

Judas and The Black Messiah

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Judas and The Black Messiah, recipient of the recently awarded, American Film Instituteâ??s Movie of the Year*,* made its World Premiere at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival with fanfare. A late, Warner Brothers production, addition to the Premiere category starring Daniel Kaluuya and LaKeith Stanfield, *Judas and The Black Messiah* was a richly told story of the leadership, revolutionary activism, and eventual assassination of Black Panther Fred Hampton, and powerful addition to the social revolution films of the 1960s and early 1970s.

With the film set in 1968, social unrest in the United States was at the highest it had been in close to 50 years. The New Left was emerging. The Anti-War Movement was underway. Fears and threats of Communism were still present. And Chicago was hosting the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy had been recently assassinated and as the Black Community looking for new leadership, the Chicago Chapter of the Black Panthers and its chairman, Fred Hampton, saw an opportunity to fill a void and unite the disenfranchised.

All eyes were on Chicago, as the United States continued to deal with the issues at home and abroad. J. Edgar Hoover, the founder and first director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation had turned the organization into a menacing, crime-fighting apparatus. Richard Nixon was elected as the 37th President of the United States under the promise of law and order. Hoover and his FBI saw Hampton as a radical â??Black Messiahâ?• threat and managed to compromise a young black male, William Oâ??Neal, portrayed by Stanfield, to infiltrate the Black Panthers and keep tabs on Fred Hampton and the Chicago Chapter. Hampton, portrayed to a tee by Kaluuya, was young, impressionable, and highly charismatic. He rose up in the ranks of the Black Panthers and rallied the New Left, the Anti-War Movement, and the young Communists with his war cry, â??I amâ?¦ a Revolutionary.â?•

Judas and The Black Messiah, directed by Shaka King, with a cast, led by Kaluuya and Stanfield, and supported by a strong performance from Dominique Fishback portraying Hamptonâ??s life partner, Deborah Johnson, is exceptional as the production design, costuming, makeup and wardrobe move the film into a period piece. And, the writing pulls heavily from historical texts with Black Panther phrases

such as â??War is politics with blood. Politics is war without blood.â?• King also manages to pose questions about how to make progress as his characters address the concepts of reform and revolution. While the film is set in 1968-69, these issues are still prevalent today.

Judas and The Black Messiah, an historical drama on par with Gore Vidalâ??s *Lincoln,* is an emotionally moving, and at times, riveting film. Seeing history brought to life in a viscerally real and emphatic manner, made the work very compelling to me. Fred Hampton was killed at the age of 21 on December 4th, 1969. The aggrieved parties would wait well over a decade for justice with a civil suit settlement of $1.85 million in 1982 after an initial coronerâ??s jury inquest in January of 1970 found Fred Hamptonâ??s death justifiable homicide. Watch at your own peril.





LaKeith Stanfield, left,



rner Brothers 2021)

(Warner Brothers 2021)

Category

1. #Sundance
2. Feature Film
3. Sundance
4. Sundance Film Festival
5. Sundance Film Festival 2021

Tags

1. Black Messiah
2. Black Panthers

3. Fred Hampton

Date Created
February 17, 2021
Author
hollywoodglee