



For Immediate Release

**THE 2023 AMERICAN BLACK FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES
OFFICIAL FEATURE AND DOCUMENTARY LINEUP**

**WITH RECORD-BREAKING SUBMISSIONS, FILMMAKERS FROM ACROSS THE
GLOBE BRING INNOVATIVE STORYTELLING AND
PERSPECTIVE TO THE 27TH EDITION**

LOS ANGELES – April 20, 2023 -- The 2023 American Black Film Festival (ABFF) today announced its lineup of narrative and documentary features. This year's Festival, which takes place live in Miami Beach June 14-18, followed by a virtual segment June 19-25 on ABFF PLAY (<https://abffplay.com/>), showcases the best of emerging artists from the U.S and international countries.

Widely considered the premiere festival for Black storytellers and diverse voices, ABFF provides a platform for filmmakers to showcase their work in front of an enthusiastic audience and potential buyers. With record breaking submissions – doubled from last year – the festival will feature a varied group of independent filmmakers from the USA, United Kingdom and Mexico during its five-day run. The winners of the films in competition will be announced during the “Best of ABFF Awards” hosted by Emmy-nominated Actor/Author Dondré Whitfield on Saturday, June 17th.

The 2023 lineup showcases a number of world premieres including *Murder City* produced by notable filmmaker Oz Scott and Kevin Garnett starring Michael Colter; *Jagged Mind* directed by Kelley Kali, and *Phels High* starring Omari Hardwick, Allen Maldonado and Elise Neal and more. Producers Oz Scott and Kevin Garnett, also bring their highly-anticipated feature film *Cinnamon* starring Pam Grier and Damon Wayans.

The full feature and documentary lineup for the 2023 American Black Film Festival is listed below and at <https://www.abff.com/miami/official-selections/>. The festival's Series and Voices of Cultures non-competitive lineup, along with finalists for the prestigious HBO® Short Film Award, will be announced at a later date.

“The American Black Film Festival is akin to a reunion that celebrates, discovers, and uplifts artists and our attendees, and this year is no exception with an exciting lineup of diverse filmmaking that showcases Black culture. Over the course of five days in Miami, followed by seven days of virtual programming, we invite audiences to explore the art of storytelling through their own lens,” said Nicole Friday, president and COO, ABFF

Ventures. “We’re proud to highlight emerging filmmakers and bring a wide-range of empowering stories to our community.

NARRATIVE FEATURES (U.S. & International)

A competitive section for U.S. and international feature-length films directed by or written and produced by persons of African descent. Films in this category are eligible to be nominated to compete for the following Jury Awards – Best Actor (presented by Ally Financial, \$2,500 cash prize), Best Director (presented by Cadillac, \$5,000 cash prize), and Best Narrative Feature (presented by Andscape, \$2,500 cash prize). The following films represent the 2023 official selections in the Narrative Features category:

A Song from the Dark

After the mysterious death of her husband, a woman with a dark family secret hires a spirit-hunter to expel a spirit tormenting her family.

UK | 103 min

Director: Ogo Okpue

Writer: Ogo Okpue

Producer: Ogo Okpue

Cast: Vanessa Vanderpuye, Nse Ikpe Etim, Wale Ojo, Garcia Brown, Paul Coster

Cinnamon

Jodi, a gas station attendant with killer pipes and big dreams (Hailey Kilgore), falls hopelessly in love with a hustler (David Iacono), only to fall foul of a local crime lord (Pam Grier) and her murderous family.

USA | 91 min

Director: Bryian Keith Montgomery, Jr.

Writer: Bryian Keith Montgomery, Jr.

Producers: Oz Scott, Kevin Garnett

Cast: Damon Wayans, Pam Grier, Hailey Kilgore, David Iacono

***Jagged Mind* *World Premiere**

When Billie starts dating a mysterious new girlfriend, she is plagued by blackouts and strange visions that lead her to discover she’s stuck in a series of time loops.

USA | 88 min

Director: Kelley Kali

Writer: Allyson Morgan

Producers: David Worthen Brooks, Arbi Pedrossian, Jenna Cavelle, Daniela Ruiz, Kelley Kali, Congyu E

Cast: Maisie Richardson-Sellers, Shannon Woodward

***Million to One* *World Premiere**

Dre Shaw reluctantly puts his life as a social media rising star on hold to return home for his brother’s wedding, only to go from family liability to savior.

USA | 73 min

Director: Harold Jackson

Writer: Harold Jackson

Producers: Harold Jackson, Elena Lake, Laketa Bailey, Tsedey Aragie

Cast: Rob Gordon, Ashley Rios, Michael J Patterson, Briana Cortesiano

Murder City *World Premiere

After losing his job on the police force, Neil (Mike Colter) is forced to work with the city's most ruthless kingpin, Ash (Stephanie Sigman), to settle the debts of his estranged father, Graham (Antonio Fargas).

Mexico | 85 min

Director: Michael D. Olmos

Writer: Michael D. Olmos

Producers: Oz Scott, Kevin Garnett

Cast: Mike Colter, Stephanie Sigman, Antonio Fargas, Medina Senghore

Phels High *World Premiere

Loyalty amongst friends isn't always the case, when your life is on the line.

USA | 85 min

Director: Kevin J. Nelson

Writer: Kevin J. Nelson

Producers: Kevin J. Nelson, Michael Arcell, Rovelt Laforet

Cast: Omari Hardwick, Elise Neal, Michael Hyatt, TJ Atoms, Allen Maldonado

Playing Sam *World Premiere

When a Latina actress struggles to stand out from the stereotypical role, she channels her turbulent love life to book the character of her dreams.

USA | 89 min

Director: Ramon Pesante

Writers: Ramon Pesante, Jenni Ruiza

Producers: Jessica Hernandez, Jenni Ruiza, Elaine del Valle, Michelle Johnson, Marc Reign, Burton Lewis

Cast: Jenni Ruiza, Marc Reign, William McDermitt, Phyllis Salaberrios

Summer of Violence *World Premiere

Refusing law school to pursue poetry, a sheltered college grad, cut off from her father's money, struggles to survive while living in Denver during the Summer of Violence in 1993.

USA | 104 min

Director: Nicki Micheaux

Writer: Nicki Micheaux

Producers: Efurú Flowers, Nicki Micheaux, Sean Riggs

Cast: Kasey Inez, Damon Gupton, Jahking Guillory

DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

A competitive section for nonfiction feature films directed by persons of African descent or centered on the culture and experiences of persons of African descent. Films in this category are eligible to be nominated to compete for the Jury Award for Best Documentary (\$2,500 cash prize). The following films represent the 2023 official selections in the Documentary Features category:

Bad Things Happen in Philadelphia *World Premiere

Bad Things Happen in Philadelphia is a full-length documentary focusing on the effects of gun violence on young men, women & mothers living in Philadelphia.

USA | 69 min

Director: Kyra Knox

Producer: Kyra Knox
Executive Producers: Allen Iverson, Mark Mims
Cast: Garry Mills, Wynter Bess, Kalil Camara, David King

Betye Saar: Ready to be a Warrior

Filmed over the course of 8 years, this documentary is a love letter to famed LA artist Betye Saar as she navigates life as a Black Woman artist.

USA | 77 min

Director: Angela Robinson Witherspoon

Producers: Angela Robinson Witherspoon, Abdul Malik Abbott

Cast: Betye Saar, John Legend, CCH Pounder, Alison Saar, Lezley Saar

Birthing Justice

America's medical establishment has turned giving birth into a battleground for Black women and their babies

USA | 86 min

Director: Monique N. Matthews

Writers: Jacoba Atlas, Monique N. Matthews

Producer: Sasheen Artis

Cast: Allyson Felix

Black Barbie: A Documentary

Through intimate access to a charismatic Mattel Insider, Beulah Mae Mitchell, Black Barbie delves into the cross-section of merchandise and representation as Black Women strive to elevate their own voices and stories, refusing to be invisible.

USA | 100 min

Director: Lagueria Davis

Writer: Lagueria Davis

Producers: Aaliyah Williams, Lagueria Davis

Cast: Beulah Mae Mitchell, Kitty Black Perkins, Stacey McBride-Irby, Ashley Blaine Featherson-Jenkins, Gabourey Sidibe, Julissa Calderon

Gaining Ground: The Fight for Black Land *World Premiere

From Executive Producer Al Roker, Gaining Ground: The Fight for Black Land answers the question; why has black ownership of farmland dwindled to alarmingly low numbers, and examines the causes, effects, and solutions to the issue of Heirs' Property.

USA | 96 min

Director: Eternal Polk

Writer: Eternal Polk

Producers: Chimene Williams, Denise Hurst Green, Francisco Newman

Executive Producers: Al Roker & Eternal Polk

Higher Power *World Premiere

Higher Power uses the stories of Black Washingtonians fighting to enter the legal cannabis industry to reveal the stark reality of 700,000 disenfranchised Americans living in Washington, D.C. and the urgent need for D.C. Statehood.

USA | 64 min

Director: Dewey Ortiz Jr.

Writers: Rafi Aliya Crockett, Dewey Ortiz Jr.

Producer: Rafi Aliya Crockett

Cast: Eleanor Holmes Norton, Queen Adesuyi, David Gross, Jason Alrich, JohnChe Larracuente

Locked Out

Owning a home—the cornerstone of generational wealth—is increasingly out of reach for people of color. In Detroit, a group of Black women fight against scammers, evictions, and traditional banks to help make The American Dream a reality for all.

USA | 87 min

Directors: Kate Davis, Luchina Fisher

Producer: Rupert Maconick

Cast: Soummer Crawford, Geraldine Smith-Bey, Niaja Rutledge

National Battle of the Bands, Salute To HBCU Marching Bands *Festival Premiere
History, Culture, Pomp, and Circumstance. From football halftimes to battles in the stands. So, you think you know all there is to know about HBCU Marching Bands... Well think again!

USA | 42 min

Director: Reggie Scott

Writer: Reggie Scott

Producers: Reggie Scott, Derek Webber

Cast: Derek Webber, Dr. Charles McClelland, Chauncey Hamlett, Dr. Julian White, Dr. Michael Magruder, Donovan Wells, Warren Duncan, Kedrick Taylor, Jared White

Riding Legacy (An Oklahoma Black Cowboy Story)

Cowboy culture as the past, present, and future of black Oklahomans.

USA | 60 min

Directors: Kian Taylor, James "Videohero" Ridley

Writer: Nicole Jocleen

Producer: Nicole Jocleen

Cast: Danell Tipton, Tory Johnson, Kandra Demery, Ronnie Davis, Da'Mon Hopkins

The Five Demands

"The Five Demands" tells the dramatic but little known story of the 1969 student strike that changed the face of higher education.

USA | 74 min

Directors: Greta Schiller, Andrea Weiss

Producers: Greta Schiller, Andrea Weiss

Executive Producer: Stanley Nelson

Cast: Henry Arce, Francee Covington, Dorothy Randall Gray, Charles Powell

Previously announced, the festival will open with the upcoming Netflix satirical conspiracy caper film ***They Cloned Tyrone*** starring John Boyega, Teyonah Parris and Jamie Foxx. Emmy® winning writer, producer and actor Lena Waithe is ABFF's 2023 Festival Ambassador.

Since its inception, the highly anticipated American Black Film Festival has become a cornerstone for diversity in Hollywood. It has premiered the work and supported the careers of many of today's most successful filmmakers, actors, writers and stand-up comedians and is recognized as a standard-bearer of excellence for Black creativity. Continuing its legacy to empower Black artists and showcase a wide range of

entertainment content will feature studio premieres independent films, master classes, panels, talent showcases, networking and hospitality events.

For festival information, including a full list of panels and screening that will be presented at the 2023 ABFF and how to obtain an ABFF pass, visit www.abff.com. Follow @ABFF on Twitter and @AmericanBlackFilmFestival on Instagram and Facebook.

ABFF sponsors and partners to date are Warner Bros. Discovery and HBO® (Founding), Andscape, Ally (Presenting), City of Miami Beach, Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMCVB), UPS, TV One Networks, Netflix (Major), American Airlines, IMDb, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Variety, YouTube Black Voices, Prudential Financial, Bounce TV (Official), A&E, BET Media Group, Motion Picture Association (MPA), Confluent Films, Pfizer, Miami Beach Visitor and Convention Authority (Supporting).

About ABFF

The American Black Film Festival (ABFF) is a property of ABFF Ventures LLC, an entertainment company specializing in the production of live events and platforms that celebrate Black culture and achievement. ABFF, the company's flagship event, is dedicated to recognizing Black talent and showcasing quality film and television content by and about people of African descent. ABFF founder Jeff Friday conceived the festival in 1997 as a vehicle to strengthen the Black entertainment community by fostering resource sharing, education and artistic collaboration. Now in its 27th year, the festival has become a key proponent of diversity in Hollywood, providing a platform for emerging Black artists. The ABFF is a property of ABFF Ventures LLC, an entertainment company specializing in the production of live events that promote Black culture and achievement.

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