

*Passes now on sale for BlackStar Film Festival*

A vibrant purple poster for the BlackStar Film Festival 2022. The text "BLACKSTAR" is in large, bold, black letters with a white outline, followed by "FILM" in a similar style. Below "BLACKSTAR" is "FESTIVAL" in the same font. To the right, "2022" is written in large, bold, teal letters with a black outline. The dates "AUGUST 3-7" are written in a teal, cursive font below "FESTIVAL". The poster is decorated with various yellow and black icons, including exclamation marks, stars, and the letter "B" inside a circle. A yellow starburst is positioned between "FESTIVAL" and "2022".

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The festival will take place **August 3-7, 2022** in a hybrid format, with select in-person screenings, live programs, and panels at Penn Live Arts at Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia, and online events accessible to a global audience. It will include narrative features and shorts, documentary features and shorts, and experimental films. Festival attendees will also have access to a range of programs, conversations, and parties across the city.

Passes for the festival are now available for purchase [here](#). An all-access pass is currently available for an early bird rate of \$200 (normally \$250), and a virtual festival pass is currently available for an early bird rate of \$100 (normally \$125). Individual tickets for virtual and in-person screenings, which go on sale in early July, will be \$5 and \$15, respectively.

The 2022 BlackStar Film Festival is set to feature a total of 76 films representing 27 countries, including 16 world, 8 North America, 12 East Coast, and 8 US premieres. 25 films will be Philadelphia premieres.

“Following the success of last year’s 10th anniversary celebration, we are thrilled to present this year’s festival and hope it allows filmmakers of the global majority to forge new connections with their audiences,” says **BlackStar Founder, Artistic Director, and CEO Maori Karmael Holmes**. “We curate every aspect of our events to be intentional community building efforts, centered on joy, radical care, and thriving, and we are excited to witness how this year’s festival embodies that spirit.”

"We are excited to continue connecting with and welcoming our community in-person and virtually. This festival is a storytelling celebration with programming that has lots of people in mind—from yoga for families to parties to issue-based documentaries and horror films," added **Festival Director Nehad Khader**.



Stills from (clockwise from top left): *Jasmine is a Star*, *O'Sho* (What They've Been Taught), *The Spirit God Gave Us*, and *Tug of War*.

Selections from this year's lineup include:

**Aftershock**—a feature documentary directed by **Paula Eiselt** and **Tonya Lewis Lee**—follows two families as they galvanize activists, birth-workers, and physicians to reckon with the US maternal health crisis after having lost loved ones due to childbirth complications.

**Blackalachia**—an experimental film by **Moses Sumney** featuring a live conceptual performance with a 7-piece band atop the Blue Ridge Mountains—captures the intersection between nature, music, dance, and cinematography.

**Conspiracy**—an experimental film co-directed by **Simone Leigh** and **Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich**—was shot in Leigh's studio on the occasion of her historic exhibition in the United States Pavilion at the 2022 Venice Biennale.

**Jasmine is a Star**—a feature narrative directed by **Jo Rochelle**—follows the journey of a determined 16-year-old with albinism (lack of pigment in the hair, skin, and eyes) who makes it her mission to become a professional model in her hometown of Minneapolis, while attempting to go unnoticed in every other aspect of her teenage life.

**Let the Little Light Shine**—a feature documentary directed by **Kevin Shaw**—follows parents, students, and educators as they fight for the survival of a thriving, top-ranked Chicago African American elementary school that is threatened to be closed and replaced by a new high school that favors the community's wealthier residents.

**Mars One**—a feature narrative directed by **Gabriel Martins**—chronicles a Brazilian family coping with an uncertain future as a far-right conservative leader rises to power. Through this time of turbulent change, the family's optimism and deep capacity for love guides them.

**Rewind & Play**—a feature documentary directed by **Alain Gomis**—spotlights Thelonius Monk recording a French TV show in 1969.

**Selahy "My Weapon"**—a short narrative directed by **Alaa Zabara**—follows a young, deaf Arab girl, born in the ravages of a war zone, whose only weapons are her hearing aids and an old video camera.

**Storming Caesar's Palace**—a feature documentary directed by **Hazel Gurland-Pooler**—uplifts the story of Las Vegas activist Ruby Duncan and a band of ordinary mothers who launched one of the most extraordinary, yet forgotten, feminist, anti-poverty movements in U.S. history.

**Sub Eleven Seconds**—a short documentary directed by **Bafic**—ruminates on time, loss, and hope; it offers a poetic imagining of the quest of Sha'Carri Richardson, a young track and field athlete, to achieve her dream of qualifying for the Olympic Games.

**The Panola Project**—a short documentary directed by **Rachael DeCruz** and **Jeremy S. Levine**—highlights the heroic efforts of Dorothy Oliver to keep her small town of Panola, Alabama safe from COVID-19, chronicling how an often-overlooked rural Black community came together in creative ways to survive.

**The Spirit God Gave Us**—a short narrative directed by **Michael Donte**—is a love story about the intersection of faith and queer love. Following two young Black men who volunteer as ushers for their Baptist church, it chronicles their journey towards love, connection and spirituality.

**Tug of War**—a feature narrative directed by **Amil Shivji**—is a coming-of-age political love story set in the final years of British colonial Zanzibar. Denge, a young freedom fighter, meets Yasmin, an Indian-Zanzibari woman, in the middle of the night as she is on her way to be married.

**We Still Here / Nos Tenemos**—a feature documentary directed by **Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi**—showcases the aftermath of Hurricane Maria for the young residents of

Comerio, Puerto Rico, who empower themselves to transform their lives and communities despite the disregard of the government and poor relief management.

**O'SHO** (What They've Been Taught)—a short documentary directed by Brit Hensel and filmed on the Qualla Boundary and Cherokee Nation—explores expressions of reciprocity in the Cherokee world, brought to life through a story told by an elder and first language speaker.

This edition of BlackStar Film Festival also marks the world premiere of short films created through BlackStar's [Philadelphia Filmmaker Lab](#), presented by Black Experience on Xfinity, following the announcement of the Lab's inaugural cohort last fall. An opportunity designed to uplift emerging and mid-career artists in the Greater Philadelphia area, the Lab has supported four filmmakers by making equipment, space, crew, mentorship, funding, and critical feedback available over the course of the past year. The Lab's 2021-2022 fellows are Bettina Escauriza, Jasmine Lynea, Xenia Matthews, and Julian Turner.

Bettina Escauriza's project, *Tonight, We Eat Flowers*, centers on a person who sells hold music to companies, employing magical realism and the absurd to disrupt expectations. Jasmine Lynea's hybrid film, *The Love Machine*, is set in 2036 North Philadelphia in a dominantly Black neighborhood and focuses on cultivating a new perspective on love. Julian Turner's short, *The Big Three*, engages a conversation surrounding Black representation and artistic ownership through a musical setting. Xenia Matthews's film *Ourika!* utilizes surrealism, animation, and multimedia elements to further the ongoing conversation on the colonization of Black women's bodies in art and material culture.

In addition to hybrid film screenings, there will be a slate of festival programming—both online and in-person in Philadelphia—this year. Select highlights include:

- A conversation with Mira Nair, the 2022 recipient of BlackStar's Luminary Award (Virtual)
- Nightly episodes of The Daily Jawn—a talk show hosted by Maori Karmael Holmes and Rashid Zakat featuring interviews with filmmakers, music, and much more—live with an audience at Penn Live Arts (In-Person)
- Opening and closing night parties, plus a co-hosted [First Friday! at the Barnes Museum](#), featuring live music by Omar's Hat (In-Person)
- A panel on disability justice and filmmaking with visionary cultural workers, moderated by Andraéa LaVant (Virtual)

BlackStar Projects has seen considerable and continued growth over the past decade, both in the scope and reach of its festival and with new and continuing initiatives for the organization year-round. Last year's 10th anniversary BlackStar Film Festival featured approximately 80 films, including 19 world

premieres, and represented 27 countries. It was attended by more than 3,000 in Philadelphia and reached nearly 1 million viewers virtually around the world.

In addition to presenting an array of live programs, panels, and select in-person events and screenings, 2021 also marked BlackStar's selection by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as a qualifying festival for both short documentary and short narrative films, making BlackStar's Best Narrative Short and Best Documentary Short winners eligible for entrance at the Academy Awards.

Among BlackStar Projects' continuing initiatives are [Seen](#), a journal of film and visual culture that will publish its fourth issue this summer, the William and Louise Greaves Filmmaker Seminar, and [Many Lumens with Maori Karmael Holmes](#)—BlackStar's signature podcast, which finds BlackStar founder Maori Karmael Holmes in dialogue with the most groundbreaking artists, changemakers, and cultural workers of today. The organization also celebrated the beginning of this decade of expansion with the opening of a new headquarters this spring.

Information on judging, sponsors, additional programming, and events will be announced soon. For more information on the festival and its programs, visit <https://www.blackstarfest.org>.

The lineup of films is as follows, with additional films to be announced in the coming weeks:

**A Morsel of Love**, directed by Helia Behrooz and Sana Norouzbaki

**The African Desperate**, directed by Martine Syms

**Aftershock**, directed by Paula Eiselt and Tonya Lewis Lee

**Ājāi: The Headball Game of the Myky and Manoki**, directed by Typju Myky and André Lopes

**Angakusajaujuq: The Shaman's Apprentice**, directed by Zacharias Kunuk

**Another Story (with esperanza spalding)**, directed by Adrien Gystere Peskine and Anthony Peskine

**Barry the Beekeeper**, directed by Ikram Ahmed

**Big Three**, directed by Julian Turner

**Black Beauty**, directed by Elle Moxley

**Blackalachia**, directed by Moses Sumney

**Body Language**, directed by Odu Adamu

**Bonded**, directed by Shobhit Jain

**By Water**, directed by Iyabo Kwayana

**Clones**, directed by Letia Solomon

**Conspiracy**, directed by Simone Leigh and Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich

**Echolocation**, directed by Nadia Shihab

**The Fire This Time**, directed by Mariam Ghani

**For Love**, directed by Joy Gharoro-Akpojotor

**Foreign in a Domestic Sense**, directed by Sofía Gallisá Muriente and Natalia Lassalle Morillo

Forgotten Paradise: Dream the Other Side of the River, directed by Charlotte Brathwaite  
The Fourfold, directed by Alisi Telengut  
Freedom Hill, directed by Resita Cox  
Freshwater, directed by dream hampton  
The Game God(S), directed by Adrian L. Burrell  
Glitter Ain't Gold, directed by Christian Nolan Jones  
Golden Jubilee, directed by Suneil Sanzgiri  
Half-Day, directed by Morgan Mathews  
Hazing, directed by Byron Hurt  
Hoop Dreams, directed by Kasey Elise Walker  
Jasmine Is A Star, directed by Jo Rochelle  
Kash Kash, directed by Lea Najjar  
Let the Little Light Shine, directed by Kevin Shaw  
Lingui, The Sacred Bonds, directed by Mahamat-Saleh Haroun  
Losing Joy, directed by Juliana Kasumu  
The Love Machine, directed by Jasmine Lynea  
Lowndes County and the Road to Black Power, directed by Geeta Gandbhir and Sam Pollard  
Mars One, directed by Gabriel Martins  
Men Nan Men, directed by Wilson Edmond  
My Parents' Bazaar, directed by Rakesh Narwani  
My Saints Recognize Your Saints, directed by Rodrigo Antonio  
Night, directed by Ahmad Saleh  
Night Shift, directed by Bim Ajadi  
One Magenta Afternoon, directed by Vernon Jordan, III  
One Take Grace, directed by Lindiwe Matshikiza  
Ourika, directed by Xenia Matthews  
The Panola Project, directed by Rachael DeCruz and Jeremy S. Levine  
The Passion of Remembrance, directed by Isaac Julien  
PATTY vs. PATTY, directed by Chris Strikes  
Piiksi/Huia (Bird), directed by Cian Elyse White and Joshua Manyheads  
Pili Ka Mo'o, directed by Justyn Ah Chong  
Quarantine Kids, directed by Bilal Motley and Bria Motley  
Rewind & Play, directed by Alain Gomis  
The Ritual to Beauty, directed by Shenny De Los Angeles and Maria Marrone  
The Season of Burning Things, directed by Gouled Ahmed Asmaa Jama  
Selahy "My Weapon," directed by Alaa Zabara  
Show Me Other Places, directed by Rajee Samarasinghe  
Silent Beauty, directed by Jasmin Mara López  
The Spirit God Gave Us, directed by Michael Donte  
Still Waters, directed by Aurora Brachman  
Storming Caesars Palace, directed by Hazel Gurland-Pooler  
Strictly Two Wheel, directed by Ania Freer  
Sub Eleven Seconds, directed by BAFIC  
Sunday Morning, directed by Bruno Ribeiro



The Syed Xmas Eve Game Night, directed by Fawzia Mirza  
Teine Sā - The Ancient Ones, directed by Matasila Freshwater, Mario Gaoa, Miki Magasiva, Anapela Polataivao, and Mario Faumui  
Tomorrow Is Another Day, directed by Ng'endo Mukii  
Tonight, We Eat Flowers, directed by Bettina Escauriza  
The Town, directed by Lindiwe Makgalemele  
Tug Of War, directed by Amil Shivji  
**O'SHO** (What They've Been Taught), directed by Brit Hensel  
Vortex, directed by Rikkí Wright  
We Still Here / Nos Tenemos, directed by Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi  
Weidle's, directed by Kevin Jerome Everson  
Wisdom Gone Wild, directed by Rea Tajiri  
Woman of the Earth, directed by Evelyn Mercedes Muñoz Marroquín  
You Can Always Come Home, directed by Juan Luis Matos

This year's festival is presented with the support of the following sponsors: AmDoc/POV, Annenberg School For Communication, Black Public Media, Catapult Film Fund, Center For Cultural Power, Drexel Westphal College of Media Arts, Expressway Grip, Eventive, Firelight Media, Gotham Film & Media Institute, Impact Partners, Indego, ITVS, Leeway Foundation, Lionsgate/STARZ, MediaJustice, NEON, Open Society Foundations, PBS, PECO, Philadelphia Foundation, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Red Bull, Scattergood Foundation, Temple University Film and Media Arts Department, The Study Hotels, Unique Photo, Urban Affairs Coalition, Urban Outfitters, Warner Bros/Discovery, WestxEast, and the Wyncote Foundation.

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### About BlackStar Projects

BlackStar Projects is the producer of the BlackStar Film Festival, an annual celebration of the visual and storytelling traditions of the African diaspora and global communities of color – showcasing films by Black, Brown, and Indigenous people from around the world. In addition to the acclaimed festival, BlackStar presents an array of programming across film and visual culture year-round, including the twice-annual journal *Seen*, the podcast *Many Lumens*, the William and Louise Greaves Filmmaker Seminar, and the Philadelphia Filmmaker Lab, among other initiatives.

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