AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AMC NETWORKS ANNOUNCES THE BLACK PRODUCTION FUND

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Fund Supports Thesis Productions By Black Fellows At AFI Conservatory

AFI Alumni Award Winners Revealed

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE â?? Los Angeles, CA, October 16, 2020 â?? The American Film Institute (AFI) announced today the establishment of the Black Production Fund in partnership with AMC Networks. The fund will provide grants for thesis productions by Black Fellows in their second year at the AFI Conservatory. The Black Production Fund, along with the recently announced Thomas P. Pollock Endowed Scholarship for promising diverse AFI Producing Fellows, is part of AFIâ??s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiatives dedicated to increasing Black voices in storytelling.

â??At this pivotal moment in Americaâ??s history, the revolutionary power of visual storytelling to inspire change has never been more critical â?? and there is no better way to support underrepresented voices than to help fund the films they make to tell their own stories,â?• said Susan Ruskin, Dean of the AFI Conservatory and EVP of the American Film Institute. â??This support for our

Fellows with their thesis films is transformational. We want to thank AMC Networks for their leadership in creating opportunities for Black storytellers.â?•

Beyond the fund, AMC Networks has committed to distributing select AFI Conservatory films on UMC, AMC Networksâ?? streaming VOD platform exclusively dedicated to showcasing Black film and television, beginning with THE FIRST STONE, directed by Kaisan Rei (AFI Class of 2016); GUMMI BEAR, directed by RJ Dawson (AFI Class of 2019); and YELLOW GIRL AND ME, directed and written by Isabella Issa (AFI Class of 2019).

â??AMC Networks is proud to support the Black Production Fund â?? a vehicle to break down barriers for Black artists to tell stories that build a more inclusive culture,â?• said Josh Sapan, CEO of AMC Networks. â??With UMC, we are also proud to provide a home to showcase some of these outstanding projects.â?•

In its continuing efforts to honor excellence in the art of the moving image, AFI also awarded the AFI Alumni Awards, which recognize outstanding achievement in directing and screenwriting, to members of the Class of 2019 during a private virtual alumni reception at this yearâ??s AFI FEST presented by Audi.

The William J. Fadiman Award for Screenwriting ($15,000) went to Christina Kingsleigh Licud for her screenplay â??The Daughters.â?• The Richard P. Rogers Spirit of Excellence Award ($10,000) was awarded to Isabella Issa for her thesis film YELLOW GIRL AND ME; and The Franklin J. Schaffner Fellow Award for Directing ($20,000) went to Haohao Yan for her thesis film THE SPEECH. The first Thomas P. Pollock Fellows, Haley Beasley (Producing, Class of 2022) and Nagee Brown (Producing, Class of 2022), were also feted at the reception.

About the American Film Institute (AFI)
Established in 1967, the American Film Institute is the nationâ??s non-profit organization dedicated to educating and inspiring artists and audiences through initiatives that champion the past, present and future of the moving image. AFIâ??s pioneering programs include filmmaker training at the AFI Conservatory; year-round exhibition at the AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center and at AFI Festivals across the nation; workshops aimed at increasing diversity in the storytelling community; honoring todayâ??s masters through the AFI Life Achievement Award and AFI AWARDS; and scholarly efforts such as the AFI Catalog of Feature Films that uphold film history for future generations. Read about all of these programs and more at AFI.com and follow us on social media at Facebook.com/AmericanFilmInstitute, YouTube.com/AFI, Twitter.com/AmericanFilm, and Instagram.com/AmericanFilmInstitute.

About the AFI Conservatory

The AFI Conservatory opened its doors in 1969 to an inaugural class that included Terrence Malick, Caleb Deschanel and Paul Schrader. Today, the Conservatory offers a two-year MFA degree in six filmmaking disciplines: Cinematography, Directing, Editing, Producing, Production Design, and Screenwriting. In a collaborative production environment, AFI Fellows learn to master the art of storytelling, collectively creating up to 175 films a year. Fellows actively participate in the entire life cycle of a film, from development through production and exhibition.

Alumni of this elite program, ranging from modern masters to bold new voices defining the state of the art form, including Andrea Arnold, Darren Aronofsky, Ari Aster, Sam Esmail, Brad Falchuk, Liz Hannah, Patty Jenkins, Janusz KamiÅ?ski, Matthew Libatique, David Lynch, Melina Matsoukas, Polly Morgan, Rachel Morrison, and Wally Pfister, among others.

About the AFI Alumni Awards

The William J. Fadiman Award recognizes outstanding achievement in screenwriting in honor of the distinguished story editor and AFI Conservatory faculty member, William J. Fadiman (THE LAST FRONTIER).

The Richard P. Rogers Spirit of Excellence Award is given annually to directors whose performance at AFI embodies the independent filmmaking spirit of celebrated documentarian Richard P. Rogers (PICTURES FROM A REVOLUTION), filmmaker, teacher, mentor and friend who passed away on July 14, 2001 at the age of 57. The William J. Fadiman Award and the Richard P. Rogers Spirit of Excellence Award were established by an alumnus who has chosen to give back to AFI in honor of those who have inspired generations of AFI Conservatory Fellows.

The Franklin J. Schaffner Fellow Award is presented to an exceptional Directing alum in memory of Franklin J. Schaffner (PATTON, PLANET OF THE APES), a longtime champion of AFI and former chair of the AFI Conservatory Advisory Committee. The Schaffner Fellow Award was established in 1991 by Jean Schaffner to celebrate her husbandâ??s creative legacy and dedication to fostering new talent. This award is funded by the Franklin and Jean Schaffner Foundation.

About AMC Networks

Known for its groundbreaking and celebrated original content, AMC Networks (NASDAQ:AMCX) is the company behind the award-winning brands AMC, BBC AMERICA, IFC, SundanceTV, WE tv, and IFC Films. Its diverse line-up of popular and critically-acclaimed series and independent films include *Killing Eve*, *Better Call Saul* and *The Walking Dead*, which has been the #1 show on ad-supported cable television for ten consecutive years, as well as *Documentary Now!*, *Brockmire*, *Love After Lockup*, and the films *Boyhood*, *Death of Stalin*, and many more. Its original series *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad* are widely recognized as being among the most influential and acclaimed shows in the history of TV. The Company also operates AMC Studios, its production business; AMC Networks International, its international programming business; the subscription streaming services Acorn TV, Shudder, Sundance Now, and UMC; RLJE Films; and Levity Entertainment Group, the Companyâ??s production services and comedy venues business. For more information, visit http://www.amcnetworks.com.

(Source: AFI Press release)

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1. #AFI
2. American Film Institute

Date Created
October 16, 2020
Author
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