



AFI DWW+ SHOWCASE CELEBRATES FILMS FROM EMERGING DIRECTORS

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, Los Angeles, CA, March 6, 2025 â?? The [American Film Institute](#) (AFI) premiered films from the AFI DWW+ Class of 2025 directors â?? Julia Bales, Jahmil Eady, MG Evangelista, Marissa High, Jasmine J. Johnson, Natasha Mynhier, Karina Lomelin Ripper and Ezra Rose â?? to a full house at the annual AFI DWW+ showcase on Wednesday, March 5 at the Directors Guild of America (DGA) Theater in Los Angeles. Founded in 1974, [AFI DWW+](#) is a tuition-free year-long directing program, open to all applicants, that supports emerging narrative filmmakers through the production cycle of a short film, providing hands-on instruction led by industry experts.

Susan Ruskin, Dean of the AFI Conservatory and Executive Vice President of the American Film Institute, opened the event with welcome remarks and congratulated the eight members of the Class of 2025 as they now join a legion of artists who have participated in the program since it began over 50 years ago. She noted the programâ??s â??signature superpowerâ?• is its ability to bring artists together whose work aims to drive culture forward.

Ruskin then introduced AFI DWW+ Alum and Class of 2025 Guest Artistic Director Hanelle M. Culpepper (STAR WARS: THE ACOLYTE, STAR TREK: PICARD, WESTWORLD), who mentored the directors and oversaw the artistic curriculum for the 2024â??2025 program. She celebrated the achievements of the filmmakers and their dedication to their craft. â??[They are] eight directors with passionate visions, talent, curiosity, unafraid to ask for what they need, and completely open to learning, to collaboration, and to feedback while supporting each other however they can,â?• said Culpepper. â??Their work will have a social impact by challenging us and expanding our thinking while never failing to entertain us.â?•

Distinguished keynote speaker Emmy[®] Award-winning writer/director/producer Lucia Aniello (HACKS, BROAD CITY, ROUGH NIGHT) brought her signature humor to her address to the graduates, inspiring participants and guests alike with advice about the creative process and the unexpected places they may find story ideas. Aniello encouraged the directors to take in as many unique experiences as

possible to help shape their point of view as a filmmaker, â??Be disciplined â?? not with your output but with your life experiences and how present you are with themâ?|. And write everything down.â?•

Aniello is currently writing, directing and executive producing the fourth season of Maxâ??s Original comedy series, HACKS starring Jean Smart, which she also co-created alongside Paul W. Downs and Jen Statsky.

Following the remarks, the audience, which included filmmakers, actors, producers, agents, managers, studio executives and more, screened films directed by the AFI DWW+ Class of 2025 participants during the intensive program.

Learn more about the directors and their projects at: <https://conservatory.afi.com/dww-showcase/>.

As one of the longest-running and preeminent film and television workshops nationwide, AFI DWW+ has trained hundreds of artists whose directorial work has entertained global audiences and defined our collective cultural landscape. Distinguished Alums of the AFI DWW+ program include Maya Angelou, Anne Bancroft, Neema Barnette, Pippa Bianco, Tessa Blake, Tricia Brock, Ellen Burstyn, Rebecca Cammisa, Dyan Cannon, Dime Davis, Jan Eliasberg, Naomi Foner, Jennifer Getzinger, Lesli Linka Glatter, Lyn Goldfarb, Randa Haines, SiÃ¶n Heder, Victoria Hochberg, Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Matia Karrell, Maggie Kiley, Lynne Littman, Nancy Malone, Gandja Monteiro, Amber Sealy, Sarah Gertrude Shapiro, Becky Smith, Cicely Tyson, Jude Weng and Joanne Woodward. [View full list of 350+ AFI DWW Alums here.](#)

AFI DWW+ is part of the AFI Conservatoryâ??s Department of Innovative Programs, which also includes the AFI Cinematography Intensive Workshop. Through a range of learning opportunities, Innovative Programs serves a diverse community of aspiring visual storytellers to cultivate cutting-edge technological and media-making skills, bridge access to professional networks and place participants on an upward career trajectory.

Learn more at Conservatory.AFI.com/Innovative-Programs/.



About the American Film Institute (AFI)

The American Film Institute (AFI) is a nonprofit organization with a mandate to champion the moving image as an art form. Established in 1967, AFI launched the first comprehensive history of American film and sparked the movement for film preservation in the United States. In 1969, AFI opened the doors of the **AFI Conservatory**, a graduate-level program to train narrative filmmakers. The

Conservatory, which counts Deniese Davis, Affonso Gonçalves, Susannah Grant, Matthew Libatique, David Lynch, Melina Matsoukas and Rachel Morrison as Alumni, is ranked one of the top film schools in America. AFI's enduring traditions include the **AFI Life Achievement Award**, which honors the masters for work that has stood the test of time; **AFI AWARDS**, which celebrates the creative ensembles of the most outstanding screen stories of the year; and scholarly efforts such as the **AFI Catalog of Feature Films** and the **AFI Archive** that preserve film history for future generations. AFI exhibition programs include **AFI FEST Presented by Canva** and year-round exhibition at the **AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center** in Maryland. **AFI Movie Club** is a destination for movie lovers from around the world to celebrate and engage with the art form every day. Other pioneering programs include workshops aimed at elevating emerging storytellers and technology, including **AFI DWW+** and the **AFI Cinematography Intensive Workshop**. Read about all of these programs and more at AFI.com and follow us on social media at Facebook.com/AmericanFilmInstitute, YouTube.com/AFI, X.com/AmericanFilm, TikTok.com/@americanfilminstitute and Instagram.com/AmericanFilmInstitute.

About the AFI Conservatory

The [AFI Conservatory](https://AFI.com) 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, include Andrea Arnold, Darren Aronofsky, Ari Aster, Deniese Davis, Sam Esmail, Brad Falchuk, Affonso Gonçalves, Susannah Grant, Liz Hannah, Patty Jenkins, Janusz Kamiński, Matthew Libatique, David Lynch, Melina Matsoukas, Polly Morgan, Rachel Morrison and Wally Pfister, among others.

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