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THE 55th CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL UNVEILS GALA AND SPECIAL PRESENTATION SELECTIONS

The 55th Chicago International Film Festival to take place October 16-27 at AMC River East 21

Full lineup to be announced on Wednesday, September 18

CHICAGO - **Mimi Plauché, Artistic Director** of the **Chicago International Film Festival**, today announced titles selected for the Galas and Special Presentations programs for the 55th edition of the Festival. Offering movie lovers a first look at the year's most highly anticipated films, the programs will feature top contenders for the Oscars® and the Golden Globes®. The **55th Chicago International Film Festival** will take place **October 16-27** at the **AMC River East 21 (322 E. Illinois St.)** The full schedule will be announced on **Wednesday, September 18**.

“This year’s line-up of Gala and Special Presentations includes some of the year’s most extraordinary films, showcasing master filmmakers—like Terrence Malick and Hirokazu Kore-eda—who consistently excite and challenge us as well as directors who have created some of their finest and most provocative work,” said Plauché. “The films will move and surprise audiences, from the extraordinary journey of an inspirational national hero to the thought-provoking true story of one lawyer’s battle for justice to two riveting high-speed, high-risk tales of adventure.”

Featuring more than 150 films from around the world as well as appearances from top directors, producers, actors, designers, and more, the 55th Chicago International Film Festival continues to be the premier destination for film enthusiasts and experts alike. The longest running competitive film festival in North America, the Chicago International Film Festival is committed to selecting the world’s most exciting, compelling and groundbreaking feature films, documentaries and short films, including multiple Oscar contenders and winners, year after year. For the past five years, the Festival has been proud to showcase the Academy Award Winner for Best Picture.

Centerpiece Gala

Knives Out — Dir. Rian Johnson, U.S.

Acclaimed writer and director Rian Johnson (*Brick*, *Looper*, *The Last Jedi*) pays tribute to mystery mastermind Agatha Christie in *Knives Out*, a fun, modern-day murder mystery where everyone is a suspect. With an all-star ensemble cast including Daniel Craig, Chris Evans, Ana de Armas, Jamie Lee Curtis, Michael Shannon, Don Johnson, Toni Collette, LaKeith Stanfield, Katherine Langford, Jaeden Martell, and Christopher Plummer, *Knives Out* is a witty and stylish whodunit guaranteed to keep audiences guessing until the very end.

Gala Presentations

Harriet — Dir. Kasi Lemmons, U.S.

Based on the thrilling and inspirational life of an iconic American freedom fighter, *Harriet* tells the extraordinary tale of Harriet Tubman's escape from slavery and transformation into one of America's greatest heroes. Her courage, ingenuity, and tenacity freed hundreds of slaves and changed the course of history.

Just Mercy — Dir. Destin Daniel Cretton, U.S.

Just Mercy is the true story of young lawyer Bryan Stevenson (Michael B. Jordan) and his history-making battles for justice in Alabama. Stevenson refuses to back down as he fights a legal system without mercy stacked against him and his clients at every turn. One of his first, and most incendiary, cases is that of Walter McMillian (Jamie Foxx), a man whose clear innocence means nothing to the corrupt and compassionless forces Stevenson doggedly takes on.

Special Presentations

The Aeronauts — Dir. Tom Harper, U.K.

In 1862, daredevil balloon pilot Amelia Wren (Felicity Jones) teams up with pioneering meteorologist James Glaisher (Eddie Redmayne) to advance human knowledge of the weather and fly higher than anyone in history. While breaking records and furthering scientific discovery, their voyage to the very edge of existence helps the unlikely pair find their place in the world they have left far below them. But they face physical and emotional challenges in the thin air, as the ascent becomes a fight for survival.

A Hidden Life — Dir. Terrence Malick, U.S., Germany

Based on real events, from visionary writer-director Terrence Malick, *A Hidden Life* is the story of an unsung hero, Franz Jägerstätter, who refused to fight for the Nazis in World War II. When the Austrian peasant farmer is faced with the threat of execution for treason, it is his unwavering faith and his love for his wife Fani and children that keeps his spirit alive.

Honey Boy — Dir. Alma Har'el, U.S.

From a screenplay by Shia LaBeouf, based on his own experiences, award-winning filmmaker Alma Har'el brings to life a young actor's stormy childhood and early adult years as he struggles to reconcile with his father through cinema and dreams. Fictionalizing his childhood ascent to stardom, and subsequent adult crash-landing into rehab and recovery, Har'el casts Noah Jupe and Lucas Hedges as Otis Lort, navigating different stages in a frenetic career. LaBeouf takes on the daring and therapeutic challenge of playing a version of his own father, an ex-rodeo clown and a felon. Artist and musician FKA twigs makes her feature acting debut, playing

neighbor and kindred spirit to the younger Otis in their garden-court motel home. Har'el's feature narrative debut is a one-of-a-kind collaboration between filmmaker and subject, exploring art as therapy and imagination as hope.

Jojo Rabbit — Dir. Taika Waititi, U.S.

Writer-director Taika Waititi brings his signature style of humor and pathos to his latest film, *Jojo Rabbit*, a World War II satire that follows a lonely German boy (Roman Griffin Davis as JoJo) whose world view is turned upside down when he discovers his single mother (Scarlett Johansson) is hiding a young Jewish girl (Thomasin McKenzie) in their attic. Aided only by his idiotic imaginary friend, Adolf Hitler (Taika Waititi), Jojo must confront his blind nationalism.

Marriage Story — Dir. Noah Baumbach, U.S.

Marriage Story is Academy Award nominated filmmaker Noah Baumbach's incisive and compassionate portrait of a marriage breaking up and a family staying together. The film stars Scarlett Johansson and Adam Driver, Laura Dern, Alan Alda, and Ray Liotta co-star.

Ordinary Love — Dirs. Lisa Barros D'Sa, Glenn Leyburn, U.K.

Lesley Manville and Liam Neeson star as an everyday couple with an extraordinary love, who must find the humor and grace to face a year of adversity. In a tour-de-force performance, Manville (*Phantom Thread*) plays Joan, a mature woman unprepared to face a newly diagnosed illness, while Neeson imbues her husband Tom with restrained pathos. Subtle, sophisticated and sweet, *Ordinary Love* is a deceptively simple story about love, survival and the epic challenges that life throws at each and every one of us.

Seberg — Dir. Benedict Andrews, U.S., U.K.

Inspired by real events about the French New Wave darling and *Breathless* star, Jean Seberg, this captivating drama chronicles the actress's turbulent life in the late 1960s, when she was targeted by Hoover's FBI Counterintelligence Program, because of her political and romantic involvement with black civil rights activist Hakim Jamal. Kristen Stewart delivers a raw and stunning performance as a young woman, spiraling out of control and caught in the crossfire of the political moment.

The Report — Dir. Scott Z. Burns, U.S.

In this thriller based on actual events, idealistic Senate staffer Daniel J. Jones (Adam Driver) is tasked by his boss, Dianne Feinstein (Annette Bening), to lead an investigation into the CIA's post-9/11 Detention and Interrogation Program. Jones' relentless pursuit of the truth leads to explosive findings that uncover the lengths to which the nation's top intelligence agency went to destroy evidence, subvert the law, and hide a brutal secret from the American public.

The Song of Names — Dir. François Girard, Canada, U.K., Germany, Hungary

Martin Simmonds (Tim Roth) has been haunted throughout his life by the mysterious disappearance of his "brother" and extraordinary best friend, a Polish Jewish virtuoso violinist, Dovidl Rapaport, who vanished shortly before the 1951 London debut concert that would have launched his brilliant career. Thirty-five years later, Martin discovers that Dovidl (Clive Owen) may still be alive, and sets out on an obsessive intercontinental search to find him and learn why he left.

The Traitor (Il traditore) — Dir. Marco Bellocchio, U.K., Italy, Argentina, U.S.

The Traitor tells the true story of Tommaso Buscetta, the man who brought down the Cosa Nostra. In the early 1980s, an all-out war rages between Sicilian mafia bosses over the heroin trade. Tommaso Buscetta, a made man, flees to hide out in Brazil. Back home, scores are being settled, and Buscetta watches from afar as his sons and brother are killed in Palermo, knowing he may be next. Arrested and extradited to Italy by the Brazilian police, Buscetta makes a decision that will change everything for the Mafia: He decides to meet with Judge Giovanni Falcone and betray the eternal vow he made to the Cosa Nostra.

The Truth (La Vérité) — Director: Hirokazu Kore-eda, France, Japan

Catherine Deneuve and Juliette Binoche play a mother and-daughter at odds in master director Kore-eda's (*Shoplifters*) first foray outside of his native Japan. After her movie star mother Fabienne (Deneuve) publishes a controversial memoir, screenwriter Lumir (Binoche) returns to France with husband Hank (Ethan Hawke) and child in tow. Fabienne is shooting her newest film, *Memories of My Mother*, and the on-screen and on-set worlds become increasingly and amusingly intertwined in this shrewd exploration of reality and fiction, family and forgiveness.

The Two Popes — Dir. Fernando Meirelles, U.S., U.K., Italy

From Fernando Meirelles, the Academy Award-nominated director of "City of God," and three-time Academy Award-nominated screenwriter Anthony McCarten, comes an intimate story of one of the most dramatic transitions of power in the last 2,000 years. Frustrated with the direction of the church, Cardinal Bergoglio (Jonathan Pryce) requests permission to retire in 2012 from Pope Benedict (Anthony Hopkins). Behind Vatican walls, a struggle commences between both tradition and progress, guilt and forgiveness, as these two very different men confront elements from their pasts in order to find common ground and forge a future for a billion followers around the world.

Waves — Dir. Trey Edward Shults, U.S.

Set against the vibrant landscape of South Florida, and featuring an astonishing ensemble of award-winning actors and breakouts alike, *Waves* traces the epic emotional journey of a suburban African-American family—led by a well-intentioned but domineering father—as they navigate love, forgiveness, and coming together in the aftermath of a loss. From acclaimed director Trey Edward Shults, *Waves* is a heartrending story about the universal capacity for compassion and growth even in the darkest of times.

Festival Information

The 55th Chicago International Film Festival runs Oct. 16-27, 2019 at the AMC River East, 322 E. Illinois St., and features more than 150 films, with a vast diversity of offerings, including numerous competitive categories and several highlight programs such as Black Perspectives, Cinemas of the Americas, International Comedy, Women in Cinema, Out-Look, After Dark and the City & State program (showcasing films made in Chicago and throughout Illinois.)

Festival Sponsors and Partners

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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, Summer Screenings Program, CineYouth Festival, and year-round Education Program. Celebrating its 55th edition October 16-27, 2019, 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, YouTube and Twitter.

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