

Preview: Final Week of the 50th Chicago International Film Festival

Submitted by [NickHC](#) [1] on October 17, 2014 - 1:10pm

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CHICAGO – The 50th Chicago International Film Festival has hit its final six days, continuing to offer Chicagoans an electrifying group of films from around the world. The festival breaks down these films in several categories, including the Main Competition, New Directors, Docufest, Out-Look (LGBT), World Cinema, After Dark and Spotlight Scandinavia.

HollywoodChicago.com contributors Nick Allen and Patrick McDonald have been sampling the best of the festival, and offers this preview of this final preview of the best to be found in the festival's remaining days. Each capsule is designated with NA (Nick Allen) or PM (Patrick McDonald), to indicate the author. Be sure to check back with this list, as more capsules will be added as more films are screened.

Don't forget to check out our previous coverage of CIFF 2014, featuring numerous recommended films that are still playing.

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CENTERPIECE FILM: "Evolution of a Criminal"



'Evolution of a Criminal'

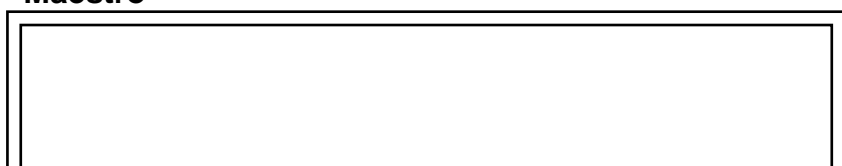
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

A man takes back control of his life in "Evolution of a Criminal," a must-witness documentary that provides a rare first-person account of a convict's story before and after prison. Director Darius Clark Monroe exercises fine, fearless narrative and journalistic filmmaking as he goes deep into his past with the help of witnesses, heart-racing reenactments of the bank robbery that changed his life, and personal moments that no outsider's profile could justify. Executive produced by Spike Lee, this documentary offers a success story in its epilogue, nonetheless after a necessary account of an experience that is both familiar and foreign to viewers. (NA)

Sunday, 10/19, 7:00pm

Monday, 10/20, 6:15pm

"Maestro"





Maestro

Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

Festival-goers looking to take a break from the heavier lifting of the festival might be charmed by this French romantic comedy about a group of actors trying to make a film. Focused around the accidental rise of an extra-turned-lead-actor (who says out loud that Bruce Willis is a genius actor), the references to filmmaking is equally silly and specific. "Maestro's" best jokes involve nudges to the technical artistry of making a movie, including stressed crew members who do the heavy lifting for a revered filmmaker who can supposedly do no wrong. A bonus to the experience of "Maestro" is its historical significance, as the film is inspired by director Eric Rohmer's relationship with an actor on the set of his 2006 film "The Romance of Astrea and Celadon." Even if that last sentence means nothing to you, the light fun of the chaotic "Maestro" will still make you laugh. (NA)

Friday, 10/17, 2:30pm

Sunday, 10/18, 2:30pm

Tuesday, 10/21, 5:45pm

"Shorts 1: City and State - Locally Sourced"



Shorts 1: City and State

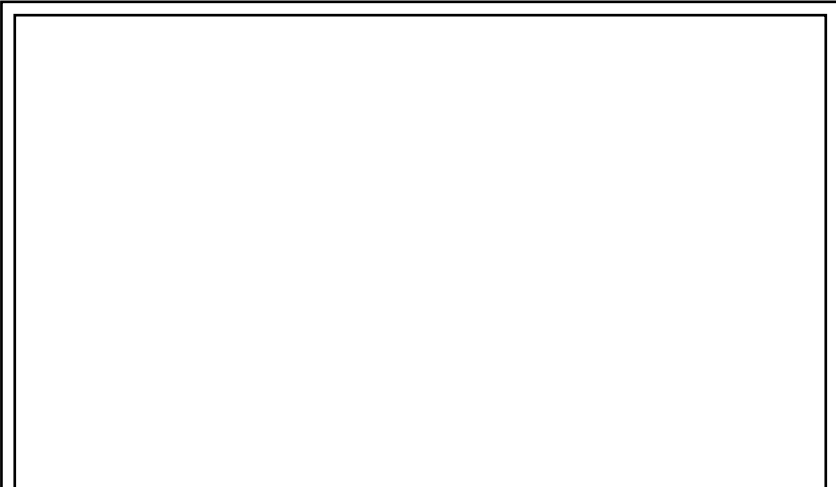
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

This upcoming weekend at the Chicago International is "short film" themed, with all of the packaged programs available (click the link below for schedules). The locally sourced "City and State" shorts are all from Chicago or Illinois, and has an amazing array of subjects and stories. Watch out for "Speed Dating" (Meghan Artes), "Lucy" (Zoe Lubeck), "Frame Walk" (Hayoung Jeon), "Drifting" (Joel Benjamin), "Jaspa' Jenkins" (Robert Carnilius) and "Pariental Guidance" (Lonnie Edwards, who also won the State of Illinois "Shortcuts" Award contest for best short). (PM)

Friday, 10/17, 2:45pm

Sunday, 10/19, 12:00pm

"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"





One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

In 1975, the Chicago International Film Festival held the world premiere of Milos Forman's iconic "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." Now, with producer Saul Zaentz (also of "Amadeus" and "The English Patient") in attendance, the CIFF marks its 50th year with one premiere that went on to create a worldwide sensation. See this winner of "Best Picture," "Best Actor," and "Best Actress," at the place where it was first introduced.

Saturday, 10/18, 4:00pm

"Futuro Beach"



Futuro Beach
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

An intriguing history of a relationship, split into three stories. A lifeguard in Brazil cannot save a male German tourist, and when he delivers the news of the death to his male traveling companion, the lifeguard and the German mourner begin a relationship. Death, dying, love and renewal permeates all three segments, the most illustrative of these themes are in the third segment. The film highlights new themes for gay films, with the better acceptance of orientation in society creating new issues in the subculture, especially having to do with the complications of relationships. We all can relate to that. (PM)

Sunday, 10/19, 1:00pm

Tuesday, 10/21, 8:30pm

"Birdman"



Birdman
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

Michael Keaton soars in a film that you might think is autobiographical – an aging movie star, who used to be a franchise movie superhero called Birdman, takes a hack out of Broadway by adapting a series of Raymond Carver short stories (the staging of the stories are as intriguing as the backstage antics). But it isn't Keaton, it's a fully realized character that uses the old Birdman hero as a voice in his head. The supporting cast, including Naomi Watts, Zach Galifianakis, Emma Stone and Edward Norton, is a dream. Director Alejandro González Iñárritu ("Babel") provides an illusion that that whole movie was done in one take, which is extraordinary. This film needs to filter through your perspective, because it lives as a conscious flight-of-fancy that furnishes its own wings. (PM)

Saturday, 10/18, 7:30pm

"Life After Death"



An American's fantasy of supporting and sponsoring young men and women in third-world countries is given a strong dose of reality with this striking documentary. "Life After Death" parallels two sides of the world, connected by charity - a Rwandan young man trying to make a living in his post-genocide society, and the Texas couple who sponsor him, of which he calls mommy and daddy. With the film produced by the couple, "Life After Death" provides an interesting clash between filmmaker and subject, as the mindsets of two don't seem to be shared. Director Joe Callander speaks most vividly through his cinematography and editing, which assembles footage to show life as is in a piece of the world that can't be aided by simple charity.

Sunday, 10/19, 2:30pm

Tuesday, 10/21, 8:45pm

"Dear White People"



This send-up of the "post racial" society, through the boundaries and challenges of an elite college, picks rightfully at a scab that probably will never heal – as long as people feel a need for superior over the other. Writer/director Justin Simien pulls no punches on the attitudes of white America towards their African-American brethren. As individuals, it's a reminder to NOT get into the hive mind, where acceptance into a certain group means marginalizing another. And those in power continue to use this marginalization to win elections. "Dear White People" has the Spike Lee influence – the tone feels like "She's Gotta Have It" – but with much more subtlety and mindfulness. (PM)

Monday, 10/20, 6:00pm

"Life Itself"





Life Itself

Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

With only two more months left of films in 2014, Steve James' documentary "Life Itself" remains one of its absolute best. This story of famous Chicago Roger Ebert is a celebration that doesn't wear off in repeat viewings, and provides an exuberant account of one of the festival's finest attendees. James and Chaz Ebert are scheduled to appear at this special screening, a lovely option to close out the 50th year of a festival that our man Roger so deeply influenced. (NA)

Wednesday, 10/22, 8:00pm

The 50th Chicago International Film Festival takes place from Oct. 9 to Oct. 23, 2014. [Click here \[13\]](#) for film schedules, information and to purchase tickets.

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