

Ah-In Yoo (left) and Steven Yeun in *Burning*.

Courtesy of Well Go USA

Miami Film Festival's Gems 2018 Announces a Lineup of Oscar Hopefuls

HANS MORGENSTERN | SEPTEMBER 19, 2018 | 8:30AM

Miami Dade College's [Miami Film Festival Gems 2018](#) has announced its full lineup, and the movies include several Oscar hopefuls from across the globe. Both opening- and closing-night films have been submitted for the Foreign Language category by their respective countries.

Kicking off the festival Thursday, October 11, will be Colombia's *Birds of Passage* (*Pájaros de V*
erano

) from director [Ciro Guerra](#), whose 2015 Gems movie, *Embrace of the Serpent*, was Colombia's first film nominated for an Academy Award. Spain's Oscar submission, *Champions* (*Campeones*), was also a hit at that country's box office. It will close the four-day event the following Sunday.

Other notable films include *Burning* from South Korea. It won the International Federation of Film Critics prize at Cannes earlier this year and was nominated for the Palme d'Or. Members of the [Florida Film Critics Circle](#), including this writer and *New Times*' Juan Barquin, will participate in a panel afterward to discuss the challenging film as well as the state of arthouse cinema. *Burning* has a mainstream connection in that it includes a performance by Steven Yeun, who starred in *The Walking Dead* until 2016.

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Another familiar name at the festival is Paul Dano, who starred in *Wildlife*, *There Will Be Blood*, and *Little Miss Sunshine*. His directorial debut, which he co-wrote with girlfriend Zoe Kazan, will have its Florida premiere at the event. The film stars Carey Mulligan and Jake Gyllenhaal and explores the disintegration of a marriage through the eyes of a couple's son. Cinematographer Diego García will attend the screening and participate in a conversation about his craft prior to the film. He will also receive Gems' Art of Light Award and take part in a workshop for film students.

Another celebrity coming for Gems is Goya-winning Spanish actress Bárbara Lennie, who will be honored with the Precious Gem Award, a prize that was bestowed upon Don Francisco in 2015. Most recently, *The Florida Project* producers Kevin Chinoy and Francesca Silvestri received the prize at this year's 35th Miami Film Festival.

Lennie appears in two movies at Gems: *Petra*, directed by Jaime Rosales, and the Oscar-winning Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi's first Spanish-language film, *Everybody Knows (Todos Lo Saben)*, which also stars Penélope Cruz, Javier Bardem, and Ricardo Darín. No stranger to Miami, Lennie also starred in two movies at Miami Film Festival's 2017 edition: *A Sort of Family*, which won the Knight Competition Grand Prize, and *Maria (And Everybody Else)*, the winner of the HBO Ibero-American Feature Film Award.

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For the first time, Gems has made room for a midnight screening. *Border (Gräns)* is a contemporary take on the Nordic folktale about trolls from the writer of the slow-burning cult vampire film *Let the Right One In*. It's also Sweden's Oscar submission.

Finally, of note, there's Pawel Pawlikowski's new drama, *Cold War*. Pawlikowski won best director at this year's Cannes for his followup to *Ida*, the 2014 winner of the Best Foreign-Language Oscar. *Cold War* is a candidate for Poland's 2019 Oscar submission.

Other movies announced include *Ben Is Back*, which stars Julia Roberts and Lucas Hedges. The movie has Oscar buzz for Roberts. There's director Luis Ortega's *El Ángel*, the biggest hit in Argentina's box office history. There's also *Animal*, an Argentina and Spain coproduction by filmmaker Armando Bo, who won an Academy Award for Best Screenplay for *Birdman*. And Lebanon's *Capernaum*, a guttersnipe drama in the vein of *Bicycle Thieves* and *Pixote*, earned director Nadine Labaki the Jury Prize at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival.

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Seven other films will premiere at Gems 2018. This year, the two screening rooms at the Tower Theater will be distinctly programmed. The Spotlight Stage can be found in the theater's larger room, which will show the higher-profile films, many of which are Oscar hopefuls. The Discovery Stage will screen the newer filmmakers, many of whom have debut features at the festival. There will also once again be new works in virtual reality. Programmed in partnership with MDC's Miami Animation & Gaming International Complex (MAGIC), Virtual Escape will allow festivalgoers to experience five projects of 360-degree VR and "alternative gaming."

This year's VR experience will be ticketed (\$5) and last for the duration of the festival; however, all films will screen only once. Tickets are now on sale for Miami Film Society members. Sales will open to the public Monday, September 24.

Miami Dade College's Miami Film Festival Gems 2018. *October 11 through 14 at Tower Theater, 1508 SW Eighth St., Miami; 305-237-2463; towertheatermiami.com. Tickets to the opening-night film and party cost \$50 for general audiences and \$40 for Miami Film Society members. Tickets for all other screenings cost \$10 to \$13 per film via miamifilmfestival.com.*

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