

Miami Film Festival's Gems Puts Films by Women at the Forefront

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Christine

The Orchard

If it seems there's a lot to be excited about Miami Film Festival's 13-film lineup for its Gems series, it's because there is. This year's Gems, taking place October 13 through 16, is meant to just give a taste of what's to come for the main fest in March. Local cinephiles will want to catch the whole baker's dozen, but most people don't have the time to binge-watch 13 films in one weekend.

Here's some advice to help you sort through the options: Avoid men.

That's right. Some of Gems' most exciting films were either made by women or focus on a

female protagonist. In filmmaking, as in most other professions, women are underrepresented, underpaid, and underrated. Do your part to change that by catching these stories about anything other than the usual rich white male problems at the movies.

Christine

Of the four features on this list, only one is directed by a man: Antonio Campos' excellent *Christine*. Though his last two features – *Afterschool* and *Simon Killer* – were led by male protagonists, *Christine* concentrates on the titular figure, Christine Chubbuck, a real-life reporter in Sarasota who killed herself on live television July 15, 1974. As bleak as that might sound, Campos' talent is in delivering a fascinating character study of Chubbuck, played with grace by Rebecca Hall, who never dulls in her performance just what a harsh person Chubbuck could be. Hall's genuine attempt at stepping inside the mind a mentally ill protagonist at the end of her rope has already been critically acclaimed; don't be surprised to see Hall get a lot of love this awards season. *Christine* also offers a fascinating look at the inner workings and personal relationships at a Florida news station in the '70s, delivering a cynical period drama grounded in reality.

Christine shows October 14 at 9:15 p.m. and October 16 at 3:30 p.m.

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Certain Women

Kelly Reichardt, the Miami native behind *River of Grass*, *Old Joy*, *Wendy and Lucy* and *Night Moves*, is one of the most underrated American filmmakers working today. Her latest is the wonderfully simple feature *Certain Women*. In adapting short stories from Maile Meloy's collections *Half in Love* and *Both Ways Is the Only Way I Want It*, Reichardt offers a glimpse into the lives of three women: Laura (Laura Dern), a lawyer who has grown weary of her frustrating

the lives of three women: Laura (Laura Dern), a lawyer who has grown weary of her frustrating client (Jared Harris); Gina (Michelle Williams), a wife in a lackluster marriage with plans of building a beautiful house in the country out of natural resources; and Jamie (Lily Gladstone), a horse rancher who finds herself enamored with Beth (Kristen Stewart), who teaches school law late at night. With a cast like that, along with Reichardt's presentation of these segments and of the gorgeous landscapes in which they take place, *Certain Women* is unmissable.

Certain Women shows October 15 at 3:30 p.m.

Don't Call Me Son

Last year, Brazilian filmmaker Anna Muylaert released her feature *The Second Mother* (*Que Horas Ela Vota?*), to a mountain of critical praise and a multitude of festival awards. This year, she follows up her hit with a film that also contrasts two very different mothers, though the protagonist here is unlike the previous one. In *Don't Call Me Son* (*Mae Son Ha Uma*), Muylaert follows the cross-dressing teenager Pierre (played by newcomer Naomi Nero), who learns he was stolen at birth and is subsequently forced to move in with his wealthy biological parents. With this feature, the director not only dives into the issues of class that her former work discussed, but also explores gender and sexual identity through the viewpoint of this young man whose world is thrown completely out of balance.

Don't Call Me Son shows October 15 at 6:30 p.m. and October 16 at 1 p.m.

Toni Erdmann

Last, but certainly not least, is *Toni Erdmann*, the latest feature by director Maren Ade (*The Forest for the Trees* and *Everyone Else*). Ade's feature was the smash hit of last year's Cannes Film Festival; it received overwhelming acclaim from critics and won the FIPRESCI Award for Best Film in Competition. The German comedy – fast on track to becoming an Oscar nominee next year as that country's submission for Best Foreign-Language Film – tells the story of a father trying to reconnect with his adult daughter. Of course, it's so much more than that; Ade packs an abundance of hilarity and emotion into the two-hour-plus film, which might seem like a hurdle but flows by quickly.

Toni Erdmann shows October 16 at 6:45 p.m.

Gems Film Festival

October 13 through 16 at Tower Theater, 1508 SW Eighth St., Miami. Regular screening tickets cost \$13 for adults, \$12 for seniors, and \$10 for Miami Film Society members. Visit miamifilmfestival.com/gems.