

Interviews: Michael Peña, Craig Robinson & Ira Sachs at 2016 Chicago Critics Film Festival

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on May 24, 2016 - 12:09pm

- [CCFF](#) [2]
- [CFCA](#) [3]
- [Chicago Critics Film Festival](#) [4]
- [Chicago Film Critics Association](#) [5]
- [Craig Robinson](#) [6]
- [Exclusive Portraits](#) [7]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [8]
- [Interview](#) [9]
- [Ira Sachs](#) [10]
- [Joe Arce](#) [11]
- [Little Men](#) [12]
- [Michael Pena](#) [13]
- [Morris From America](#) [14]
- [Music Box Theatre](#) [15]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [16]
- [War on Everyone](#) [17]

CHICAGO – The Chicago Critics Film Festival (CCFF) keeps rolling, and it's a blockbuster so far. Actors Michael Peña and Craig Robinson, along with director Ira Sachs, made appearances on behalf of their films "War on Everything," "Morris from America" and "Little Men." The festival runs through May 26th, 2016.



Michael Peña Meets the Chicago Film Critics, Patrick McDonald Fourth from Right

Photo credit: Dann Gire, Daily Herald

Throughout the 2016 festival, audiences can expect amazing cinema from the first quarter major festivals – including Sundance and South X Southwest – and there are a couple more director and celebrity appearances to go. For a complete schedule of these events and the films, [click here](#). [18]

Since this is a film festival curated by the Chicago critics, Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com has asked some of the participating film critics to contribute to the Michael Peña interview, because it was a one-question-red-carpet situation (they will be identified below by their name and outlet). And as always, HollywoodChicago.com photographer Joe Arce is on the scene to capture these Exclusive Portraits.



Michael Peña of "War on Everyone"

The actor from Chicago, Michael Peña, is riding a sizzling hot streak. After recent high profile roles in "American Hustle" and "The Martian," he stole the picture in the hilarious superhero movie "Ant-Man" as the motormouth character Luis. He came to the CCFF to promote his latest,

“War on Everyone.”



Michael Peña at the Chicago Critics Film Festival

Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com: You’ve portrayed a cop before, most famously in ‘End of Watch.’ What appealed to you about going outside the box with a typical cop character in ‘War on Everyone’?

Michael Peña: This is way different, because it’s not going for any sense of reality – this is a dark John Michael McDonagh movie. The tone of it is way different, and I love that kind of writing, where it’s definitely Un-PC. This story could only be written by someone outside America, because people here would be afraid of some of the dialogue that is not politically correct. But dude, it’s just a movie. [laughs] I love that the director is doing what he does, and he thought that this would be funny.

Ian Simmons (kickseat.com): What attracted you to ‘War on Everyone’?

Peña: It’s gotta be John Michael McDonagh. I thought ‘The Guard’ and ‘Calvary’ were really amazing. This script in itself was so refreshing. There were so many great one-liners, so many references, I thought, ‘Just give me a crack at saying some of these lines.’ The ideas that come across, the story structure, it was just crazy. It’s a real European movie, and I like that. It’s way different than ‘End of Watch,’ or

anything else I've ever done.

Leo Brady (AMovieGuy.com): Can you talk about the contrast between doing two big budget blockbusters like 'The Martian' and 'Ant-Man,' versus doing an independent film like 'War on Everyone'?

Peña: I don't know why, but when I was younger I wanted to do dark dramas. I wasn't an oppressed person, that was just what I gravitated towards. I studied 1970's movies and they had a big impact on me. When I had a kid, I realized that he's not going to watch those movies. So now I'm doing 'Ant-Man' and loving it, and when he sees it he's laughing and having a good time. I'm doing all those movies just for him. 'War on Everyone' is all for me. I got paid pennies, but I'm proud of it.

Eman (EmansMovieReviews.com): I asked for some questions from the people, and they wanted to know, 'What movie are you most proud of?'

Peña: What role? I think the most meaningful to me right now, just right now...it's got to be 'Crash' [2004]. It was my first movie, and I was living in a shoe box, I mean I had no money. I had been struggling for twelve years, and then all of a sudden, 'Crash' comes out, and then it was like, 'Whoa, dude!'. And then the following year, I'm doing 'World Trade Center' with Oliver Stone – so to me that was like, 'Whaaat!?' It was a big 'what' moment. Before that, I remembered my girl, she'd try to come visit me to come see my apartment, and I said, 'No no no no no no no...We're gonna go to your house. We're going to go to YOUR house!'



Craig Robinson of "Morris from America"

Craig Robinson is another made-in-Chicago actor, and is most famously known for his role as Darryl on the iconic TV series, "The Office." He has been very busy since that show ended, appearing in films such as "Peeples" and "Get on Up." He also had a run last year at his own sitcom, "Mr. Robinson." He made an appearance at the CCFF on behalf of his excellent new film, "Morris from America" – in which he portrays a Dad named Curtis Gentry.



Craig Robinson at the Chicago Critics Film Festival

Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com: How do you think you and Curtis are most alike, and which scene did you feel like it was almost Craig talking, and not your character?

Craig Robinson: When I got the script, what attracted me the most was the language and vernacular of Curtis, because it was very close to how I talk. I love old school hip-hop, I don't have kids but love how my parents were – so I channeled that, to be the friend and father. I love music, so the comparisons he was making about different eras, I'm really turning into that guy. [laughs] Also like me, he's a bit shy in new situations, as when he goes out with his German buddies and acts a bit tentative...that is me as well.

HollywoodChicago.com: So after being on one of the most successful TV series in the medium's history, you broke out on your own with 'Mr. Robinson' last year. What did you take from 'The Office' that you applied to that series, or did you just want to approach it completely different?

Robinson: Besides 'The Office,' I observed experiences on 'The Bernie Mac Show' and 'Curb Your Enthusiasm.' From all the lead actors on those shows, they all get the biggest trailer, but they spend the least amount of time in it. [laughs] It is about the work ethic, being nice to people on set, working closely with everyone and coming up with ideas. I got good training, and was ready to go into the lead spot, which was

most important for me.

I wanted also to hire people who had collaborated before, that's why I had my band on the show, for example. It's all designed to make it more comfortable, so in a sense you're right at home. That is what I learned from what I did before.



Director Ira Sachs of "Little Men"

Ira Sachs is a lucky star – he was the first interview that Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com did in 2008! But besides that, Sachs is one of the top independent film directors of the last ten years, with memorable works like "Forty Shades of Blue" (2005), "Married Life" (2007), "Keep the Lights On" (2013) and "Love is Strange" (2014). He came to the CCFF with the magnificent "Little Men," which features Oscar-nominated actor Greg Kinnear.



Ira Sachs at the Chicago Critics Film Festival

Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com: I thought this was one of Greg Kinnear's finest performances. What did he know about the character that impressed you the most, and which scene does he use that knowledge the most?

Ira Sachs: What he understood about the character of Brian – and a way it's the arc of the film – is that he is a man who lost his father, and is still trying to figure out the man he is supposed to be. Marking that throughout the course of the film, and where it shifts, in the scene in the car

where he yells at his son and his friend. It is after that scene when we realize that he becomes his most honest.

HollywoodChicago.com: What predictive elements in your last film – ‘Love is Strange’ – do you think has come true in the past few years, regarding the observations of gay marriage in that film, and in light of the Supreme Court decision?

Sachs: Civil Rights movements, historically, steps forward, and then steps back – for example the ‘bathroom laws.’ But actually, it all has to happen, there has to be ruptures and there has to be conflicts to elicit change. It is an insane time, but it has brought the issues to the forefront, and nothing happens without pain.

The 4th Annual 2016 Chicago Critics Film Festival runs through May 26th, 2016, at the Music Box Theatre – 3733 North Southport Avenue, Chicago. As a reminder, for ticket purchase and general information, [click here](#). [18] “War on Everyone” is tentatively scheduled for fall release. “Morris from America” has a scheduled release date of August 26th, 2016. “Little Men” is scheduled to release August 5th. See local listings for theaters and show times.



[19]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [20]
Writer, Editorial Coordinator
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [19]

© 2016 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 19 2024 - 8:23am):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/26542/interviews-michael-pe-a-craig-robinson-ira-sachs-at-chicago-critics-film-festival>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ccff>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/cfca>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/chicago-critics-film-festival>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/chicago-film-critics-association>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/craig-robinson>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/exclusive-portraits>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/interview.html>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ira-sachs>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/joe-arce>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/little-men>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/michael-pena>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/morris-from-america>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/music-box-theatre>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-mcdonald>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/war-on-everyone>
- [18] <https://chicagocriticsfilmfestival.com/>
- [19] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [20] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>