

## Preview: First Weekend of 50th Chicago International Film Festival

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 9, 2014 - 9:54am

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CHICAGO – The 2014 edition, the 50th Chicago International Film Festival, kicks off tonight on October 9th. The premiere film will be “Miss Julie,” an adaptation of the August Strindberg play adapted and directed by Liv Ullmann. The first weekend promises a scintillating variety of cinema indulgences.

HollywoodChicago.com contributors Nick Allen and Patrick McDonald have been sampling the festival offerings, and provide this preview to cover the first four days of the event. The depth and breadth of the films is a reminder to participate in the variety of the Festival, especially if interested in a particular country, for their cinema is a glimpse into their culture. Each capsule is designated with NA (Nick Allen) or PM (Patrick McDonald), to indicate the author.

### OPENING NIGHT “Miss Julie”



Jessica Chastain in ‘Miss Julie’

*Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival*

Liv Ullmann, the legendary Swedish actress – and muse to director Ingmar Bergman – directs her fifth feature film, an adaptation of the August Strindberg play, “Miss Julie.” This dense and tragic story takes place over one night in 1890, in an Irish Baron’s manor. His daughter Julie (Jessica Chastain) plays a game of seduction with John (Colin Farrell), her father’s valet, which leads to severe consequences. Exquisitely acted and composed, director Ullmann uplifts and expands the material, while Chastain and Farrell push the stage play material into dreamy

realms of emotion. (PM)

Thursday, 10/9, 7pm

**"Free Fall"**



Free Fall  
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

This demented contender in this year's Main Competition is definitely one of the festival's more eccentric choices, and indeed one of its most intriguing. Broken into vignettes, György Pálfi's off-offbeat comedy is an odyssey through the circle of life, as visually framed with an old woman trying to climb the stairs. The film has a zippy unpredictability, its abstract sequences ending with punchlines; while it dances with easy and wild poetry, Pálfi nonetheless has a distinct way of articulating the finite experiences of different relationships. Those who are jazzed about the announced "Twin Peaks" revival will get a few doses of impassioned weirdness from this Hungarian madhouse. (NA)

Friday, 10/10, 6:15pm

Sunday, 10/12, 2:45pm

Thursday, 10/16, 2:30pm

**BLACK PERSPECTIVES: "Beyond the Lights"**

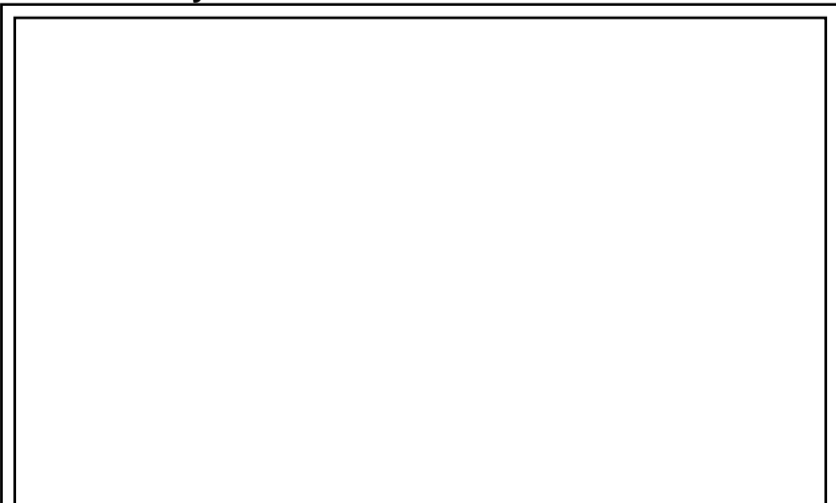


Beyond the Lights  
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

One of the classic African American films in the last twenty years is "Love & Basketball" (2001). The writer/director of that favorite – Gina Prince-Bythewood – is back with "Beyond the Lights," an intense love story between a superstar singer (Gugu Mbatha-Raw) and a police officer (Nate Parker). What distinguishes the story is the Prince-Bythewood touch, the feeling that in the background something is always simmering. The lead performances are also sincere without being coy, precisely as adults should be. Ms. Prince-Bythewood and lead actress Gugu Mbatha-Raw will attend the screening. (PM)

Friday, 10/10, 7pm (Reception afterward)

**"Iron Ministry"**





Iron Ministry

Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

An oddball documentary, reminiscent of this year's fictional film "Snowpiercer." Director J.P. Sniadecki traveled on Chinese trains for three years, and moved through the cars to capture contemporary images and attitudes of China today. What is interesting about the document is its casual nature. The camera captures imagery like an eye, rarely do the passengers even acknowledge it. Also, in the few snippets of dialogue, there is a sense that the individual always matters, and always has an opinion regarding their circumstances and surroundings. A must-see for China buffs, and unusual documentary aficionados. (PM)

Friday, 10/10, 6pm

Saturday, 10/11, 12:45pm

### "No Thank You"



No Thank You

Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

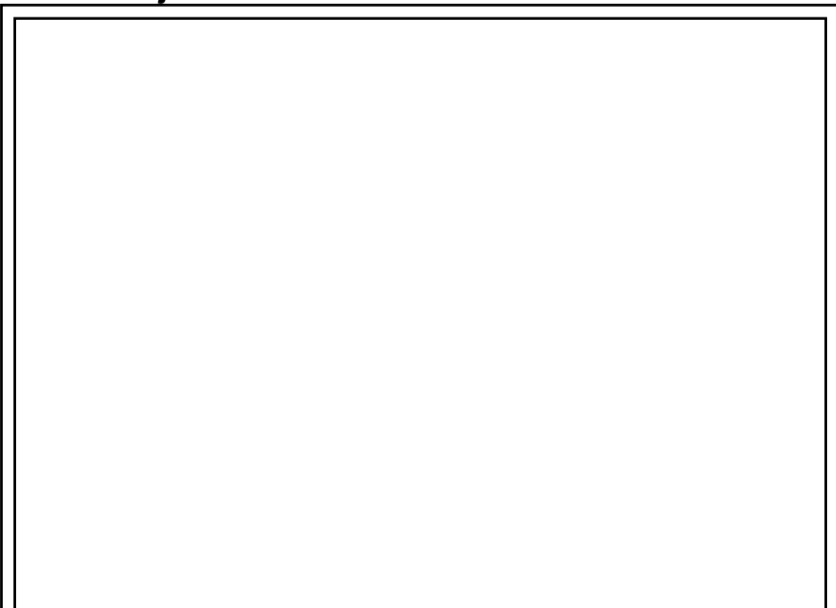
Part of the Festival's "Spotlight Scandinavia," this film is a universal exploration of a marriage in middle age, killed by routine and divergent interests. The wife Heli (Anu Sinisalo) is a language instructor, and decides to spice up her life by having an affair with one of her students. Filled with the morality of love, marriage and coupling, "No Thank You" is virtually and brutally honest, and allows that the compromise of self is sometimes not such a bad thing. (PM)

Friday, 10/10, 8pm

Sunday, 10/12, 3:45pm

Thursday, 10/16, 2:15pm

### "Force Majeure"





Force Majeure

Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

A “force majeure” is an unexpected circumstance, and this film which borrows the term certainly fulfills the expectation. A Swedish family – two parents, a boy and a girl – takes a ski vacation, and an unexpected potential accident throws the balance of power within the family unit way off. Truths and lies are told, and realities in dynamics of being in a couple are revealed. This is a Swedish, Denmark, French and Norwegian production, and it’s always interesting to get the European and Scandinavian perspective on social morality. This story never goes in the direction expected, which is part of its attractive charm. (PM)

Friday, 10/10, 8:15pm

Sunday, 10/12, 5:30pm

### “The Babadook”



The Babadook

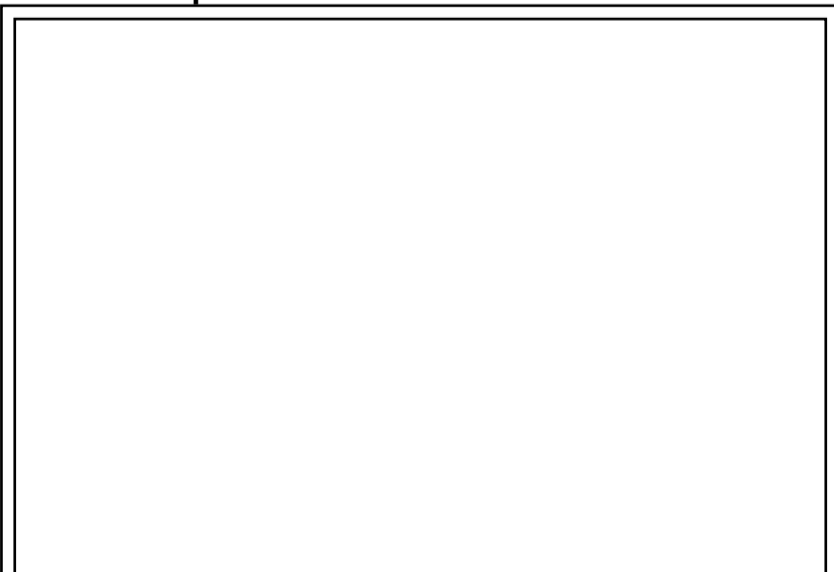
Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

Out from Australia and unleashed at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival is legitimately spooky boogeyman tale “The Babadook,” a strong bid for those who thought “Annabelle” subtracted its horror factor with cluttered filmmaking. Bumps in the night prove creepier than thunderous jump scares in this finely-crafted nightmare of widowed mother Amelia (Essie Davis) and her troublesome six-year-old son Louis (Noah Wiseman) who are haunted by a monster that first appears in one of his bedtime pop-up books. With Davis’ intensely emotional performance and a playful screenplay, debut writer/director Jennifer Kent’s “The Babadook” takes vivid form as both a heartbreaking reflection on depression and an enthralling, not to mention legitimately creepy, nighttime festival pick. (NA)

Friday, 10/10, 11pm

Tuesday, 10/21, 8:30pm

### “Winter Sleep”





Winter Sleep

Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

“Winter Sleep” is the tale of an aloof king who rules over few, but nonetheless has great sovereignty. Aydin (a magnificent Haluk Bilginer) is the owner of the local lodge, as well as a landlord and head columnist for a newspaper of tiny readership. This winner of the Palme d’Or from the 2014 Cannes Film Festival is a longhand dissection of this man, along with how his brash wielding of power has effected the lives of others. Narratively frozen with little movement in its storytelling, “Winter Sleep” forges a hypnotic force with its extended conversations, expertly realized by writer/director Nuri Bilge Ceylan and clear-cut performances. A compliment that should be good enough, “Winter Sleep” is at times indeed worthy of the comparisons it has been getting to Ingmar Bergman’s “Scenes from a Marriage.” The whammy for “Winter Sleep”, in spite of its fantastic sequences, is its 196-minute running time, making it one festival movie at the length of two; depending on your other choices, it is either a bargain or a rip-off (If you’re asking, this one is certainly much stronger than the same-time “Beloved Sisters”). (NA)

Saturday, 10/11, 7:15pm

Tuesday, 10/14, 7:45pm

### “Beloved Sisters”



Beloved Sisters

Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

This official submission from Germany for the 2014 “Best Foreign Language Film” Oscar is not the slickest three-hour period piece, but it is dazzling enough in dedicated production quality and pertinent history that it does get a recommendation. This late-1790s period piece tells of a rebellious writer (Florian Stetter, scheduled to appear at the festival) and his lifelong connection with two closely-bonded sisters (played by Henriette Confurius and Hannah Herzsprung) as they begin a lifelong companionship that forever changes a burgeoning German art culture. Director Dominik Graf’s perspective this true story does not soak in melodrama or pithy menage-a-trois jokes, but his loony visual choices prove to be a recurring distraction to a bloated experience, even if the inching narrative is often in need of a jolt. Romantic era period piece devotees are this film’s firmest bets, as this expansive production provides rich art design, albeit allowing these details to resonate more thoroughly than its unusual drama itself. (NA)

Saturday, 10/11, 8:15pm

Sunday, 10/12, 7:15pm

### “Why Be Good?”





Why Be Good?

Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

Actress Colleen Moore is one of Chicago's favorite daughters, having distinguished herself in the early 20th century days of filmmaking in the Windy City and Hollywood, and years later co-founded the Chicago International Film Festival. During its 50th edition, the Chicago International Film Festival is proud to present a 1927 film starring Moore that was thought to be lost, but was recently discovered, and the festival will be the North American premiere of the restoration of "Why Be Good?". Moore, who popularized the 1920s "bobbed" hairstyle, portrays a poor flapper girl whose new wealthy beau puts her virtue to the test. Film historian David Robinson will introduce this special and rare movie event. (PM)

CORRECTED: Sunday, 10/19, 5pm

*The 50th Chicago International Film Festival will take place October 9th-23rd, 2014. [Click here](#) [20] for film schedules, information and to purchase tickets.*



[21]

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