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NEWS

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Q HUGO AWARD CELEBRATES LGBTQ+ FILMS AT THE 51ST CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Films in Competition Offer Unique Stories About Sexual & Gender Identity

(CHICAGO, Sept 21, 2015) - The 51st Chicago International Film Festival (Oct. 15-29) announces the lineup for **OUT-Look**, its competitive LGBTQ+ program that showcases new artistic perspectives on sexuality and identity. From big stars to first-time filmmakers, the thirteen films included in this annual program are from Albania, Australia, Brazil, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, the United States and Vietnam. Films in the international OUT-Look program compete for the Chicago International Film Festival's **Q Hugo Award**.

Tickets are on sale now and may be purchased by calling the Festival Hotline Mon-Fri from 10:00am-6:00pm CST at 312-332-FILM (3456) or by visiting our Box Office 7 days a week from 12:00pm-8:00pm at the AMC River East 21 (322 E. Illinois St, Chicago). Tickets are also available online at ChicagoFilmFestival.com/tickets.

The international OUT-Look program is inclusive of a variety of LGBTQ+ experiences, ranging from **Carol**, the story of a love affair between a wealthy housewife (Cate Blanchett) and a young shop clerk (Rooney Mara, winner of the Best Actress award at this year's Cannes Film Festival) to **I Am Michael**, based on the controversial true story of Michael Glatze, a one-time gay-rights activist turned straight, conservative pastor. **I Am Michael** features outstanding performances by James Franco and Zachary Quinto.

In a year that saw transgender actress Laverne Cox on the cover of "Time" magazine, the Chicago International Film Festival's OUT-Look program offers four films that explore gender fluidity: **Sworn Virgin**, the feature film debut from Laura Bispuri, starring Alba Rohrwacher as a woman who lived as a man in her Albanian village for more than 14 years; the multi-award-winning Polish documentary **Call Me Marianna**, about Marianna's male-to-female transition as family and friends abandon her; the taboo-busting, Swedish teen-fable **Girls Lost**; and the intriguing noir **Carmín Tropical**, set in the mixed gender community of Juchitán, Mexico.

"Since its inception, the Chicago International Film Festival has programmed films that explore issues of sexuality and identity," says **Founder & Artistic Director Michael Kutza**. "This year's international selection of films in OUT-Look are strong and the subjects are relevant. They provide us with a variety of stories and perspectives that reflect LGBTQ+ issues happening around the world."

“These thirteen contenders for the Q Hugo Award are uncompromising, sensitive, timely, and quite moving,” added **Programming Director Mimi Plauché**.

Xenia, last year’s winner of the Chicago International Film Festival’s Q Hugo Award, went on to be selected as Greece’s entry for the Best Foreign Language Film competition at the 88th Academy Awards. *Xenia* won six Hellenic Film Academy Awards, Greece’s equivalent to the Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Director.

OUT-Look FILMS

All films listed will receive their Chicago premiere at the Festival unless otherwise indicated.
Festival screenings will be held at the AMC River East 21 Theater (322 E. Illinois St.).
Program subject to change.

Absence (Ausência)

USA PREMIERE

Country: Brazil

Director: Chico Teixeira

Synopsis: A sensitively observed slice of social realism, **Absence** tenderly depicts one adolescent’s uncertain journey into adulthood. Left adrift after his dad’s sudden departure, teenager Serginho works as a vendor at the local market, playing father figure to his little brother and companion to his frazzled, alcoholic mother. As Serginho’s burgeoning sexuality clashes with his own search for a role model, the film reveals a new level of tenderness. Matheus Fagundes won the Best Actor for his role as Serginho at the Rio de Janeiro Film Festival.

- Screening 1: Mon, Oct 26, 5:00 pm
- Screening 2: Tues, Oct 27, 5:15 pm

Barash

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Country: Israel

Director: Michael Vinik

Synopsis: In this spirited look at contemporary Israel, rebellious 17-year-old Naama Barash is living on the edge as her family unravels. While she’s experimenting with alcohol, guys, and drugs, her army-enrolled sister appears to have gone AWOL. As parents fret about their older daughter’s disappearance, Naama meets a wild new girl in school and discovers, for the first time, the intoxicating fervor of first love.

- Screening 1: Thurs, Oct 22, 7:30 pm
- Screening 2: Sun, Oct 25, 2:30 pm

Big Father, Small Father and Other Stories (Cha và con và)

Country: Vietnam

Director: Phan Dang Di

Synopsis: This portrait of disaffected, libidinous youth follows a group of friends in 1990s Saigon. While an amateur photographer longs for his hunky roommate, an aspiring ballerina copes with her double life as a sexy nightclub dancer. This sumptuous film captures the hopes and hopelessness of a generation of young Vietnamese.

- Screening 1: Fri, Oct 16, 9:45 pm
- Screening 2: Mon, Oct 19, 1:00 pm
- Screening 3: Sat, Oct 24, 12:15 pm

Call Me Marianna (Mów mi Marianna)

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Country: Poland

Director: Karolina Bielawska

Synopsis: Her ex-wife won't meet her. Her daughter rejects her. Her mother still calls her "son." As Marianna transitions from male to female, she is abandoned by her loved ones, alone in a world unwilling to accept her true self. This multi-award-winning documentary is an intensely sympathetic and powerful account of one individual's struggle to gain acceptance—even in the midst of profound physical hardship.

- Screening 1: Wed, Oct 21, 6:15 pm
- Screening 2: Thurs, Oct 22, 5:15 pm
- Screening 3: Mon, Oct 26, 1:15 pm

Carmín Tropical

Country: Mexico

Director: Rigoberto Perezcano

Synopsis: A noir unlike any other, this sun-soaked whodunit is set in Juchitán, a southern Mexican town home to a community of people who consider themselves *muxe* (mixed gender). After years away, *muxe* Mabel returns to investigate the death of an old friend, finding that the past can be just as unclear as the future.

- Screening 1: Sat, Oct 17, 7:15 pm
- Screening 2: Tues, Oct 20, 3:00 pm
- Screening 3: Fri, Oct 23, noon

Carol

Country: USA

Director: Todd Haynes

Synopsis: In an adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's seminal novel "The Price of Salt," **Carol** follows two women (Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara) from very different backgrounds who find themselves in an unexpected love affair in 1950s New York. As conventional norms of the time challenge their undeniable attraction, an honest story emerges to reveal the resilience of the heart in the face of change.

- Screening 1: Wed, Oct 28, 7:30 pm

Eisenstein in Guanajuato

Countries: Netherlands, Mexico, Finland, Belgium, France

Director: Peter Greenaway

Synopsis: The revolutionary Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein kick-started modern movies with his breakthrough "Battleship Potemkin." This energetic, stylish biopic chronicles the director's 1931 sojourn to Mexico, where, in Peter Greenaway's imaginative retelling, he lost his virginity to his suave male guide. A treat for cinephiles, the film adapts Eisenstein's own feverish editing rhythms and features a giddy performance by Elmer Bäck as the legendary director.

- Screening 1: Tues Oct 27, 6:00 pm
- Screening 2: Tues, Oct 28, 5:30 pm

Front Cover

Country: USA

Director: Ray Yeung

Synopsis: Ryan, a gay Chinese-American magazine stylist, has long tried to suppress his Asian heritage for fear of being stereotyped. But when his latest client, a big Chinese movie star, demands that his photo shoot capture the spirit of their shared country, both men find themselves questioning their most deeply held identities. In this smart, perceptive romantic drama, cultural heritage rises above the latest fashion.

- Screening 1: Sun, Oct 18, 5:00 pm
- Screening 2: Mon, Oct 19, 6:15 pm

Girls Lost (Pojkarna)

USA PREMIERE

Country: Sweden

Director: Alexandra-Therese Keining

Synopsis: A taboo-busting teen fable about gender fluidity, **Girls Lost** conjures one of the screen's most vividly realized transgender characters. Three girls discover a mysterious flower with the power to change their sex, which causes tomboy Kim to recognize her own urgent need to live as a boy. Brilliant male/female dual performances and a dreamy color palette give this film a propulsive energy.

- Screening 1: Fri, Oct 16, 1:00 pm
- Screening 2: Fri, Oct 23, 8:15 pm
- Screening 3: Sun, Oct 25, 8:30 pm

Henry Gamble's Birthday Party

Country: USA

Director: Stephen Cone

Synopsis: Henry's turning 17, and he thinks he might be gay. But he's not telling his pastor father, who's throwing him a pool party. Soon, school mates and church friends are spending a sunny, hormonal afternoon together in their swimsuits. Unfolding over the course of one day, this funny and heartbreakingly honest portrait from Chicagoan Stephen Cone explores the intersection between devout faith and burgeoning sexuality.

- Screening 1: Thurs, Oct 22, 3:00 pm
- Screening 2: Fri, Oct 23, 8:00 pm
- Screening 3: Sat, Oct 24, 11:30 am

I Am Michael

Country: USA

Director: Justin Kelly

Synopsis: James Franco and Zachary Quinto give powerhouse performances in this complex true-life drama about Michael Glatze, a gay-rights activist who became a conservative Christian pastor and "ex-gay" therapist. Beginning against the backdrop of Matthew Shepard's murder and unfolding over more than a decade, **I Am Michael** probingly explores questions about faith, community, identity, and what it means to truly follow your own path.

- Screening 1: Sat, Oct 24, 9:00 pm
- Screening 2: Tues, Oct 27, 1:00 pm

Sworn Virgin (Vergine Giurata)

Countries: Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Albania

Director: Laura Bispuri

Synopsis: In an Albanian mountain village, a young woman takes a culturally mandated vow of chastity and lives as a man to avoid an unwanted marriage. After 14 years, she leaves home for the first time. Tackling questions of tradition and identity, Laura Bispuri employs a mesmerizing lightness of touch, while Alba Rohrwacher delivers an extraordinary measured performance as Hanna/Mark.

- Screening 1: Mon, Oct 26, 7:30 pm
- Screening 2: Wed, Oct 28, 8:15 pm

Women He's Undressed

Country: Australia

Director: Gillian Armstrong

Synopsis: From award-winning Australian director Gillian Armstrong (*The Last Days of Chez Nous*, *My Brilliant Career*) comes this glitzy portrait of celebrated costume designer Orry-Kelly, who dressed generations of starlets, from Ingrid Bergman to Marilyn Monroe, as a gay man in a world where "gay" didn't exist. An exuberant, gossipy portrait of Hollywood fashions through the decades, the film also lifts back the curtain on the unspoken sexual politics of showbiz, from Marlene Dietrich to Cary Grant.

- Screening 1: Fri, Oct 23, 8:30 pm
- Screening 2: Wed, Oct 28, 5:00 pm

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ABOUT CINEMA/CHICAGO

Cinema/Chicago is a not-for-profit arts and education organization dedicated to encouraging better understanding between cultures and to making a positive contribution to the art form of the moving image. The Chicago International Film Festival is one of the year-round programs presented by Cinema/Chicago, which also include the Chicago International Film Festival Television Awards, CineYouth Festival, INTERCOM Competition, International Screenings Program, and Education Program. Celebrating its 51st anniversary this year, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival.

Festival passes are now available. The full Festival schedule is available at ChicagoFilmFestival.com. Individual tickets go on sale on Friday, Sept. 25, 2015.

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