FILM CALENDAR
FEBRUARY 14-APRIL 2, 2020

Chicago’s Year-Round Film Festival
3733 N. Southport Avenue, Chicago
www.musicboxtheatre.com 773.871.6607

WEST SIDE STORY
Part of The 70MM Film Festival
March 5-19

AND THEN WE DANCED
A MUSIC BOX FILMS RELEASE
OPENS FEBRUARY 14

PORTRAIT OF A LADY ON FIRE
OPENS FEBRUARY 21

CATVIDEOFEST
FEBRUARY 22, 23 & 25

BARBARELLA
MARCH 3 AT 7PM

SAINT FRANCES
OPENS MARCH 20

OPENS FEBRUARY 21

FEBRUARY 22, 23 & 25
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TO THE MUSIC BOX THEATRE!

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Brian Andreotti, Director of Programming
Ryan Oestreich, General Manager
Buck LePard, Senior Operations Manager
Claire Alden, Group Sales and Membership Manager
Steve Prokopy, Public Relations Manager
Julian Antos, Technical Director and Assistant Programmer
Kyle Westphal, Programming Associate
Rebecca Lyon, Assistant Technical Director
Dennis Scott, House Organist

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Cover Image from the film WEST SIDE STORY as part of the 70mm Film Festival March 5-19 at the Music Box Theatre
## Features and Special Events

### Music Box Theatre February-April 2020

#### And Then We Danced

**Opens February 14**

**Directed by:** Levan Akin  
**Starring:** Levan Gelbakhiani, Bachi Valishvili, Ana Javakishvili  
**2019, 113 mins, DCP, In Georgian with English subtitles**

A passionate tale of love and liberation set amidst the ultraconservative confines of modern Georgian society, **AND THEN WE DANCED** follows Merab, a devoted dancer who has been training for years with his partner Mary for a spot in the National Georgian Ensemble. The arrival of another male dancer, Irakli—gifted with perfect form and equipped with a rebellious streak—throws Merab off balance, sparking both an intense rivalry and romantic desire that may cause him to risk his future in dance as well as his relationships with Mary and his family.

“Unmissable, touching” — Film Inquiry  
“Instantly engaging” — Screen International

**A Music Box Films Release!**

#### The Princess Bride

**Thursday, February 13 at 7pm**

**Directed by:** Rob Reiner  
**Starring:** Cary Elwes, Mandy Patinkin, Robin Wright; (1987) 98 minutes, DCP

The fairy tale that puts the “comedy” in “romantic comedy.” A young boy listens while his grandfather reads him the adventures of Buttercup, the most beautiful woman in the world, and Westly, the man she loves, in the fairy-tale kingdom of Florin. Along the way they encounter a Spanish swordsman, a gentle giant, and the six-fingered villain, Count Rugen. Inconceivable!

#### Casablanca with Sweetheart Sing-Along

**Sunday, February 16 at 2pm**

**Directed by:** Michael Curtiz  
**Starring:** Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Paul Henreid; (1942) 102 mins, 35mm

The Music Box Theatre’s annual screening of the classic film **CASABLANCA** begins with a special “Valentine’s Day Sweetheart Sing-Along” featuring a selection of favorite love songs complete with projected lyrics and accompaniment by Dennis Scott on the Music Box organ. Songs include “You Are My Sunshine,” “Bicycle Built for Two” and “Let’s Call the Whole Thing Off.” After the sing-a-long you and your sweetheart can hold hands, canoodle and watch Bogart and Bergman in the timeless CASABLANCA, one of the great romantic films of all time.

#### Corpus Christi

**Opens February 14**

**Directed by:** Jan Komasa  
**Starring:** Bartosz Bielenia, Eliza Rycembel, Aleksandra Konieczna  
**2019, 116 mins, DCP, In Polish with English subtitles**

After spending years in a Warsaw prison for a violent crime, 20-year-old Daniel is released and sent to a remote village to work as a laborer. The job is designed to keep the ex-con busy, but Daniel has a higher calling. During his incarceration he has found Christ, and aspires to join the clergy—but his criminal record means no seminary will accept him. When Daniel arrives in town, one quick lie allows him to be mistaken for the town’s new priest, and he sets about leading his newfound flock. While his passion and charisma inspire the community, his unconventional sermons and unpriestly behavior raise suspicions among some of the townsfolk—even more so as he edges toward a dark secret that the community hasn’t revealed in the confessional booth.

“A harrowing exploration of faith, second chances and the possibility of atonement.” — Variety  
“Critic’s Pick. Compelling... powerful...” — Variety

**Read Peter Sobczynski’s Commentary on Page 16**

**Academy Award Nominee — Best International Film**

### Valentine’s with the Music Box

**THE PRINCESS BRIDE**

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**VIOLET EVERGARDEN: ETERNITY AND THE AUTO MEMORY DOLL**

**Wednesday, February 19 at 7:15pm & Saturday, February 22 at 11:30am**
*(Haruka Fujita, 2020, 90 mins, DCP, In Japanese with English subtitles)*

Violet Evergarden comes to a private women’s academy to tutor Isabella in the ways of being a lady. Heir to the York family, Isabella feels trapped in this new and uncomfortable world. She still grieves for the only person to ever bring her happiness—now lost to her. Violet’s lessons do give her a brief respite from the melancholy but with the absence of joy, how long does it take to truly heal?

**OPENS FEBRUARY 21**

**PORTRAIT OF A LADY ON FIRE**

**DIRECTED BY:** Céline Sciamma  
**STARRING:** Noémie Merlant, Adèle Haenel, Luàna Bajrami  
*2019, 121 mins, DCP, In French with English subtitles*

France, 1760. Marianne is commissioned to paint the wedding portrait of Héloïse, a young woman who has just left the convent. Because she is a reluctant bride-to-be, Marianne arrives under the guise of companionship, observing Héloïse by day and secretly painting her by firelight at night. As the two women orbit one another, intimacy and attraction grow as they share Héloïse’s first moments of freedom. Héloïse’s portrait soon becomes a collaborative act of and testament to their love.

“Sets a highest standard for any romance that will come after it.”  
—RogerEbert.com

“A deeply stirring romance with a modern soul”  
—The AV Club

Winner - Best Screenplay - Cannes Film Festival

READ MATT FAGERHOLM’S COMMENTARY ON PAGE 18

**BARBARELLA**

**Tuesday, March 3 at 7pm**  
*(Roger Vadim, 1968, 98 mins, DCP)*

Jane Fonda stars as a voluptuous outer space agent, searching the galaxies for a missing inventor and his doomsday device in this psychedelic sci-fi romp. This one-night-only screening will be hosted by Dwight Cleveland, author of “CINEMA ON PAPER: The Graphic Genius of Movie Posters.” Comprising more than 100 works from one of the most prominent private collections of film posters in the world, “CINEMA ON PAPER” is a tribute to the superior talent of an international group of artists whose creativity captured a movie’s essence with arresting precision. “CINEMA ON PAPER” not only celebrates film posters as unique works of art, but also as cultural time capsules that reflect historic trends in design and popular culture.

**FEBRUARY 22, 23 & 25**

**CATVIDEOFEST**

**Saturday, February 22 & Sunday, February 23 at Noon  
Tuesday, February 25 at 7pm**

CatVideoFest is a compilation reel of the latest and best cat videos culled from countless hours of unique submissions and sourced animations, music videos, and, of course, classic internet powerhouses. CatVideoFest is a joyous communal experience, and each screening at the Music Box raises money for cats in need through partnerships with local cat charities, animal welfare organizations and shelters to best serve cats in the area.

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SAINT FRANCES

DIRECTED BY: Alex Thompson
STARRING: Kelly O’Sullivan, Ramona Edith-Williams, Max Lipchitz
2019, 96 mins, DCP

Flailing 34-year-old Bridget (Kelly O’Sullivan) finally catches a break when she meets a nice guy and lands a much-needed job nannying 6-year-old Frances (played by a scene-stealing Ramona Edith-Williams). But an unwanted pregnancy introduces an unexpected complication. To make matters worse, she clashes with the obstinate Frances and struggles to navigate a growing tension between Frances’s moms. Amidst her tempestuous personal relationships, a reluctant friendship with Frances emerges, and Bridget contends with the inevitable joys and shit-shows of becoming a part of someone else’s family.

THE WHISTLERS

DIRECTED BY: Corneliu Porumboiu
STARRING: Vlad Ivanov, Catrinel Marlon, Rodica Lazar, Antonio Buil
2019, 97 mins, DCP, In Romanian with English subtitles

Not everything is as it seems for Cristi, a police inspector in Bucharest who plays both sides of the law. Embarking with the beautiful Gilda on a high-stakes heist, both will have to navigate the twists and turns of corruption, treachery and deception. A trip to the Canary Islands to learn a secret whistling language might just be what they need to pull it off.
70MM FILM FESTIVAL

March 5-19, 2020

The Music Box is very pleased to present the sixth iteration of our 70MM FILM FESTIVAL. After 7 years of 70mm festivals and a flurry of new 70mm releases including DUNKIRK, PHANTOM THREAD and ROMA, we no longer have to say things like “70mm was once a popular format.” Instead, the images—rich in color, contrast, and detail—can speak for themselves.

Opening with a special 35mm presentation of THE BIG TRAIL (1930)—the only surviving feature film shot in Fox’s 70mm Fox Grandeur system and John Wayne’s first starring role—this festival reaches back to the very early days of widescreen projection. Writing on Museum of Modern Art’s restoration of THE BIG TRAIL in 1988, then Chicago Tribune critic Dave Kehr called the film “a milestone, a film at least 25 years ahead of its time in its visual strategies and one that can still astonish with the depth and sweep of its imagery.”

Returning to the festival after a brief period of hibernation is our beautiful 70mm print of 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, made specifically for the Music Box Theatre. Also on the schedule are LAST ACTION HERO, LIFEFORCE and THE UNTOUCHABLES, screening in gorgeous, vintage Blowup prints from the year of their original release; big budget studio musicals WEST SIDE STORY and HELLO, DOLLY!; the rarely screened Ultra-Panavision spectacle KHARTOUM; modern classics INTERSTELLAR and ROMA; and Disney’s original TRON.

Despite renewed interest in 70mm, the format still requires great care in handling and presentation. Many of the prints screened in this festival are one of a kind and cannot be replaced, and a great many films we’d like to show are simply unavailable (though that doesn’t mean we’ll stop trying!). There is only one lab left in the world which can process and print 70mm film, and the success and continuation of the format depends on the interest of the public, and the talents of the filmmakers, technicians, lab workers, and projectionists who bring these films to the screen.

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY
(Stanley Kubrick, 1968, 164 mins)

70mm with DTS Sound

Stanley Kubrick’s dazzling, Academy Award-winning achievement is a compelling drama of man vs. machine, a stunning meld of music and motion. Kubrick (who co-wrote the screenplay with Arthur C. Clarke) first visits our prehistoric ape-ancestry past, then leaps millennia (via one of the most mind-blowing jump cuts ever) into colonized space, and ultimately whisk astronout Bowman (Keir Dullea) into uncharted space, perhaps even into immortality. “Open the pod bay doors, HAL.” Let an awesome journey, unlike any other, begin. Screening in the Music Box’s very own print, made just for our audience!

Friday March 6 at 7pm • Saturday March 7 at 10:30pm • Sunday March 8 at 11:30am • Tuesday March 10 at 7pm • Thursday March 12 at 2:30pm and 9pm

THE BIG TRAIL
(Raoul Walsh, 1930, 125 mins)

35mm with Optical Sound

The biggest Western of the 1930s—complete with wagon trains, buffalo hunts, forests as wide as the eye can see, and every genre trope you can name—demonstrated the promise of Fox’s 70mm Grandeur process and introduced audiences to a new would-be star, John Wayne. Alas, the film’s commercial failure sent Wayne back to B-movie cow-punching for nearly a decade. The only complete, surviving example of a Fox Grandeur production (albeit preserved in 35mm), THE BIG TRAIL still radiates a pioneer aura as Walsh exploits the large-gauge format’s depth of field like no production this side of PLAYTIME.

Restored by The Museum of Modern Art with support from The Film Foundation.

Thursday March 5 at 7pm
HELLO, DOLLY!  
(Gene Kelly, 1969, 146 mins)  
70mm with DTS Sound from Fox/Disney  
One of the Hollywood studio system’s last really wonderful big budget Broadway musical adaptations, HELLO, DOLLY! stars Barbra Streisand as matchmaker Dolly Levi. Walter Matthau is the “well-known, unmarried half-a-millionaire” Horace Vandergelder, who needs a match. Part of the film’s $25-million-dollar budget went toward restoring Pennsylvania Railroad Steam Locomotive 1223 for the number “Put on Your Sunday Clothes.” Directed by Gene Kelly (who incidentally hated the widescreen format, but made do), and with choreography by the great Michael Kidd, HELLO, DOLLY! is a joy to behold.  
Saturday March 14 at Noon • Wednesday March 18 at 7pm

KHARTOUM  
(Basil Dearden, 1966, 128 mins)  
Ultra Panavision 70mm with Magnetic Sound from Park Circus  
A military spectacle in the tradition of LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, KHARTOUM chronicles Britain’s 1883 crisis in Sudan. Charlton Heston, who cited KHARTOUM as one of his favorite films, plays General Charles Gordon, who is sent by British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone (Ralph Richardson) to salvage a bloody and untenable situation. Veteran stuntman Yakima Canutt, who was responsible for teaching John Wayne how to fall off a horse, worked as second unit director on the film’s thrilling action sequences. KHARTOUM was the last film to be shot in Ultra Panavision until Quentin Tarantino’s THE HATEFUL 8, 49 years later.  
Image courtesy of Park Circus/MGM Studios  
Friday March 13 at 2pm • Sunday March 15 at 7pm

INTERSTELLAR  
(Christopher Nolan, 2014, 169 mins)  
70mm with DTS Sound from Paramount  
A midwestern space melodrama set in the distant and desolate future, INTERSTELLAR stars Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway as two astronauts who leave their families behind in search of habitable worlds for the starving human race. In the era of bloated, self-deflating, CGI-infested blockbusters, INTERSTELLAR is a welcome anomaly: uncompromising, expansive, and very genuinely moving. Shot on 35mm, Vistavision, 65mm and IMAX film with lab work by Fotokem.  
Friday March 13 at 7pm • Thursday March 19 at 7pm

LAST ACTION HERO  
(John McTiernan, 1993, 130 mins)  
70mm Blowup with Magnetic Sound from Sony Pictures Repertory  
Arnold Schwarzenegger IS Jack Slater, and also Arnold Schwarzenegger, and briefly Hamlet, in LAST ACTION HERO! From John McTiernan, director of DIE HARD and PREDATOR, and a script co-written by Shane Black (LETHAL WEAPON, THE LAST BOY SCOUT), comes a messy Hollywood meta-comedy/action flick hybrid, lampooning the genre that brought the creative team such great past success. A young movie fan is magically transported into the world of his favorite action hero, in this cameo-laden adventure. A failure at the box office, largely due to opening a week after JURASSIC PARK, LAST ACTION HERO isn’t a flawless film, but it’s a hell of a lot of fun.  
Friday March 6 at 10:30pm • Saturday March 7 at Noon • Monday March 9 at 7pm
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Film Title</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TRON</strong></td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>96 mins</td>
<td>70mm with Magnetic Sound from Disney</td>
<td>With Wait Disney Animation presumed comatose, the studio doubled-down on PG-rated live action sci-fi, first with THE BLACK HOLE and then TRON. Produced at the dawn of the personal computing age, TRON presents a credulous, colorful, and oddly literal vision of how data works, complete with rudimentary CGI graphics that still look sharp under 70mm scrutiny. Like an ‘80s version of THE WIZARD OF OZ set in an eight-bit arcade, the boundary between cold flesh and digital fantasy remains glitchy for Jeff Bridges and his gang of his happy hackers. Friday March 13 at 11pm  •  Sunday March 15 at Noon Monday March 16 at 6:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WEST SIDE STORY</strong></td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>152 mins</td>
<td>70mm with DTS Sound from Park Circus</td>
<td>Adapted from the incredibly successful Broadway play, even the magnificent 70mm frame has trouble containing the raw energy of WEST SIDE STORY. Robert Wise (THE SOUND OF MUSIC, THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL) co-directed with Jerome Robbins, who had a nervous breakdown midway through production—the results are visible on screen, and it was worth it. For our money, this is one of the best looking prints of the festival, it also has the best end credits sequence by Saul Bass. Image courtesy of Park Circus/MGM Studios Saturday March 7 at 3:30pm  •  Sunday March 8 at 7pm  •  Monday March 9 at 2:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>THE UNTOUCHABLES</strong></td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>119 mins</td>
<td>70mm Blowup with Magnetic Sound from Paramount</td>
<td>Federal agent Eliot Ness (Kevin Costner) fights crime and corruption during Prohibition in Chicago. Unable to take down legendary crime boss Al Capone (Robert De Niro) on his own, Ness recruits an elite group of lawmen who won’t be swayed by bribes or fear, including Sean Connery, who won his only Oscar for his performance as Irish-American cop Jimmy Malone. Filmed on location in Chicago, THE UNTOUCHABLES features a sweeping score by Ennio Morricone. Saturday March 14 at 4pm  •  Tuesday March 17 at 7pm Wednesday March 18 at 2:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ROMA</strong></td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>135 mins</td>
<td>70mm with DTS Sound from Netflix</td>
<td>The most personal project to date from Academy Award-winning director and writer Alfonso Cuarón (GRAVITY, CHILDREN OF MEN, Y TU MAMA TAMBIEN), ROMA follows Cleo (Yalitza Aparicio), a young domestic worker for a family in the middle-class neighborhood of Roma in Mexico City. Delivering an artful love letter to the women who raised him, Cuarón draws on his own childhood to create a vivid and emotional portrait of domestic strife and social hierarchy amidst political turmoil of the 1970s. Shot digitally on the Alexa 65 camera and beautifully transferred to 70mm film, we’re proud to bring back Alfonso Cuarón’s masterpiece in his preferred exhibition format. Saturday March 7 at 7pm  •  Tuesday March 10 at 2:30pm  •  Wednesday March 11 at 7pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIFEFORCE</strong></td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>101 mins</td>
<td>70mm Blowup with Magnetic Sound from Park Circus</td>
<td>In a Tale of Halley’s comet, there’s something wrong, something ancient, something hungry... Tobe Hooper (TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE, POLTERGEIST) was given almost free reign and a huge budget by producers Cannon Film Group to make this adaptation of Colin Winston’s British science fiction horror novel “The Space Vampires.” With amazing special effects and a score by Henry Mancini, LIFEFORCE is a bewildering guilty pleasure, all the more pleasurable in this rare original 70mm print. Image courtesy of Park Circus/MGM Studios Thursday March 12 at 6:30pm  •  Saturday March 14 at 11pm  •  Monday March 16 at 9pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It may not surprise too many people to discover that the country of Georgia is not exactly one of the most liberal-minded places on the planet, especially when it comes to members of the LGBTQ communities. What may surprise some is that this conservative-minded and deeply oppressive attitude even extends to the world of traditional Georgian dance, a form that favors powerful and precise movements and which frowns on anything that might indicate the slightest hint of softness. Set in that repressive milieu, Swedish filmmaker Levan Akin’s AND THEN WE DANCED (which was Sweden’s official entry for this year’s Oscar for International Feature Film) opens with a dancer going through his brutally exhausting paces, only to be berated by his teacher and reminded “Georgian dance is based on masculinity. There is no room for weakness in Georgian dance.” Over the course of this fascinating coming of age drama, that dancer will find his personal and professional lives thrown into upheaval when those hard-headed attitudes wind up crashing head-on with certain truths that he finds he can no longer deny about himself.

Then one day, a new student, Irakli (Bachi Valishvili), arrives in class and things for Merab will never be the same. Irakli is the antithesis of his fellow dancers—his physique is more rounded and less angular (softer, one might say), he wears an earring and he openly talks back to the instructor. Merab’s surprise toward the newcomer soon transforms into anger when Irakli is given his part in a duet with Mary, which is intensified by the announcement that a few of the company’s dancers will be allowed to audition for the national company. His attitude toward Irakli begins to soften when they start rehearsing together on their own in the morning and over the course of a weekend of partying at a house in the country with their classmates, the two finally act on the mutual unspoken desire that has developed between them.

The particulars of what happens next will probably not come as a shock to anyone who has seen their fair share of films involving dance or LGBTQ coming-of-age issues—perhaps the biggest flaw in Akin’s screenplay is his evident determination to fit as many of them in as possible, including the late-inning addition of a foot injury that only serves as a distraction to the main story. However, the film manages to avoid succumbing to cliche by Akin’s deft handling of the material. Characters that initially seem extraneous—such as Mary (who has assumed that she was Merab’s girlfriend) and Merab’s drunken and troublemaking brother David (Giorgi Tsereteli)—end up having arcs that pay off in surprisingly emotional ways. Akin also does a good job of illustrating how Merab’s awakening goes beyond an infatuation with Irakli through a sequence in which he goes into a gay dance club and finds himself expressing himself through dance in ways that he never would have dreamed of only a few weeks earlier. There are also numerous instances of Akin’s skill as a visual stylist, two of the most striking being a sequence in which Merab first expresses his real feelings for Irakli by dancing to Robyn’s “Honey” and a later extended take set at a wedding that, in terms of technical precision and the way that it illustrates Merab’s emotional state, puts the visual pyrotechnics of 1917 to shame.

The most notable aspect of AND THEN WE DANCED, however, is the moving and compelling lead performance by Levan Gelbakhiani, who makes a striking screen debut here. He is obviously a skilled dancer but he is just as gifted as an actor as well, fully and convincingly conveying the emotional journey that Merab takes over the course of the film, whether in scenes where he is trading dialogue with the other actors or on his own as he tries to come to terms with his new feelings and how they could impact his life. His best scene comes at the end when, even though he knows that it is an exercise in futility, he does his audition and stumbles the judges by performing in a way that mixes the traditional format with a personal touch that shows that he is finally comfortable enough with himself to use dance to express who he really is. As he walks out the door afterwards, he may not get the slot but he now realizes that there is a larger world out there that will be more accepting of who he is, both as a person and as an artist; and, thanks to his time with Irakli, he is now ready to break free of expectations and experience life and dance on his own terms.

Peter Sobczynski is a locally based film critic whose work can be seen at RogerEbert.com and eFilmcritic.com.
IT TAKES TWO
PORTRAIT OF A LADY ON FIRE Sets the Screen Ablaze

By Matt Fagerholm

In all three of her previous feature-length directorial efforts, which she has referred to as an unofficial trilogy, French auteur Céline Sciamma has displayed an unparalleled eye for capturing the complicated dynamics between women and their struggle to define themselves despite societal strictures. Her young heroines consistently subvert gendered tropes, imitating the behavior of others as a half-step toward forming their own identities, as when the 10-year-old protagonist in TOMBOY practices spitting in order to present as a boy, or when a macho crew of football players in GIRLHOOD reveal themselves to be female. In some ways, Sciamma’s long-awaited fourth feature is a continuation of her 2007 debut film, WATER LILIES, about the repressed desires between a smitten brunette (Pauline Acquart) and an alluring blonde (Adèle Haenel).

Haenel has been subsequently credited as a muse of sorts for Sciamma, to whom she was romantically involved for a period of time, and in PORTRAIT OF A LADY ON FIRE, the actress receives the best showcase of her career. For the first twenty minutes of the picture, we never see the face of its titular heroine, Héloïse (Haenel), a key example of how Sciamma withholds certain elements in order to make their startling presence all the more impactful. In paintings, the painter’s gaze is the key to unlocking the subject’s essence—just as the viewer's gaze participates in the unfolding of the portrait. In Sciamma’s masterful fourth feature, Héloïse herself is transformed into a portrait—through the eyes and brushstrokes of Marianne (an equally captivating Noémie Merlant), the artist assigned to paint her portrait. There are echoes of Hitchcock’s VERTIGO in how the raging waves mirror the characters’ turbulent emotions, or how a framed painting contains a hidden meaning undetected by most observers, or how Héloïse—a reluctant bride-to-be—initially appears doomed to follow in the footsteps of her sister, who chose a watery grave over an unwanted marriage.

Marianne catches her first glimpse of the fiercely passionate woman concealed within the embittered armor of her subject when Héloïse charges up to the precipice of a cliff, if only to approximate the sensation of freedom. Having also lensed Mati Diop’s ATLANTICS, another of 2019’s most ravishing odes to love and loss, cinematographer Claire Mathon has proven adept at illustrating how the presence of a romantic partner can haunt us even in their absence. Since the portrait is meant for Héloïse’s Milanese suitor, Marianne must paint it without the woman’s knowledge. In a deliciously tense close-up shot in profile, Marianne’s gaze drifts from the water to Héloïse’s face, as her subject becomes suspicious of the lingering glances.

Just as Héloïse’s mother (Valeria Golino) notes that “it takes two to be funny,” an intimate meeting of the souls must occur between painter and subject in order for the latter’s inner life to be vividly etched on the canvas. Mathon finds inventive ways of blending the women’s faces together à la Bergman’s PERSONA, suggesting that any work of art is as much a portrait of the artist as it is the muse. Marianne and Héloïse fall in love only after catching one another in unguarded moments.

Winner of the Best Screenplay prize at Cannes, Sciamma’s dialogue reminds us of how overwritten most movies are. Not a word is wasted between this pair, and there’s a wonderful scene where they dissect each other’s body language, articulating the unspoken significance of each gesture.

Equally rapturous is a sequence set in the woods, where Marianne and Héloïse come upon various other eighteenth century women inhabiting their small island community in Brittany. Exuding the excitement of the friends in GIRLHOOD when they lip-synced to Rhianna’s “Diamonds,” the islanders’ voices rise in unison as they begin to perform the spellbinding a cappella number, “La Jeune Fille en Feu.” It stands as the latest indelible instance of Sciamma’s signature motif, namely the synchronicity practiced by those who wish to join as one, whether it be swimmers, allies or lovers. The familial bond that develops between the discreet couple and their young maid, Sophie (marvelous newcomer Luana Bajrami), is all the more touching in light of its inevitable impermanence.

All the while, Marianne finds herself hounded by the spectre of Orpheus’ ill-fated love, Eurydice, whose infamous second death also carries traces of VERTIGO. Yet rather than confine Héloïse within a rigid pose designed purely for the male gaze, Marianne discovers how to keep her subject’s humanity intact, preserving not only her features but the fire igniting her eyes. PORTRAIT OF A LADY ON FIRE is Sciamma’s masterpiece, taking its time not unlike Marianne does in order to cast its entrancing spell. Exhilarated by the notion that they are inventing something new, Héloïse and Marianne come together to create a beautiful third thing—their union, as mirrored by the painting—in the same way that colors do when they mix on a palette, or when Haenel’s expressions are joined with Vivaldi’s “Violin Concerto in G Minor” to produce one of the most arresting moments in recent cinema.

As an orchestra performs the composition, which Marianne had previously played for her, likening it to a “coming storm,” Héloïse’s face transforms into a symphony of raw emotions, reliving each heightened memory of her cherished affair. Like a fleeting glance frozen in time, whether preserved via brush strokes or one’s subconscious, the suddenness and lasting impact of the storm echoed by Vivaldi is channeled through every nuance of Haenel’s astonishing performance. With blazing grace, she conveys how art can lend newfound clarity and closure to fragments from our past that would otherwise be too painful to bring into focus.

Matt Fagerholm is an Assistant Editor at RogerEbert.com as well as the creator of Indie-Outlook.com, and has been a published critic covering the film beat in Chicago since 2006. He considers the Music Box Theatre his home away from home.
Sometimes we meet people who come into our lives at just the right time. And for Bridget, that person is Jace. We see Bridget’s face reveal painful familiarity with his nightmare, but luckily, she soon meets a friend, Jace. He confronts Bridget about the blood she left on the chair, prompting her to open up for the first time to another woman about her abortion. What this circle of blood does is normalize an experience. She founded the Chicago Film Lover Exchange in 2011, which now has 6,000+ members.

Bridget, like me, is an unconventional thirty-something. My life did not go in the order it was expected to go in a conventional sense—graduate college, get married, have babies, etc. I am so glad my life did not work out that way. There is a beautiful scene between Bridget and her mother, who asks her daughter if she would still want to have been born had she known how her life would’ve turned out. “Are you on your period?” Bridget bonds with one of Frances’ mothers, Maya (Charin Alvarez), with what could appropriately be called a “pad party.” Frances’ other mother Annie (Lily Mojekwu) confronts Bridget about the blood she left on the chair, prompting her to open up for the first time to another woman about her abortion. What this circle of blood does is normalize an uncomfortable yet wholly common female experience.

Blood, the theme of it, cannot go without being addressed. If you look at it in a religious sense, the blood of Christ is actually replaced by the blood of women. After Jace and Bridget’s first sexual encounter, they both wake up with blood on their faces. It’s an amusing detail, since Bridget just happened to get her period when Jace was going down on her. After the abortion, Bridget has heavy bleeding and carries tampons with her everywhere. Frances pulls all of her tampons out of her purse when she steps away and goes to the bathroom, announcing to everyone in the library, “Are you on your period?” Bridget bonds with one of Frances’ mothers, Maya (Charin Alvarez), by Frances simply introducing herself to a woman who is being judgmental toward her family: “My name is Frances, what’s your name?” Equally moving is a sequence set in a confessional booth where Frances pretends she’s a priest, asking Bridget to confess her sins. Frances brings out her wisdom when appropriate in that scene, telling Bridget she is brave because she tries, even when she’s scared. It’s mind-blowing how children can be so perceptive, because their emotions are simplified.

Not only is O’Sullivan’s screenplay flat out wonderful, it was elevated by her partner, director/editor Alex Thompson, with beautiful cinematography by Nate Hurtsellers and music by Quinn Tsan and Alex Babbitt. The song choices in this film were key, along with an amazing dance scene to “I Hate Myself For Loving You” by Joan Jett. The energy in this sequence is indicative of the forward momentum sustained by the cinematography, editing and uniformly strong performances. The light throughout seemed natural, especially during a scene where Bridget walks with Frances on the sidewalk, and the sun shines through the trees in a way that makes it appear almost heavenly. But heavenly on earth, not above.
**MUSIC BOX WEEKEND MATINEES**

**SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS at 11:30am**

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**February 29 & March 1**

**FOLLOW THAT BIRD**

*(Ken Kwapis, 1985, 88 mins, 35mm)*

Big Bird (Caroll Spinney) loves spending his days on Sesame Street with all of his different friends. However, social worker Miss Finch feels that Big Bird should live in an environment with only birds like himself. When she sends him to live with a family of dodos in Illinois, Big Bird cannot help but think of his friends back home. Deciding Sesame Street is the place for him, Big Bird begins a journey back to where he truly belongs. The first big screen adventure from Sesame Street features John Candy, Waylon Jennings, Sandra Bernhard, Oscar The Grouch, Grover, Bert, Ernie and more!

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**March 28 & 29**

**MERMAIDS**

*(Richard Benjamin, 1990, 111 mins, 35mm)*

Charlotte (Winona Ryder) is an adolescent girl torn between her blossoming passions for a handsome caretaker, and her desire to be a nun (a tough calling for a girl who’s Jewish). Complicating her teen angst is her little sister (Christina Ricci), a determined swimmer she affectionately calls “Fishhead,” and their mother (Cher), a non-traditional, sexy, flamboyant woman who relocates them to a new town every time she causes a hint of scandal—which is often. But even as their personal styles clash, these incredibly different individuals begin to see that nothing can tear apart the bonds of family.

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BARE KNEES
(Erie C. Kenton, 1928, 60 mins, 35mm)
Saturday, February 15 at 11:30am
The flapper captured America’s imagination in the 1920s, and Hollywood gave the public what it wanted with films like IT (1927) and OUR DANCING DAUGHTERS (1928). Leave it to low-budget independent Gotham Productions to deliver the most whole-hearted endorsement of the archetype in BARE KNEES. With her modern fashion and penchant for cigarettes, Billie (Virginia Lee Corbin) sticks out from the moment she arrives in Portersville, a marked contrast to her prim sister Jane (Jane Winton). Billie soon turns the sleepy town upside down with new uniforms for the women’s softball team and fresh insights into conservative hypocrisy. With no star egos to weigh down the proceedings, BARE KNEES emerges as a fleet and crisp time capsule, crammed with clever wordplay and fiery setpieces.
35mm print courtesy of the Library of Congress

TRAFFIC IN SOULS
(George Loane Tucker, 1913, 75 mins, 35mm)
Saturday, March 21 at 11:30am
The earliest feature films to grace American screens were spectacles imported from the stage or from Europe. It’s no wonder that TRAFFIC IN SOULS, an all-American, effortlessly cinematic blend of thrills, melodrama and social critique, would stand out like a flare in a tinderbox. Promoted as a “full-blooded sermon” that allegedly dramatized the results of a highly-publicized 1910 grand jury investigation into sex trafficking chaired by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., TRAFFIC IN SOULS is a Progressive Era tract outfitted with enough pulp espionage to make it a runty American cousin of the hyperbolic crime cinema of Louis Feuillade and Fritz Lang. With a frenetic tempo that rivals D.W. Griffith, TRAFFIC IN SOULS may be past its centenary, but it’s never stopped to catch its breath.
Print courtesy of the Library of Congress
MUSIC BOX DRINK-A-LONG

LEGALLY BLONDE
(Robert Luketic, 2001, 96 mins, 35mm)

Wednesday, April 8 at 7pm

Do you like movies? How about a beverage or two? Do you like rules? Then come to the monthly Music Box Drink-A-Long! Once a month, hosts Brooke and Cody create a list of drinking rules to accompany a screening of some of your favorite movies, cuing you when to take a sip (by cheerfully yelling at you in the theater). Each screening features a specialty cocktail, plus our usual selection of beer and wine. Even if drinking isn’t your thing, you can still join in the fun to scream and shout along!

In April, prep those perms and shove your dog in your purse, because we’ll be drinking along to the modern feminist classic LEGALLY BLONDE! We’ll cheer Elle Woods through her journey of love, law and Luke Wilson. Prove that you are serious (about movies) and join us!

Follow us on Instagram: @musicboxdrinkalong

SHY PEOPLE
(Andrei Konchalovsky, 1987, 118 mins, 35mm)

Monday, March 30 at 7pm

Do you love DELIVERANCE but find it too mannered and insufficiently attentive to mother-daughter dynamics? A lyrical cousin to John Boorman’s landmark of Southern sadism, SHY PEOPLE is a grindhouse melodrama rife with contradictions. Jill Clayburgh stars as a Cosmopolitan journalist whose genealogy research sends her and daughter Martha Plimpton to a haunted swamp. There they meet distant relative Barbara Hershey (awarded Best Actress at Cannes) and her unruly brood, who aren’t eager for a family reunion. Underneath the astonishingly humid cinematography and the trill of mosquitoes, speedboats and Tangerine Dream, SHY PEOPLE is a surprisingly sensitive study of families and the work required to keep them above water.

The Music Box hosts the Chicago Film Society for monthly all-celluloid screenings of classic and underseen features, short subjects, trailer reels and other analog odds and ends from archives, studio vaults, small distributors and private film collectors. For more information, visit chicagofilmsociety.org
MANIC MOVIE MONDAYS

For All Humans presents MANIC MOVIE MONDAYS, a unique and immersive experience featuring your favorite cult classic films, curated photo moments, costumes, lewks and pop-up performances from some of Chicago’s best drag artists. As ALWAYS, LEWKs are welcomed and encouraged! It’s a queer-curated event, after all.

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ROMEO + JULIET
(Baz Luhrmann, 1996, 120 mins, DCP)
Monday, February 17 at 8pm
Baz Luhrmann (MOULIN ROUGE) brings Shakespeare’s tale of young love roaring into the ’90s, setting the long-running feud of the Montague and Capulet families against the urban backdrop of Verona Beach. A swoon-worthy Leonardo DiCaprio is Romeo and an ethereal Claire Danes is Juliet (Plus a post-CLUELESS Paul Rudd!), in this electric adaptation that practically explodes off the screen.

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS
(Frank Oz, 1986, 94 mins, 35mm)
Monday, March 2 at 7pm
Seymour (Rick Moranis), a shy young man working for a tyrannical florist, finds a vehicle for private and public success in the form of a maneating plant from outer space. The carnivorous shrub helps him to become a celebrity, gets rid of his boss and clears the way for him to woo the girl of his dreams. However, its cannibalistic eating habits become insatiable and it’s up to Seymour to cut it down to size. Based on the stage musical of the cult movie, and features Steve Martin as a sadistic dentist.

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CONTINUING SERIES

MIDNIGHTS
FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS AT MIDNIGHT

Music Box Midnights are sponsored in part by ALTER.
ALTER is a horror brand that explores the human condition through warped and uncanny perspectives featuring horror short films, movies, series, and more.

February 14 & 15
ROSES ARE DEAD VOLUME 2
(Multiple directors, 2019, 75 mins, DCP)

February 21 & March 20
THE ROOM
(Tommy Wiseau, 2003, 99 mins, 35mm)

February 22 & March 21
THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW
(Jim Sharman, 1975, 100 mins, 35mm)

February 28 & 29
GUN A KIMBO
(Jason Lei Howden, 2019, 95 mins, DCP)

March 6 & 7
THE DARK RED
(Dan Bush, 2019, 99 mins, DCP)

March 27 & 28
HAUSU aka HOUSE
(Nobuhiko Ôbayashi, 1977, 88 mins, 35mm)

GUN A KIMBO
(Jason Lei Howden, 2019, 95 mins, DCP)

A nerdy video game developer (Daniel Radcliffe) wakes to find heavy pistols bolted into his bones, becoming the next contestant in Skizm, an illegal live-streamed death match, in this hilariously dark, viciously violent, and chillingly prescient sci-fi thriller. As Miles navigates the underworld of Skizm along with its trigger-happy star nix (Samara Weaving, READY OR NOT), the stakes—and the ratings—have never been higher.

THE DARK RED
(Dan Bush, 2020, 99 mins, DCP)

A young woman is committed to a psychiatric hospital claiming that her newborn has been abducted by a secret society called the Dark Red—an ancient cult that harvests an incredibly rare blood type that gives the power to hear and guide another person’s thoughts. She insists she carries a powerful strain of the blood like nothing seen before, and that the society sees her and her child as its next evolution—or perhaps its greatest threat...

Is the Dark Red entirely a figment of her imagination—a coping mechanism to overcome a personal tragedy—or is there some truth behind her story?

HAUSU
(Nobuhiko Ôbayashi, 1977, 88 mins, 35mm)

How to describe Nobuhiko Ôbayashi’s indescribable 1977 movie HAUSU (HOUSE)? As a psychedelic ghost tale? A stream-of-consciousness bedtime story? An episode of SCOOBY-DOO as directed by Mario Bava? Any of the above will do for this hallucinatory head trip about a schoolgirl who travels with six classmates to her ailing aunt’s creaky country home and comes face-to-face with evil spirits, a demonic house cat, a bloodthirsty piano and other ghoulish visions, all realized by Ôbayashi via mattes, animation and collage effects. Equally absurd and nightmarish, HAUSU might have been beamed to Earth from some other planet.
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