

Black stars of tomorrow honored

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The most promising up-and-coming African-American actors, writers, producers and directors were honored at the recent Film Life 13th Annual American Black Film Festival (ABFF) in Miami. The event is billed as the premier show-place for black films in search of recognition and distributors.

The top honor, Best Narrative Feature, went to "Mississippi Damned," which follows the struggles of three poor black youngsters as they try to break the cycle of poverty and abuse. The film is directed by Tina Mabry, who accepted the honor, which is sponsored by BET, and the \$5,000 cash prize that came with it. Tessa Thompson, who stars in the film, won the Best Actor prize.



Tessa Thompson

Group film "Black Dynamite," starring Michael Jai White, was screened to a full audience. The blaxploitation spoof is set for release in December.

"The ABFF Independent Film Awards continues to celebrate the best independent films produced and directed outside of Hollywood. We are committed to providing new opportunities each year for emerging talent and bringing the best work of these gifted filmmakers to a broad audience," said Jeff Friday, CEO of Film Life and founder of the American Black Film Festival.

Other winners included:

- HBO Short Film Award, presented by HBO (award includes a \$20,000 cash prize), "The Roe Effect," directed by Kiel Adrian Scott;
- Best Documentary, "Len Bias," directed by Kirk Frasier;
- Audience Award, "Blue," directed by Ryan Mingham;
- Allstate Beyond February "Be Reel" Contest

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Winner, presented by Allstate (award includes a \$5,000 cash prize), "The Broken Sole," directed by Travis Trent; and

• Star Project Winner, presented by Vibe magazine, Khalilah Joi Dubose and Bechir Sylvain

As part of the closing night festivities, the SONY Pictures World Wide Acquisitions

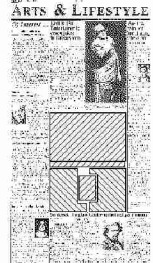




Photo courtesy of Morgan Stiff

Kylee Russell in a scene from "Mississippi Damned."



Photos courtesy of ABFF

Winners Kiel Adrian Scott, Travis Dent, Khalilah Joi Dubose, Reggie Scott (Festival Producer), Bechir Sylvain, Kirk Frazier, Morgan Stiff and Tina Mabry.