

BlackStar x MOCA

DECEMBER 11, 2021, 5-9PM

The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, WAREHOUSE

BlackStar presents a special shorts program and panel featuring LA-based filmmakers who are alumni of the annual festival. The BlackStar Film Festival was founded in Philadelphia in 2012 by curator and filmmaker Maori Karmael Holmes. It is an annual celebration of the visual and storytelling traditions of the global majority, showcasing film and video by Black, Brown and Indigenous artists.

About BlackStar

BlackStar Projects creates the spaces and resources needed to uplift the work of artists of color working outside of the confines of genre. We do this by producing year-round programs including film screenings, exhibitions, an annual film festival, the William and Louise Greaves Filmmaker Seminar, a film production lab, and *Seen*, a journal of film and visual culture. BlackStar has organized screenings and events in partnership with Ambulante Documentary Film Festival, Barnes Museum, British Film Institute, Colgate University, ICA Philadelphia, Kelly-Strayhorn Theater, MOCA, Sundance Film Festival, and Swarthmore College, among others.

FILM PROGRAM

Afrikan Space Program Forever

Dir. Nesanet Abegaze, 2020, 6 min, Super 8mm Film

The Ras G music festival was held in Leimert Park on August 10, 2019, as a loving tribute to a community champion, musical genius, and visionary, Gregory Shorter - aka Ras G.

Friendzone LA

Dir. Angel Kristi Williams, 2021, 3 min, HD Video

Best friends explore a day in LA but he's quietly in love with her.

Noor & Layla

Dir. Fawzia Mirza, 2021, 13 min, HD Video

Noor and Layla are breaking up. Is it the end of the road for these two Muslim women, or is it just the beginning? A film about reclaiming ritual through queer, Muslim love told at five moments in their relationship marked by the Azaan (call to prayer).

Slow Pulse

Dir. Marshall Tyler, 2021, 12 min, HD Video

In this moving story of love and dedication, Bernard Brash heals and finds hope by learning how to dance.

A Song About Love

Dir. Rikki Wright, 2019, 14 min, HD Video

A Song About Love explores the complex relationship between sexuality and religion and my personal experience with finding myself withing that paradigm. Navigating redemptive love vs. real love.

Nesamet Teshager Abegaze

Nesamet Teshager Abegaze is a filmmaker, entrepreneur, educator, co-founder of Azla Ethiopian Eatery, and co-founder of Mamush Studios, whose profound love of storytelling and community unifies her wide-ranging career. At Stanford University, Nesamet earned her BA in Human Biology, an interdisciplinary major that allowed her to explore science, history, and the arts. Following her tenure supporting non-profit organizations at the New World Foundation, she earned her MA in Education from UCLA and taught at Los Angeles schools, where she developed an innovative health/life sciences curriculum with an emphasis on the arts.

Since leaving the formal education sector, Nesamet has immersed herself in many creative fields. As Vice President of Operations at Atom Factory, a renowned entertainment management company, she helped musicians and entertainers realize their unique artistic visions. From there, she and her mother co-founded Azla, a plant-based Ethiopian restaurant inspired by the idea that the dining table is a space to share food and your life. Working with and listening to her mother inspired Nesamet to preserve her family history via her lifelong interest in film. Her short film, *Bereka* (2020), screened at Sundance Film Festival, and won best experimental film at BlackStar Film Festival. Today, Nesamet brings her extensive career and artistic experiences to Mamush Studios. She works on books, films, podcasts, cooking seminars, and more to foster community while creating new narratives.

Angel Kristi Williams

Angel Kristi Williams is a writer/director born and raised in West Baltimore, Maryland. She was 8 years old when her late father gave her a VHS camcorder which sparked her love for the medium. After studying visual art, photography, and experimental film, Angel developed a voice that embraces silence and the power of the image to tell a story.

Her feature directorial debut *Really Love*, produced by MACRO, was selected to play in narrative competition at SXSW and won the Special Jury Recognition for Acting for co-stars Kofi Siriboe and Yootha Wong-Loi-Sing. The film then played as part of AFI Fest's Special Presentations to much acclaim. It began streaming on Netflix in August 2021. Angel is a Film Independent Project Involve Directing Fellow and was the recipient of the Sony Pictures

Diversity Fellowship. This year she was selected to participate in Sundance Institute's Momentum Fellowship. Most recently Angel directed an episode of *Colin in Black and White*, Ava DuVernay & Colin Kaepernick's limited series for Netflix and will later helm the Season 2 opener of *Cherish the Day* for OWN.

She splits her time between Baltimore and Los Angeles and teaches in the MFA film program at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). She holds an MFA in Directing from Columbia College Chicago.

Fawzia Mirza

Fawzia Mirza (she/they) is a queer, South Asian Muslim writer/director. She co-wrote the feature *Signature Move* (world premiered at SXSW, screened 150+ film festivals, won 15 awards) and wrote on CBS series *The Red Line*, from Greg Berlanti & Ava Duvernay; her episode marked the first queer, Muslim romance on network TV. She is a White House Champion of Change in Asian American Art & Storytelling, a Tribeca Film Institute All-Access alum, a 'Yes, And Laughter Lab' Winner, an Islamic Scholarship Fund Winner. She wrote and directed on the award-winning TikTok series *Hidden Canyons* (4M+ views) and *I Know Her* (Palm Springs Shortfest, CBC Short Film Face Off). CBC produced *Noor & Layla* (Outfest; BlackStar; Bentonville; Bend; Calgary; St. John's Women's Film Festival; Audience Award: Inside Out; Best Lesbian Film: Seattle Queer Film Festival; Best Director: Image+Nation; nominated for the Iris Prize). She directed the romantic comedy short *The Syed Family Xmas Eve Game Night* (world-premiered TIFF 2021) named one of Xtra's 'Top 10 Films' of TIFF. She wrote/will direct the feature film *Me, My Mom & Sharmila* in 2022, supported by SFFILM; Canada Council for the Arts; TIFF Writers Studio and Filmmaker Lab; Telefilm Canada; the 2021 International Finance Forum at TIFF; and The Gotham. Mirza is currently in post production for her new short *Group Text*, executive produced by Paul Feig and is part of the 2021/2022 cohort of the Canadian Academy Directors Program for Women.

Marshall Tyler

Born in Philadelphia, but raised in Hawaii and San Diego, award-winning filmmaker Marshall Tyler got his start in the world of music videos and later under his mentor, legendary director, Michael Mann. It was as Mann's documentarian on films such as *Collateral*, *Miami Vice*, *Public Enemies*, and

the HBO series *Luck*— that Marshall further developed his love for authentic storytelling. This deep-seeded desire to follow the truth led to his feature-length documentary *Skid Row* featuring Grammy-award winning Pras Michel from the Fugees fame living as a homeless person on the streets of Los Angeles for nine straight days. *Skid Row* was released theatrically by Screen Media and premiered on Netflix. Marshall's first narrative project, *Night Shift*, was Executive Produced by Viola Davis' and Julius Tennon's Juvee Productions and premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2017. In addition to screening at over 50 festivals, *Night Shift* was selected as one of seven films to travel the globe as part of the 2017 Sundance Shorts Tour. The film has won numerous awards including a Gold Hugo at the 53rd Chicago International Film Festival and is currently a Vimeo Staff Pick. His next film *Cap* premiered at the 2019 American Black Film Festival and was acquired by HBO after winning the highly coveted HBO Short Film Competition. *Cap* also won the Grand Jury Award for Best Narrative Short at the 2019 Urban World Film Festival. Both *Night Shift* and *Cap* were Oscar qualified. His most recent film, *Slow Pulse*, premiered at the 2021 Tribeca Film Festival and aired in primetime on CBS and BET as a part of 8:46 hosted by Gayle King. Moving into the episodic space, Marshall directed "The Taking of Dispatch 9-1-1" on Ryan Murphy's hit series *9-1-1* starring Angela Bassett. Marshall is currently directing two episodes of the critically acclaimed Showtime series, *City on a Hill*, starring Kevin Bacon and Aldis Hodge.

Rikki Wright

Rikki Wright is a photographer/filmmaker and multidisciplinary artist moving through the mediums of printmaking, documentary, and ceramics. Her work is interested and concerned with notions of community and sisterhood, especially among women of color, and looks at the way a community can mold or expand our ideas of femininity and masculinity, strength and beauty. Working with her personal and the historical archive, Wright is granted a space to remember, imagine or re-image histories. Her work also investigates beauty politics and desire through self portrait photography and various other mediums.

**Panel: “Mothering and Laboring the Cinematic Revolution”
With filmmakers and mothers: Amatus Ali, Sonya Childress
(moderator), Loren Hankin, Tchaiko Omawale, and Numa Perrier**

Sonya Childress

Sonya Childress is a cultural strategist, film impact producer, and writer who believes in the catalytic power of film and the arts to bolster social justice movements. Sonya currently serves as Senior Fellow with the Perspective Fund, a philanthropic resource for documentary film and impact campaigns, where she conducts field-building research, writing and initiatives that move the documentary field towards equity, transparency and impact. She is a frequent speaker, trainer, and writer through her consulting arm, Pa'lante Strategies. www.sonyachildress.com

Loren Hankin

Loren's professional career in film began at the legendary Roland House post-production facility in Arlington, VA where she started as an intern and was hired within two months as an assistant editor. She moved through the ranks to editor, working on a range of projects from promos and short films to long-form documentaries. As a freelance editor, she has worked with clients such as The Discovery Channel, National Geographic, and MTV Networks, as well as on numerous independent films. She edited the award-winning feature film *Teza*, by filmmaker Haile Gerima, which won Special Jury Prize at the Venice International Film Festival.

As an actress, Loren made her feature film debut in the critically acclaimed film *Pariah* by filmmaker Dee Rees and Executive Produced by Spike Lee. She made her television debut in Nickelodeon's *How to Rock*. Recently, she appeared in the web series *Compersion*, by award winning writer-director Jackie Stone, and at the newly opened Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in the film *Solace*, directed by Daniel Willams.

Loren is currently working on her documentary directorial debut while preparing to birth her second child.

Numa Perrier

Born in Haiti and raised in small town, USA, Numa Perrier has emerged as a provocative voice in the film/TV landscape. She first garnered attention starring in and writing the hit web series, *The Couple*, which scored a deal at HBO.

She co-founded the first streamer for Black millennials, *Black&Sexy TV*, serving as Chief Content Officer on the business side, while creating and show running over a dozen series launched by the platform, including *Roomieoverfriends* (Executive Producer, Issa Rae) and *Hello Cupid* (co-created by Lena Waithe)

She then moved on to write, direct, and co-star in her first feature film, *Jezebel*, which premiered at SXSW 2019 and is distributed on Netflix via ARRAY Releasing. *Jezebel* was a fan and industry favorite nabbing The Hollywood Reporter's *Critic's Choice List*.

Numa won Best Director and Best Feature Film at The American Black Film Festival and is a Root100 Alumni.

In front of the camera Numa recurred as a guest star on Showtime's irreverent comedy *SMILF* in a critically acclaimed story arc about immigrants. Numa also stars in the upcoming surreal thriller *Fuzzyhead* alongside Rain Phoenix and is slated to take on the role of writer Audre Lorde in her first ever biopic.

As a director Numa is currently in post production on her first studio film, *The Perfect Find*, with Netflix starring Gabrielle Union slated for 2022 release.

Tchaiko Omawale

Tchaiko's filmmaking is influenced by her upbringing as a Third Culture Kid, and the longing to transform trauma responses to racism, deaths, and constant moving. Magic, themes of in-between in the African Diaspora, its effects on the body and spirit, fill her work. Her creative impulses for fantasy are a connection to African Indigeneity and its healing potential. She centers ethical practices of care, a focus on process, intuition and deep listening to her body, her dreams, and the magic of her baby.

Ava Duvernay tapped Tchaiko to direct *Queen Sugar* after seeing her debut feature film *Solace*, starring Hope Olaide Wilson, Chelsea Tavares, Lynn Whitfield and Glynn Turman. *Solace* is streaming on Showtime, Kweli TV, and Amazon. It won Special Jury Mention at the LA Film Festival and the Audience Award at the New Orleans Film Festival. *Solace*'s production budget was crowdfunded and additional support came from Panavision, Tribeca Film Institute, IFP, Women In Film, and Film Independent.

Tchaiko's fantasy film *Sita*, exhibited in the Project Row House show Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter, co-curated by Simone Leigh. *Solace* was workshopped in a South African township allowing the audience to recognize their community's self-harm with compassion. The film's outreach also included a conversation about food, trauma, and the Black body with Roxane Gay, moderated by Franklin Leonard.

Amatus Sami-Karim

Amatus-sami Karim-Ali is an award winning producer, sound artist, creator and actress. Her recent projects include *We Are the Dream: The Kids of the Oakland MLK Oratorical Fest*, *The Homecoming Queen*, and *The Last Two Lovers at the End of the World*. Amatus did the sound design for the Obie winning play *Sunset Baby* at the Labyrinth Theater and continues to create collaboratively as a multi-disciplinary artist for stage and screen. Most recently she was nominated for a Drama Desk Award in 2018 for her work as a composer and sound designer of *The Homecoming Queen* for the Atlantic Theatre and received an Emmy as an Executive Producer of *We Are the Dream: The Kids of the Oakland MLK Oratorical Fest* for HBO. In 2018, she Co-Founded a production company KNOWWONDER FILMS as a platform for unique stories and storytellers.

Music by Sonny James

Sonny James

Mr. Sonny James FKA DJ Statik is a writer, DJ, producer, videographer, and actor. He is a co-founder of Philadelphia's most prolific and well-respected DJ/Production crew, Illvibe Collective. Sonny has worked as the official tour DJ for the legendary MC Bahamadia, J-Live, Mr. Lif, and other prominent

international hip-hop artists. Famously noted as “your DJ’s favorite DJ,” his sets regularly hit popular venues across the world: Chateau Marmont, Ace Hotel (LA); Santos Party House, SOBs and APT (New York City); Voyeur Nightclub, Silk City, and Morgan’s Pier (Philadelphia); Pearl & Tube Station (Berlin), Electric Pickle, Basement, Coyo Taco (Miami), and Drai’s After Hours (Las Vegas). He is an annual staple at the SXSW Music Festival in Austin, TX and at Miami’s Winter Music Conference in South Beach. Sonny’s full and diverse roster includes a DJ residency for Heineken Green Room; the legendary Beat Society producer showcase; and Illvibe Collective’s highly anticipated traveling dance party series, *BODYROCK*—now in its 16th year. In 2014, he was personally invited to the White House to DJ the African Summit dinner for President Obama, The First Lady and over 50 more world leaders. His musicality as a producer is evident on Illvibe Collective’s debut album, *All Together Now*, and on various remixes.

Presently, Sonny James serves as Chief Operations Manager of the Illvibe Media record label where his numerous duties include artist development, marketing, and music distribution. He also works as Artists Relations in Los Angeles for the DJ Mag Award winning computer Software company, *Serato*. He deals with an enormous database of iconic music artists who use the software and assist in their daily needs at the Serato Studio in DTLA and produces, directs, and edits all of Serato’s media content filmed on the west coast.

The Museum of Contemporary Art
250 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles CA 90012
moca.org

