this year, Shannon will be seen in Alfonso Gomez-Rejon's *The Current War* and in Seth Henrikson's *Pottersville*. Shannon also lensed Meredith Danluck's *State Like Sleep* and will be seen in the Nicolai Fuglsig-directed *Horse Soldiers*. Shannon is currently in production in writer-director Elizabeth Chomko's drama, *What They Had* and will star and co-executive produce the mini-series *Waco*. In 2016, Shannon was seen in Tom Ford's *Nocturnal Animals*, receiving an Academy Award and Critics Choice nomination. Earlier that year, Shannon marked his fifth collaboration with director Jeff Nichols with a cameo in his drama *Loving*, and starred in his sci-fi thriller *Midnight Special*. Shannon's previous collaborations with Nichols include *Take Shelter*, for which he received a 2011 Film Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Actor; as well as the films *Mud* and *Shotgun Stories*. Most notably, Shannon garnered critical acclaim for his Oscar-nominated supporting role in *Revolutionary Road*. He went on to receive additional acclaim for Ramin Bahrani's timely drama *99 Homes* and was nominated for a Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild, Critics Choice, Gotham Award and Film Independent Spirit Award on behalf of this performance. He has had more than forty roles in films, with credit in Martin Scorsese's HBO series, *Boardwalk Empire*, which recently completed its fifth and final season.

Ticket and Event Information

The Festival Centerpiece Film, Greta Gerwig's directorial debut, ***Lady Bird*** will screen on **Wednesday, October 18 at 8 p.m.** (\$25/ticket). The Festival's Closing Night celebration will feature an in-person tribute to **Shannon on Thursday, October 26, beginning at 6:30 p.m. with a press line, followed by a guest presentation at 7 p.m., the screening of *The Shape of Water* at 7:30 p.m., and an after party at 9:30 p.m.** (\$30 member/\$35 non-member film ticket; \$40 after party ticket).

The 53rd Chicago International Film Festival is October 12-26. Screenings take place at the AMC River East 21 (322 E. Illinois). The complete lineup and schedule will be announced on September 18. Tickets go on sale to Cinema/Chicago members on Wednesday September 20 and to the general public on Friday October 22. Tickets are available by calling 312-332-FILM (3456), online at chicagofilmfestival.com, at the Festival Box Office at AMC River East at 322 E. Illinois Street, and at the Festival Pop-Up Box Office at 400 S. Dearborn.

Media interested in covering the Festival should fill out the [Press Accreditation Application](#).

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About Cinema/Chicago

Cinema/Chicago, the presenting organization of the Chicago International Film Festival, is a year round non-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 Chicago International Film Festival, Cinema/Chicago's programs include: International Screenings Program, Chicago International

Television Festival, CineYouth Festival, and year-round Education Program. Celebrating its 53rd edition October 12-26, 2017, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival.

Festival Sponsors and Partners

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