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**NEWS**

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **51ST CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL CELEBRATED CINEMA AND CHICAGO'S IMPACT ON THE INDUSTRY**

*Festival Highlights Included Industry Days, Spotlight: Architecture+Space+Design,  
and Awards Night*

(CHICAGO, Nov 5, 2015) - Cinema/Chicago's Chicago International Film Festival wrapped up its 51st edition on Thurs, Oct 29, 2015 with its Closing Night presentation of the Festival's Audience Choice Award winner **Spotlight**, starring Michael Keaton, Mark Ruffalo, Rachel McAdams, Liev Schreiber, Brian d'Arcy James and Stanley Tucci, plus encore presentations of the Festival's International Feature Competition winner, **A Childhood** (France), and New Directors Competition winner, **Underground Fragrance** (China).

Over the course of the two-week event, the Chicago International Film Festival saw an increase in audience attendance as compared to 2014. This year, Festival audience members were delighted by new programming highlights such as **Industry Days**, a new Culinary Cinema program that offered one-of-a-kind experiences with food and film, and **Spotlight: Architecture +Space+Design**.

Official selections at this year's Festival featured over 140 feature-length narrative films and 54 short films from 50 countries, celebrating diverse cultures. Directors from around the world attended the Festival to introduce their films and hold post-screening Q&As. This year's Festival also welcomed back works by such acclaimed directors as **Charlie Kaufman**, **Apichatpong Weerasethakul**, **Hou Hsiao-Hsien**, **Frederick Wiseman**, Chicago's own **Stephen Cone**, and **Michael Moore**, whose film **Where To Invade Next** won this year's **Founders Award**, which is given to one film across all categories that captures the spirit of the Chicago International Film Festival for its unique and innovative approach to the art of the moving image.

"Michael Moore is quite a character and his films are important. He's changed the way we look at the documentary in so many ways. You either love him or you hate him, but he's always been a director to watch," said Founder & Artistic Director **Michael Kutza**. "Where To Invade Next" doesn't disappoint."

**Where to Invade Next** (USA) was also the winner of the Festival's Audience Choice Award for Best Documentary. Other Audience Choice Award winners included **Spotlight** (USA) and **Mustang** (France, Turkey). Festival audience members received a ballot at each public Festival

screening. Overall, audience members gave this year's Festival films an average rating of 4.2 out of a 5-point scale.

The 51st Festival also paid tribute to the achievements of producer **Gigi Pritzker**, director **Charles Burnett**, composer **Howard Shore**, actors **Sarah Silverman** (*I Smile Back*) and **Christopher Abbot** (*James White*), and director **Josh Mond** (*James White*). The Festival's programming featured Special Presentations of U.S. Indies and Oscar hopefuls such as **The 33, Carol** (winner of this year's **Gold Q Hugo**), **I Smile Back**, **Spotlight** and this year's Surprise Film, Lenny Abrahamson's **Room**—one of the best-reviewed films of the year.

Films from Austria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Columbia, Croatia, Denmark, France, Iceland, Iran, Netherlands Portugal, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States won the Gold and Silver Hugos in the Festival's competitions: **International Feature, New Directors, International Documentary, OUT-Look/Q Hugo Competition, Short Film**, and **Chicago Award**. The second annual **Roger Ebert Award**, which is presented to an emerging filmmaker whose film presents a fresh and uncompromising vision, was awarded to Ida Panahandeh's **Nahid** (Iran).

"The Festival took audiences on a journey through cinema," said Founder & Artistic Director **Michael Kutza**. "We are so pleased to introduce Chicago audiences to new films and filmmakers while paying tribute to industry trailblazers."

"We were thrilled to welcome so many new and returning guests to the Festival this year to participate in screenings, Industry Days, and events," added Programming Director **Mimi Plauché**. "Our audience members embraced the films we presented and engaged the filmmakers in spirited conversations about the films, their process, and the cultural context of their work."

#### INDUSTRY DAYS

**Industry Days** successfully connected local and visiting filmmakers with their peers and industry executives. The inaugural conference was presented by Lead Partner TIAA-CREF with additional support from Tribune Media Company, Columbia College Chicago, and OtterBox. The four-day event launched with an Industry Tribute to producer **Gigi Pritzker**, moderated by **Andrea Wishom**, Chief Operating Officer for Skywalker Properties Ltd. and former Executive Vice President of Harpo Studios.

"Our Industry Days venues, the Tribune Tower and the AMC, were buzzing with invigorated attendees, discussing and debating what it takes to produce and release successful movies both in Chicago and the marketplace, at large," said **Anthony Kaufman, programmer of Industry Days**. "It was great to see such a cross-section of filmmakers, film students, and film and media talents, listening to and interacting with veteran industry professionals, and looking for ways to push their projects forward."

Featured panelists included writer-director **Steve Pink** (*Gross Pointe Blank, Hot Tub Time Machine, New Girl*); actor-producer-director **Jeff Garlin** (*Curb Your Enthusiasm, I Want Someone to Eat Cheese With*); Kickstarter co-founder **Charles Adler**; Chicago directors **Stephen Cone & Kris Swanberg**; **Richard Lorber**, distributor of films by such acclaimed directors as Steven Soderbergh, Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, and John Woo; **Tom Quinn**, distributor of films such as *Where to Invade Next* and the Oscar-winning *Citizenfour*; and **Amy Hobby**, producer of such films as *Secretary, What Happened, Miss Simone?* and co-founder of female-driven production company Tangerine Entertainment.

Speakers from the following companies also participated: IFC Films, Magnolia Pictures, The

Orchard, Sundance Institute, MPI Media Group, Music Box Films, Kino/Lorber, The Film Collaborative, Film Buff, The Film Sales Company, Preferred Content, ITVS, Kartemquin Films, and the Chicago Media Project.

Industry Days ended with a **competitive Pitch Session** (“The Pitch”) co-produced by **IFP Chicago** that made audiences and industry leaders aware of remarkable works in progress. “The Pitch” was judged by a panel including Amy Hobby (producer), Aijah Keith (IFC Films), Steve Pink (producer), and Brett Hudson (producer). Judges offered constructive feedback with humor and grace. A curated selection of six filmmaking teams with new narrative projects participated.

An Honorable Mention was given to **Fawzia Mirza, Brian Hieggelke, and Eugene Park** for their film **Signature Move** (about a 30-something lesbian who flounders in life, love and wrestling, trying to reconcile who she is with the values of her religious, TV-obsessed mother). **Signature Move** will receive support from IFP Chicago.

The winning pitch went to **Amelia Dellos and Eric Anderson** for their film **Oriole Park** (about a serial killer who looms over the tightly knit community of Oriole Park as a string of disappearances lead neighbors to suspect one of their own). Dellos and Anderson received an award of in-kind services worth over \$20,000 from such companies as Magnanimous Media, AVID, Hewlett-Packard and Stage 18, as well as support from IFP Chicago.

#### CULINARY CINEMA

The Festival’s new **Food and Film** program successfully paired food and film.

“When we found three terrific films with gastronomic themes, and all with Chicago ties (**Birth of Sake, Open Tables, and Breakfast At Ina’s**), it seemed like a natural decision to 'event-ize' the screenings with local restaurant tie-ins. We couldn't be happier with the way these events have come together with great movies and great food and drink partners,” said the Festival’s **Programming Team**.

**Breakfast at Ina’s** became one of the most popular films at the Festival. The film's World Premiere and Local Root event was the fastest program to sell out of any other film/event at this year’s Festival.

#### SPOTLIGHT: ARCHITECTURE+SPACE+DESIGN

In conjunction with the Chicago Architecture Biennial, the Festival programmed a special series called **Spotlight: Architecture+Space+Design**, featuring a World Premiere, two North American Premieres, and four USA Premieres.

From Tokyo to Milan to Sao Paulo, the international selection showcased 11 new feature films, including notable portraits of architects, designers and buildings (**Concrete Love – The Bohm Family, Why A Film About Michele De Lucchi?, The Infinite Happiness**) and beautifully photographed depictions of contemporary and futuristic cities (**Obra, Invention, Under Electric Clouds**). From subways to skyscrapers, from down-and-out squatters to glass-house-dwellers, these films portray a range of people and characters interacting with extraordinary places and spaces.

In addition to a program of shorts, a Chicago Film Archives Program (“Modern Metropolis”), and the feature-length films, the Spotlight featured a discussion with world-renowned architect **Helmut Jahn**. The Festival’s **Spotlight: Architecture+Space+Design** program is supported by its Program Partners: Chicago Architecture Biennial, The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, Tribune Media, Italian Film Commission, and Italian Trade Agency.

## EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS - REACHING THE NEXT GENERATION OF MOVIEGOERS

Cinema/Chicago's Education Program held **eight FREE film screenings** at the 51st Chicago International Film Festival, a highlight of the year-round program's mission of connecting students, teachers and young filmmakers with unique and engaging media literacy opportunities. The Education Program's **Education Screenings** were held each weekday morning during the Festival at the AMC River East 21, 322 E. Illinois St, Chicago.

"The films we present to students during the Festival are a vital piece of the full Education Program puzzle," says **Rebecca Fons, Education Director at Cinema/Chicago**. "With the Education Screenings, we give students from across the city the opportunity to see films they would not otherwise experience. With our post-screening discussions, we further engage the students by hearing their opinions, answering their questions, and speaking as a group about film. In the twenty years since the Education Program's inception, we've welcomed well over 100,000 students to the Program, and we've done it all at no cost to schools, teachers, or students."

## WHAT'S NEXT

Cinema/Chicago's **52nd Chicago International Film Festival** will be held **October 13-27, 2016**.

## 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 its Television Awards, CineYouth Festival, INTERCOM Competition, International Screenings Program, and Education Program. More information at [ChicagoFilmFestival.com](http://ChicagoFilmFestival.com).

## 51ST CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PARTNERS

The 51st Chicago International Film Festival was supported by Gold Festival Partners: TIAA-CREF, Columbia College Chicago, Wintrust Community Banks; Official Airline: American Airlines; Headquarters Hotel: JW Marriott Chicago; Silver Festival Partners: Bloomberg, Intersites; Platinum Media Partners: National CineMedia (NCM), JC Decaux, Michigan Avenue Magazine; Gold Media Partners: WTTW11, Time Out Chicago, WBEZ91.5, WXRT-FM, WBBM Newsradio, and The Hollywood Reporter; Bronze Festival Partners: Stella Artois, AARP, Tribune Media; Participating Partners: SundanceNow Doc Club, Whole Foods, Wansas Tequila, Cultivate Studios, Netrix, KIND, OtterBox, Optimus, Sound Investment; Official Vehicle: Volvo; Participating Hotels: Public Chicago, The Whitehall Hotel, theWit and Loews Chicago Hotel; and Cultural Partners: Consulate General of Argentina in Chicago, Consulate General of Italy in Chicago, Italian Cultural Institute of Chicago, Italian Film Commission, Italian Trade Agency, Polish Film Institute, Goethe Institut, Austrian Cultural Forum New York, ANCINE National Cinema Agency of Brazil, and Consulate General of Israel to the Midwest. With Foundation and Government support from the National Endowment of the Arts, Alphawood Foundation Chicago, the Illinois Arts Council, and Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events, and the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation. Additional support provided by Allstate, the Chicago Architecture Biennial, Dark Horse Wine, Effen Vodka, Lavazza, and SkinnyPop.

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