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VIRTUAL REALITY CINEMA COMES TO THE 54TH CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Five Groundbreaking Experiences, Including One from Chicago-Born Writer-Director Edward Robles. Immerse Viewers in their Stories

CHICAGO – The **54th Chicago International Film Festival**, presented by Cinema/Chicago, today announced that this year’s program will feature captivating virtual reality cinematic experiences. The inaugural **Immersive Cinema** program will include five films varying in length from nine to 37 minutes.

These spectacular innovative experiences will be available for specific blocks of time during the Festival’s opening days (Oct. 11-14) on the second floor of the AMC River East 21 Theaters (322 E. Illinois St.), host location for the 54th Chicago International Film Festival.

The projects include *Spheres: Pale Blue Dot*, from recent Venice award-winner Eliza McNitt, which takes participants on a dazzling cosmic journey from the beginning of time to present day; *BattleScar*, an animated snapshot of growing up punk in 1970s New York City; *Vestige*, a haunting personal docu-drama; *The Great C*, a computer-animated science fiction fable inspired by a Philip K. Dick short story; and *Dispatch*, an intense and thrilling neo-noir from Chicago-born writer-director Edward Robles.

“Virtual reality is taking hold as a powerful new method of storytelling—engulfing viewers in worlds and human experiences in unique and transformative ways,” said programmer Anthony Kaufman. “And we’re excited that the Chicago International Film Festival can be part of this trend with this selection of creative and mind-expanding cinematic experiences.”

Co-produced with Chicago-based company Midwest Immersive, the Chicago International Film Festival’s Immersive Cinema virtual reality films are available between Thursday, October 11 at 3 p.m. and Sunday, October 14 at 6 p.m.

The Festival's Industry Days program will also include a public panel discussion on Friday, Oct. 12, from 2:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m. on "VR: What Is It Good For?" with Midwest Immersive's Aaqim Usman, Atlas V producer Fred Volhuer, and Phosphor Games designer Chip Sineni.

Further details are below.

Spheres: Pale Blue Dot – Dir. Eliza McNitt, U.S.

Available: Oct. 11 from 3 – 5 p.m. and Oct. 12 from 2 – 4 p.m.

Narrated by singer-songwriter Patti Smith, this cosmic journey takes viewers on a phantasmagoric trip into space and through time, from the Big Bang, to the formation of the first gaseous planets, to our own "pale blue dot," all the while tracing the history of sound across the universe. But will there always be someone to hear it? *15 min.*

BattleScar – Dirs. Martin Allais, U.S. and Nico Casavecchia, France

Available: Oct. 11 from 5:40 – 7:30 p.m. and Oct. 12 from 4:40 – 6:20 p.m.

It's 1978 New York City, and Lupe, a Puerto Rican-American girl (voiced by Rosario Dawson), meets Debbie, another runaway kid who exposes her to the rebellious punk music scene of the Lower East Side. Employing eye-catching animation and a fantastic soundtrack, *BattleScar* is an immersive period portrait of a young Hispanic girl's coming of age. *9 min.*

Vestige – Dir. Aaron Bradbury, U.S./France

Available: Oct. 12 from 7 – 9 p.m. and Oct. 14 from 12 – 2 p.m.

This absorbing study of grief enters the mind of Lisa Elin, a woman dealing with the death of her husband, Erik. Digital fragments of their happy life together appear inside a void and eventually become entangled with haunting visions of her loss. Made in collaboration with the real Lisa Elin, *Vestige* is a deeply empathic experience of memory and personal tragedy. *12 min.*

Dispatch – Dir. Edward Robles, U.S.

Available: Oct. 13 from 4:50 – 7:30 p.m. and Oct. 14 from 2:40 – 6 p.m.

From Chicago writer-director Edward Robles comes this intense, four-part crime thriller about a small-town police dispatcher named Ted. What begins as a routine night of calls quickly escalates into a series of violent attacks. Unfolding in Ted's imagination, *Dispatch* uniquely combines vector graphics and layered soundscapes of terrified callers and Ted's attempts to Help into an engrossing VR noir. *28 min.*

The Great C – Dir. Steve Miller, Canada

Available: Oct. 13 from 12:00 – 4 p.m.

Inspired by Philip K. Dick's short story, this post-apocalyptic animated fable imagines a world ruled over by an all-powerful A.I. known as "The Great C." Each year, one villager is sent on a pilgrimage to appease the omnipotent supercomputer—but never returns. With impressively rendered, multi-dimensional CGI environments, this sci-fi adventure envelops the viewer in a haunting and fantastical new world. *37 min.*

Festival and Ticket Information

The 54th Chicago International Film Festival runs Oct. 10-21, 2018 at the AMC River East 21, 322 E. Illinois St., and features more than 150 films, including numerous competitive categories and several highlight programs such as Black Perspectives, Cinemas of the Americas, International Comedy, Spotlight: Italy, Women in Cinema, Out-Look, After Dark and the City & State program (showcasing films made in Chicago and throughout Illinois.) Festival passes (\$110 - \$270) are currently on sale. Individual tickets (\$8 to \$20) and Gala Presentation tickets (\$20 to \$150) will go on sale Sept. 18 for Cinema/Chicago Members and Sept. 21 for the general public. Discounted parking is available at AMC River East 21 (322 E. Illinois Street). For more information, visit www.chicagofilmfestival.com or call 312-683-0121.

Festival Sponsors and Partners

The 54th Chicago International Film Festival's sponsors include Premiere Sponsors: Bloomberg Philanthropies, Wintrust Community Banks; Official Wine Sponsor: Chloe Wine Collection; Education Sponsor: HBO; Participating Sponsor: British International School of Chicago; Airline Partner: LOT Polish Airlines; Headquarters Hotel: St. Jane Hotel; Event Partners: AMC Theaters, The Gwen Hotel, Little Goat Diner; Platinum Media Partner: NCM; This program is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency. Additional support provided by the Illinois Film Office, Chicago Film Office, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), and Lagunitas Brewing Company.

About Midwest Immersive

Midwest Immersive is an event-focused interactive multimedia studio. The studio combines specializations in Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and experiential marketing to help brands create in-person, shareable interactions with consumers.

About Cinema/Chicago

Cinema/Chicago, the presenting organization of the Chicago International Film Festival, is a year-round nonprofit arts and education organization dedicated to fostering better communication between people of diverse cultures through the art of film and the moving image. Cinema/Chicago's programs include the Chicago International Film Festival, International Screenings Program, Chicago International Television Festival, CineYouth Festival, and year-round Education Program. Celebrating its 54th edition October 10-21, 2018, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival. For more information, please visit www.chicagofilmfestival.com or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Vimeo](#) and [Twitter](#).

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