



56th Chicago International Film Festival
October 14-25, 2020

EMBARGOED UNTIL:

Wednesday, October 28, 2020, noon CT

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FRANCES MCDORMAND-STARRER *NOMADLAND*, JAPAN'S *UNDER THE OPEN SKY*, AND LOCALLY MADE *THE ROAD UP* WIN AUDIENCE CHOICE AWARDS AT THE 56TH CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Festival-goers also choose animated film “To Gerard” as the Festival’s Best Short Film

CHICAGO - The **Chicago International Film Festival** today announces the winners of the **Festival Audience Choice Awards, presented by Xfinity**. Voted by Festival-goers, the Audience Choice Award for Best English-Language Feature goes to ***Nomadland*** by director **Chloé Zhao**. **Miwa Nishikawa’s *Under the Open Sky*** (Japan) – also winner of the Best Performance Silver Hugo Award for lead actor Yakusho Koji – takes home the Best International Feature Audience Choice Award; and Chicago-made ***The Road Up***, co-directed by **Jon Siskel** and **Greg Jacobs**, which made its World Premiere at the Festival, receives the Audience Choice Award for Best Documentary. “**To Gerard**,” a seven-minute animation by director **Taylor Meacham**, receives the Best Short Film Audience Choice Award.

“We are incredibly grateful to have shared a strong slate of remarkable films with our audiences, both live at the drive-in and virtually, at the 56th Chicago International Film Festival,” said Managing Director **Vivian Teng**. “At the Festival, we always believe in the power of cinema to bring people together, introduce us to new cultures, and create empathy, transforming us all in the process. In this largely virtual edition, our enthusiastic audiences viewed at the drive-in and virtually and from across Chicago, from Illinois, as well as 47 additional states, to cast their votes and select these winners.”

The Audience Choice Awards announcement follows last week’s virtual juried Awards event, which saw the Festival’s top prizes go to: [Sweat](#) (Gold Hugo, International Feature Film Competition and Best Art Direction); [Preparations to Be Together for an Unknown Period of Time](#) (Gold Hugo, New Directors Competition); [Patois](#) (Chicago Award winner); and [Things We Dare Not Do](#) (Gold Hugo, International Documentary

Competition, and Gold Q-Hugo, Out-Look Competition). Award-winning short film films include: [The End of Suffering \(a proposal\)](#) (Gold Hugo, Live Action Shorts Competition); [Tie](#) (Gold Hugo, Animated Short Film Competition); and [We Have One Heart](#) (Gold Hugo, Documentary Shorts Competition).

Featuring more than 120 feature films and shorts from around the world as well as daily livestream Coffee Talks, Q&As from top directors, producers, actors, composers, and more, the 56th 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 six years, the Festival has been proud to showcase the Academy Award Winner for Best Picture.

Information on the winners of the Audience **Choice** Awards, presented by Xfinity, for the 56th Chicago International Film Festival is below:

Audience **Choice Award - Best Feature**

Nomadland

Dir. Chloé Zhao
U.S.

Following the economic collapse of a company town in rural Nevada, Fern (Frances McDormand) packs her van and sets off on the road exploring a life outside of conventional society as a modern-day nomad. The third feature film from director Chloé Zhao, *Nomadland* features real nomads Linda May, Swankie, and Bob Wells as Fern's mentors and comrades in her exploration through the vast landscape of the American West. Winner of the 2020 Venice Film Festival Golden Lion.

Audience **Choice Award - Best International Feature**

Under the Open Sky (Subarashiki Sekai)

Dir. Miwa Nishikawa
Japan

Hirokazu Kore-eda protégée Miwa Nishikawa (*Dear Doctor*) returns to the Festival with her compassionate yet pointed chronicle of an ex-con's rough re-entry into society. Koji Yakusho (*13 Assassins, Shall We Dance?*) delivers a nuanced lead performance as former Yakuza Mikami, who struggles to secure both employment and a new sense of self after years of incarceration. *Japanese, with subtitles.*

Audience Choice Award - Best Documentary

The Road Up

Dirs. Jon Siskel, Greg Jacobs

U.S.

From the award-winning team behind the Chicago International Film Festival hit poetry slam documentary *Louder than a Bomb*, comes this inspiring and emotional film following Jesse Teverbaugh, a charismatic leader at the job-training program Cara. With tough-love and dedication, Teverbaugh mentors four Chicagoans during their precarious journey from homelessness, addiction, and incarceration to stable employment. *The Road Up* powerfully chronicles not only America's unforgiving economic and social structures, but also the essential role that community, connection, hope, and love play in overcoming adversity.

Audience Choice Award - Best Short Film

"To Gerard"

Dir. Taylor Meacham

U.S.

A heartfelt story about the art of illusion and the magic of inspiring someone to follow their dreams.

About the Chicago International Film Festival

Celebrating its 56th edition October 14-25, 2020, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival. Showcasing the best in international and independent films from around the world, the 56th edition will be virtual and present more than 50 feature films and nine short film programs from around the world, bringing audiences together through virtual screenings, one-night-only live events, virtual tribute events with directors and actors, as well as movie club-style gatherings for audiences. From dramas and thrillers to documentaries and comedies, the Festival presents 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).

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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](#). For more information, please visit www.chicagofilmfestival.com or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Twitter](#).

More information can be found at <https://www.chicagofilmfestival.com/>.

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