

A publication with a special focus on the local film industry and upcoming stars

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FILM CENTRAL MAG

DEC 2023

ACTOR SPOTLIGHT:
INTRODUCING NICKI
MICHEAUX

FILM REVIEW
THE MARVELS



ARTFUL DODGER
Meet the cast and crew of
Disney+'s The Artful Dodger

INTRODUCING
Nicki
KAVOUSHI
By: Eileen Maynigo



PLASTIC IS FOREVER

A NEW TWIST FROM **TINA FEY**

JANUARY 11
EXCLUSIVE TO CINEMAS

SCREENPLAY BY **TINA FEY** DIRECTED BY **SAMANTHA JAYNE AND ARTURO PEREZ JR.**

FILM CENTRAL

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SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES PRESENTS AN IMAGINARIUM/DEFENDER/GARRETT BASCH PRODUCTION A TAIKA WAITITI FILM "NEXT GOAL WINS"



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DIRECTED BY TAIKA WAITITI

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Disney+ Original Series "The Artful Dodger" Premieres in Star-Studded Australian Red Carpet Event

Despite the rain, the stars of Disney+'s latest Australian Original series, "The Artful Dodger," graced the red carpet on a Wednesday night to celebrate the much-anticipated premiere. The series, exclusively available on Disney+, boasts a stellar cast, including Thomas Brodie-Sangster, David Thewlis, and Susie Porter.

David Thewlis, a distinguished actor, made a stylish appearance in a green shirt paired with brown pants. Completing his ensemble with a pair of cool kicks, he exuded confidence as he posed for photographs and engaged with the media.

Wentworth star Susie Porter also attended the premiere, catching up with StarCentral in an all-black outfit that radiated elegance and sophistication.

The star-studded event saw the presence of various renowned personalities, including Miranda Tapsell, Damon Herriman, Jessica De Gouw, former Home and Away star Emily Weir, Tim Minchin, Jack Irish, and beloved Aussie comedian Kym Gyngell, among others.

"The Artful Dodger," which premiered on the streaming giant on November 29, promises a captivating narrative. A spin-off from Charles Dickens' classic novel "Oliver Twist," the series delves into the adventures of Jack Dawkins, also known as 'The Artful Dodger,' 15 years after the events of the original Dickens novel.

The red carpet premiere not only showcased the talent of the cast but also heightened the anticipation for a series that offers a fresh perspective on a beloved literary character. With its star-studded cast and unique spin on a classic tale, "The Artful Dodger" is poised to become a standout addition to Disney+'s lineup.





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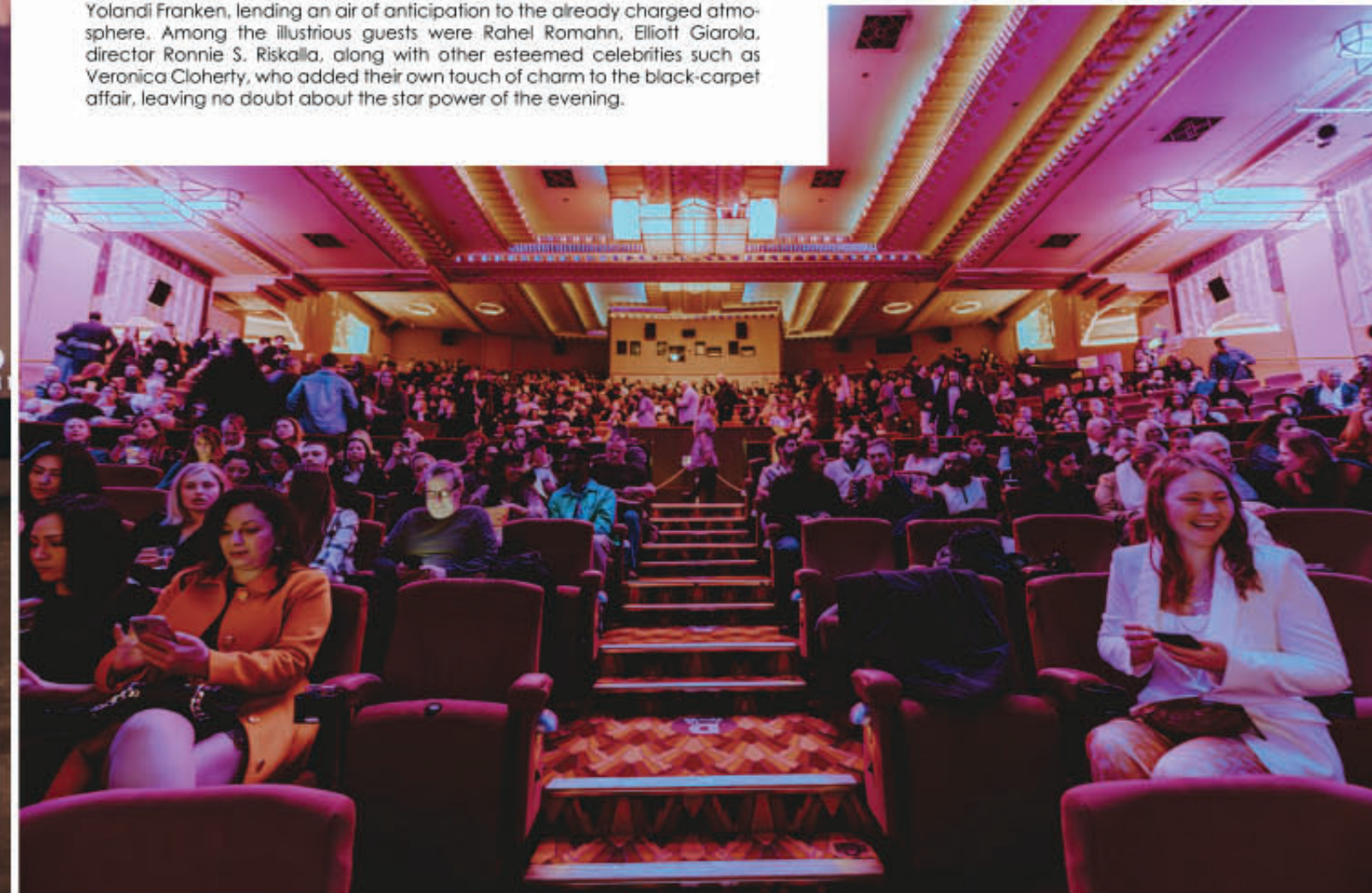
FEATURE STREETS OF COLOUR WORLD PREMIERE



STREETS OF COLOUR WORLD PREMIERE

The highly anticipated world premiere of the film "Streets of Colour" finally unfolded in all its glory at the esteemed Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace, nestled in the picturesque town of Cremorne. With an air of excitement and anticipation, the star-studded event attracted a multitude of distinguished actors, industry professionals, and esteemed guests, setting the stage for an unforgettable evening of glamour, emotion, and celebration.

As the clock struck 6:30 PM, the vibrant red carpet burst into life, bustling with activity and a palpable energy. Renowned figures from the Australian film industry graced the event led by FilmCentral Magazine's editor-in-chief Yolandi Franken, lending an air of anticipation to the already charged atmosphere. Among the illustrious guests were Rahel Romahn, Elliott Giarola, director Ronnie S. Riskalla, along with other esteemed celebrities such as Veronica Cloherty, who added their own touch of charm to the black-carpet affair, leaving no doubt about the star power of the evening.







ACTOR SPOTLIGHT: KYA STEWART

Once again, the global stage illuminates the realm of acting as World Monologue Games, the preeminent event of its kind, returns triumphantly for its highly anticipated fourth season. Among the outstanding talents selected for this year's Regional Finals is Sydney's own gifted actor, Kya Stewart, adding a local flair to this international showcase that brings together the finest performers from over 100 countries.

Unfazed by the industry disruptions, Kya courageously submitted an entry to the prestigious World Monologue Games, often dubbed the Olympics for Actors by the media. This spirited competition, spanning six distinct categories, sees thousands of international performers vying for a coveted spot on the podium.

Kya's excitement upon being selected for the esteemed event's Regional Finals is palpable. "Participating in this year's World Monologue Games fills me with incredible excitement," says Kya. "As I represent Australia, I'm joining a league of remarkable performers from around the world. The anticipation for my upcoming performance is electric."

Initiated in 2020 by the visionary Australian producer Pete Malicki, World Monologue Games continues to grow from strength to strength. Looking ahead to this fourth season, Malicki says, "The calibre of submissions has soared, with judges noting a marked rise in quality. I'm eagerly awaiting the showcase of talents that the finest actors from numerous countries will bring to this year's Games."

Kya will be performing a captivating monologue about a distinct and touching personal memory she shares with her late Grandmother. Reflecting on the experience, Kya added, "I'm so excited to represent Australia in the games and to share a simple, yet meaningful, monologue about the power of love, human connection, and the way it shapes our lives". Don't miss the chance to be part of this unparalleled event!



“

Participating in this year's World Monologue Games fills me with incredible excitement... As I represent Australia, I'm joining a league of remarkable performers from around the world. The anticipation for my upcoming performance is electric.

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Photo Credit: Halima H

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT Kian Kavousi

By: Eileen Maynigo

In the realm of the entertainment industry, Kian Kavousi emerges as a luminary, showcasing profound skill and versatility that has etched an illustrious path. His enduring impact on the small screen, silver screen, and theatre stages has left an indelible mark, garnering recognition and acclaim.

Foremost among Kavousi's achievements is his standout portrayal in the renowned TV series "The Chosen," a global hit distributed by Lionsgate and accessible on platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, NBC's Peacock, and the CW Network. Critics and viewers alike have lauded his compelling performance in this celebrated series.

Venturing beyond television, Kian Kavousi has graced feature films, earning acclaim at prestigious film festivals globally. Notable projects, including "1st Born," "The Big Apple," "Sarah Is Not Her Name," "Miles," and "The Last Chance," showcase his diverse range and talent, infusing depth and authenticity into every character.

Kian Kavousi's journey in the acting realm was shaped by dedicated training and mentorship from industry luminaries such as Larry Moss, Kristof Konrad, Jean-Louis Rodrigue, and Vincent D'Onofrio. This guidance refined his craft, endowing him with wisdom and technique that paved the way for success.

Beyond the screen, Kavousi's artistry has graced Off-Broadway stages in productions like "The Defendant Maurice Chevalier" and "Professionals." His captivating stage presence and unwavering commitment to characters showcase his adaptability and depth as an actor.

With an impressive body of work and an unwavering commitment to continual growth, Kian Kavousi's future in the entertainment industry appears promising and vibrant. His dedication to his craft, coupled with powerful performances, solidifies his position as a distinguished actor both on screen and on stage.

A recent conversation with FilmCentral magazine delved into Kian's industry journey, providing insights into his artistry and the path that lies ahead.

Your role in "The Chosen" has received widespread acclaim. Can you share some insights into your experience working on such a globally recognized TV series and the impact it has had on your career?

Working on "The Chosen" has been an incredible honor and one of the highlights of my career so far. As an actor, you always dream of being part of a production that reaches viewers globally on a massive scale. You are not aware of that fact at the beginning until you start seeing people recognizing you or reaching out to you. Many use you as an inspiration in their artworks or edit your scenes together in video clips while industry people contact you

for upcoming projects. That's when I first realized the impact of it all, and I knew things wouldn't be the same anymore. Seeing so many supporters and fans around the globe fuels my motivation to deliver my best work. Over the years, I've been fortunate to work with many talented directors, but Dallas Jenkins stands out for his visionary approach and ability to get the best from his actors. Being on set with Dallas, the experience is electric. He encourages us and gives us the freedom to take risks and explore the depths of each scene, asking thoughtful questions that reveal new dimensions. But what really stunned me was that through his vivid descriptions, he instantly transports you into the emotional space needed for the performance. All doubts were eliminated, and you end up organically creating a character on the spot that feels grounded and authentic but safe enough to go beyond and try different approaches. Dallas has this gift for articulating his creative vision so clearly that you intrinsically understand what needs to be done. He draws out nuanced performances from all of us. Combining his guidance with our own preparation, we, as the cast, have been able to create magical moments on camera. The actors and directors with whom you share a significant amount of time become unforgettable moments. You receive support, and you give support. You become a family, and you grow together. The series has been professionally and personally gratifying, and I'm very thankful for this opportunity that pushes me to be my best. It has profoundly shaped my career trajectory, and I will carry these invaluable experiences forward.

You've been part of both TV series and feature films. How do you approach your acting differently in these two mediums?

Acting for film and television share many similarities and core techniques, yet the mediums have distinct differences and approaches that you have to adapt to. In film, I often join the production with a fully envisioned character already crafted by the director and writers. This requires intense preparation beforehand to internalize their vision while still leaving space for changes. Once I receive the schedule, I map out the character's arc and storyline over the course of the shooting days. Filming is usually concentrated into weeks or months. In TV, your character has the opportunity to develop and grow over the course of multiple seasons. I still come in absolutely prepared, but the process is more dynamic since I have inhabited this persona for months or years. You get the chance to return and revisit a character, experience something new, and peel back layers as their journey evolves from episode to episode. While film provides a concentrated storyline, television allows for subplots and development. I find the key is staying open to both, whether playing a character for months on a series or weeks on a film. Both mediums produce outstanding content. There is a lot of great material out there. I feel fortunate to work in both formats and appreciate what each uniquely brings out in me as an actor. The differences keep me sharp and creative. I enjoy both as I love the challenge of bridging a character from script to screen.

Your training includes working with renowned coaches like Larry Moss and Vincent D'Onofrio. How have these experiences shaped your approach to acting, and what lessons have you carried from these mentors into your roles?

I've had the incredible privilege to study under some of the best acting coaches in the industry. Their wisdom and techniques have stuck with me and profoundly impacted my work, and I apply their fundamental teachings to every role I play whenever possible. Working with Vincent was extraordinary. I witnessed firsthand his brilliant character transformations and camera technique. He taught me the art of finding those subtle nuances for camera work and constantly adjusting the performance through layers and subtext. Making it seem effortless actually required meticulous craft and a lot of practice, analysis, and sleepless nights. Every time we wrapped filming and reviewed footage, it was as if night turned into day - it was acting at the highest level. Larry Moss expanded my mind with his vast knowledge. I could listen to him for hours and still only absorb a fraction of what he imparted. He taught me how to fully inhabit the mindset of a character and keep the audience invested. We spent intensive sessions breaking down scripts, tweaking performances, and learning to avoid traps. He went with you to the furthest reaches, where things suddenly dawned on you. His insights brought my acting to entirely new and creative heights. I have to hand it to the coaches Kristof Konrad and Jean-Louis Rodrigue - they really drilled character work and technical skills into me that are so crucial. We worked extensively on using the body, voice, and breath as instruments. Breaking old habits while adopting new and specific ones. Never showing up unprepared, yet remaining flexible. I learned how to build a character properly from the ground up and hone the techniques to bring a role to life. I'm sincerely grateful because I owe so much to these masters. Each intensive workshop demanded my complete dedication and best work. Thanks to them, I am where I am in my career, trying to deliver the most genuine performances I can every time.

In addition to "The Chosen," you've been involved in various film projects like "The Last Chance" and "The Big Apple." What drew you to these projects, and do you actively seek out diverse roles in your career?

In the beginning, when I started out, I jumped at every role that came my way. I tried to be cast in a theater play, a commercial, or film and TV because I needed the experience and exposure. But as I've grown, I've become a little more strategic. I didn't want to be pigeonholed, but instead, I constantly developed my skills and took on increasingly complex roles. When cast in projects, I think about how to bring my full range of training and life experience to the table. I like to explore new roles that will push me creatively into unfamiliar territory. The more uncomfortable, the better - those roles force me to tackle new challenges. What drew me to all the projects were the multidimensional characters. The uniqueness of the characters and their psychology and physiology interest me. I'm not picky about roles and try to find parts that will stretch my acting chops. This pursuit keeps me engaged and motivated to deliver authentic performances on screen. My goal is to avoid stagnation. I want to carry audiences along as I continue growing as an actor. I remind myself why I started this journey in the first place and try to find ways to play in the league of those actors I admire.

Your performances have been featured in film festivals globally. How does it feel to have your work recognized on such a broad scale, and what do you believe sets your performances apart from others in the industry?

Being featured in film festivals around the world is incredibly humbling. It's heartening to know my work resonates on such a

broad scale. But the truth is, those moments always catch me by surprise. You try to fulfill the director's vision and story needs when developing a character. Even when a performance feels strong, as actors, we are often self-critical, doubt our choices, and are never completely sure. So nominations or awards are always an unexpected honor that tells me I must be doing something right and motivates me to keep growing. I don't think it sets me apart, as there are so many remarkably gifted performers in this industry that I learn from all the time. Watching their work pushes me to refine and expand my creative toolbox continuously. Awards aren't the main reason actors perform, but it is tremendously moving to celebrate your work as it provides new opportunities. The true reward that emerges is the privilege of collaborating with incredible filmmakers to tell universal stories that impact viewers and resonate across borders, cultures, and experiences. If I can bring honesty to a character and move audiences emotionally or in any other way, that is already a profoundly fulfilling creative accomplishment. Though it's certainly wonderful when a performance you poured your soul into gets recognized far and wide.

Tell us about your experience performing in Off-Broadway productions such as "The Defendant Maurice Chevalier" and "Professionals." How does live theater compare to working on film or TV sets, and do you have a preference between stage and screen acting?

Performing in Off-Broadway productions like "The Defendant Maurice Chevalier" and "Professionals," among many others, provided invaluable stage experience. The weeks of intense rehearsals leading up to opening night and the live performances show after show in front of hundreds of audience members were exhilarating. Once the curtains are up, it is only you and your preparation on stage. Compared to film and TV, you have weeks of rehearsals to experiment and refine details. There are no second takes in theatre - it's live for all to see. There are no cuts and no post-production for any edits. In "The Defendant Maurice Chevalier," I portrayed two opposite characters - it was a challenge not to play any stereotypes or clichés to show how different they were. I had to embody each character's distinct psychology and physicalities fully. Precise blocking then ensured seamless transitions between roles. I required vocal training to find ways of projecting to the back rows without straining my voice for the following performances and stage combat training to avoid injuries on one side and deliver the emotional impact it needed to convey. With "Professionals," I learned to handle technical stage elements - hitting light cues, quickly changing costumes, and sustaining focus and energy during set changes and throughout the entire production. It demanded specific flexibility and preparation to handle anything that came my way. It is interesting to observe how performances can evolve or change over the run, and you never know how a show will turn out - feeling great could mean it wasn't great at all, and thinking that it was the worst night could turn out to have been one of the most brilliant and refreshing performances. Both mediums stretch me in different ways. While I would rather lean more toward film and television, it is inevitable and absolutely vital to participate in theater productions as often as possible. You create the stamina and acting chops necessary to build proper character work, and the thrill of live performing and constantly improving a role is tough to beat.

Given the diverse range of projects you've been involved in, how do you approach selecting roles? What criteria do you consider when deciding to take on a new acting opportunity?

When considering roles, I think authenticity is key. I always try to do something new and seek out compelling characters or interesting collaborations with other filmmakers. I am very open to different opportunities, and I enjoy exploring people and their psychology to understand what motivates them to behave the way they do.

Photo Credit: Angie Kremer Photography



Photo Credit: Angie Kremer Photography



Photo Credit: The Chosen



How they feel, talk, walk, and express themselves, and then find ways to bring them to life through myself. It is absolutely exciting to research characters and discover what you have in common with them and what makes them different. You gain perspective and realize the complexities of the human mind and behavior. People share a lot of psychological traits, desires, and tendencies, such as the need for social connection, the pursuit of happiness, or the capacity to feel any emotions at all. However, there are also significant other differences among people. These differences usually come from a combination of unique genetic factors, personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and environmental influences, among many other factors. While humans are alike in some ways, they are also quite diverse in other aspects. I can feel much more comfortable portraying characters when I come from a place of understanding them and showing empathy. At times, it's easier and more relatable, but in other instances, you may have to delve deep, and you might never truly relate. Nevertheless, playing these roles and tackling the challenges is always exciting.

"The Chosen" is available on various streaming platforms. How do you think the accessibility of content on platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime has influenced the entertainment industry, especially for actors and creators?

The rise of streaming platforms has transformed the entertainment industry. They provide many new and fantastic opportunities but also some challenges for actors and creators. Compared to the 80s, 90s, and early 2000s pre-streaming era, the current landscape offers actors access to vastly more projects and roles. More original series and films are being produced. This allows actors to showcase their talents in different genres and potentially gain worldwide exposure by having their work seen globally. Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV+, and others are prestigious platforms where their original shows earn critical acclaim and award recognition. Starring in a Netflix series, Apple TV+, or Amazon Production can elevate an actor's reputation and chances for future work. This is also true for creators, who now have outlets willing to take risks on new or unconventional ideas and stories that may not have been greenlit before. You can say that there is much more creative freedom. However, a possible downside could be that the content quality might suffer slightly, with many new titles being added regularly because of the quantity. The volume of projects could also mean that actors may get typecast because of the tight scheduling and casting time available. And while streaming provides a global stage, the focus on digital distribution has minimized theatrical releases for some

films. But overall, these are exciting times full of new and wonderful opportunities and possibilities that open new doors.

Are there any upcoming projects or roles that you are particularly excited about or that you think will challenge you as an actor in new ways?

I'm thrilled to have very exciting projects on the horizon that will provide new acting challenges. While I can't discuss details just yet, a few roles are coming up that will stretch my abilities in new directions. I cannot wait to unpack, explore them, and break out of my comfort zone again.

Aspiring actors often look up to successful individuals like yourself. What advice would you give to those who are just starting their journey in the entertainment industry, especially in terms of training and navigating the audition process?

When starting out, the focus should be on a lot of training and practice. One challenge is the extensive preparation required beforehand. This includes a thorough script analysis and gathering all necessary information about a character, including the emotional state, motivations, intentions, needs, fears, flaws, and many more, all without passing judgment. Then, integrate these elements into the character, avoid playing clichés or stereotypes, and instead find unique traits. The next level would be listening and reacting to your acting partners and incorporating their performances in a scene while staying true to your character and being able to adjust. Finding coaches, mentors, and suitable classes and workshops would be very helpful for polishing these skills. You want to try to avoid acting only when auditions are coming in because then you are never really ready and end up winging it somehow. What I used to do was, when there weren't any auditions, I would find audition sides of projects that had already been cast and filmed. I would then prepare those sides for a mock audition and sometimes even compare my performance to the actual casting. This became like a muscle memory exercise, and I was able to carry different characters with me in my back pocket. In addition, there are technical aspects to consider, especially for auditions. It is essential to adapt to a project's genre, style, and tone. Knowing your lines inside out allows you to be free and fresh in your performance. Also, facing rejections is normal and necessary for growth. Allowing yourself to fail is part of the process. So are taking risks and getting up again when things don't work out; don't get discouraged. And if you are not in class, on stage, or in front of the camera, the few minutes in the audition room are the ultimate opportunity to act.

**AUSTIN BUTLER
JODIE COMER
AND TOM HARDY**

THE BIKERIDERS

IN CINEMAS SOON



LEGACIES DON'T COME EASY

Micheaux

In the tapestry of Hollywood, where versatile talent shines, actress Nicki Micheaux has graced the screen in numerous notable roles, from "Lincoln Heights" to "Animal Kingdom." However, now she's taken a bold step into new territory, wielding the pen and camera to write and direct her first feature film, "Summer of Violence." This remarkable endeavor, lauded as one of BET's Top 10 ABFF Films, recently illuminated the 2023 ESSENCE Festival of Culture® Festival's inaugural film festival.

Micheaux's directorial debut is nothing short of profound—a stirring coming-of-age narrative that not only marks her transition from actress to director but also showcases her talents as a skilled storyteller. Her name is synonymous with quality, given her standout roles in the acclaimed television series "Lincoln Heights." However, with "Summer of Violence," Micheaux dons a dual hat, both helming the film and crafting its captivating script.

Micheaux's journey to the director's chair wasn't devoid of learning and evolution. While honing her craft, she delved into the esteemed Sundance Collab classes, where she nurtured her writing skills. Her thirst for knowledge and growth further led her to the Disney Directing Program from 2010-2012, an experience she attributes to equipping her with the know-how needed to venture into the world of feature filmmaking.

In the tapestry of "Summer of Violence," a constellation of distinguished actors shines brightly. The likes of Kasey Inez ("The Sex Lives of College Girls"), Jahking Guillory ("The Chi"), Pedro Correa ("The Middle"), Maduhika Krishnan ("F.U. Woody Allen"), and Damon Gupton ("Black Lightning") contribute their remarkable talents to breathe life into this poignant narrative.

Set against the backdrop of 1993, "Summer of Violence" emerges as a coming-of-age tale that explores love amidst a tumultuous period. The story revolves around Naomi (played by Kasey Inez), a college graduate whose decision to forgo law school in favor of her passion for poetry sparks a conflict with her father. Disowned and surrounded by violence, Naomi finds her voice through her verses, using poetry to resist the grip of violence. In this narrative, Frank (Jahking Guillory) portrays an artist whose tenuous ties to the streets intersect with Naomi's journey. The film doesn't merely unfold; it lifts the veil on Black love, joy, and familial bonds, underscoring the tenacity of hope even in the bleakest times.

Micheaux's illustrious career brims with a plethora of remarkable performances. One of her standout roles includes her portrayal of Jenn Sutton in the award-winning television series "Lincoln Heights" on ABC Family. Fueled by her versatility and fervor, she's embarked on an inspiring partnership with bestselling author and global investor, Johnny Wimbrey. Together, they've birthed Three60 Films, a visionary media company with a mission to share authentic stories that echo the experiences of women and people of color.

In "Summer of Violence," Nicki Micheaux not only introduces herself as a director but also elevates her journey from actress to storyteller, leaving an indelible mark on the cinematic landscape. As she continues to evolve and shape narratives that resonate, Micheaux's foray into directing promises a future illuminated with even more tales of depth, emotion, and authenticity.

FilmCentral Magazine recently secured an exclusive tête-à-tête with the multifaceted Nicki Micheaux, delving into her enthralling journey through the labyrinth of the entertainment industry. Here's what went down:

Can you share your journey from being an accomplished actress to transitioning into writing and directing your first feature film, "Summer of Violence"?

This was a story I had wanted to tell for a long time. At the beginning of my career, I felt I had to focus on acting. But over time, the call to write this story got louder. Finally, I answered that call. It took many years to get on that set, finally. I took writing classes. I studied directing and even got the chance to participate in the ABC Disney Directing program. I studied producing at UCLA, all while still working as an actor. It was thrilling. When the chance finally came to get the funding, I felt so prepared to do this film.





What inspired you to delve into the world of writing and directing?

Quite simply, the shortage of material for Black women. I didn't want to complain; I kept thinking, "What can I do about this?". I always knew I would write and direct. It was just a matter of time. I really want to create the kinds of roles and stories that I'd like to work on.

"Summer of Violence" has been receiving recognition and accolades. How does it feel to see your work being appreciated by audiences and the industry?

I think this is every artist's dream! At least it's been mine. Thrilled that they liked the film.

As a director and writer, what themes or messages did you aim to convey through "Summer of Violence," and how did you incorporate them into the film?

It's really a story about the ripple effects of violence on everyone. Even if you're not a victim, you can escape the impact of violence.

Can you tell us about your experience studying in Sundance Collab classes and participating in the Disney Directing Program and how those experiences influenced your directorial approach in this film?

Yes, in the Sundance collab, I worked on the script, which helped me hone in on the story. Really focus on the characters and dive deep into them. They also taught me how to write fast (laughs). With the Disney program, I was shadowing top veteran directors. I got to see every aspect of filmmaking. That and my years of working as an actor in front of the camera prepared me for being on set.

As a debut director, what were some challenges you faced during the filmmaking process, and how did you overcome them?

Time and money were always short. Being clear about what I wanted. Picking which battle was worth fighting for. Which shot was a Must-Get? Being clear about what I could compromise on and couldn't is how I got through every day.

"Summer of Violence" is described as a profoundly moving coming-of-age narrative. What drew you to this particular story, and what do you hope audiences take away from watching the film?

I wanted to tell a story about a young black woman trying to find herself. I wanted the audience to empathize with women's struggles and the trauma that often comes with coming of age.

How did your background in acting and producing inform your directorial style, and did it present any unique advantages during the filmmaking journey?

Ha yes! I think being an actress was like my secret weapon. In many ways, I felt so comfortable on set and producing. I'm used to all the moving parts. At least I was comfortable enough to work my way through new things. I was definitely not intimidated by the process. I felt very ready.

Now that "Summer of Violence" is being showcased to audiences, what are your future aspirations in the realm of writing and directing? Do you plan to continue exploring this side of your career?

Absolutely! I still want to tell big stories. I write constantly and honestly can't wait to get back behind the camera. Although next time, I think I'll jump in front of the camera as well.



MOVIE REVIEW: THE MARVELS

"The Marvels," the highly-anticipated sequel to "Captain Marvel," takes audiences on a journey through the cosmic realms of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). While the film promises a dazzling adventure with powerful heroes and intergalactic conflicts, its ambitious attempt to weave multiple storylines results in a cosmic mishmash that struggles to find a cohesive narrative thread.

The plot unfolds as Carol Danvers (Brie Larson), also known as Captain Marvel, inadvertently becomes the catalyst for a civil war among the Kree, a powerful alien race led by Dar-Benn (Zawe Ashton). The introduction of the Quantum Bands becomes a central point of contention, bringing Ms. Marvel (Iman Vellani) and Captain Monica Rambeau (Teyonah Parris) into the cosmic fray. As the trio embarks on an investigation into a mysterious wormhole, their destinies become intertwined, leading to a power-swapping predicament that forces them to collaborate in order to prevent a full-blown intergalactic crisis.

One of the glaring issues with "The Marvels" is its lack of clarity and focus. The film attempts to integrate various storylines from the wider MCU, the Ms. Marvel series, and the Captain Marvel sequel, resulting in a narrative that feels convoluted and difficult to follow. The Kree, portrayed as generic antagonists, lack depth and fail to evoke any meaningful investment from the audience. Their role in the story is reduced to that of generic extraterrestrial troublemakers, devoid of the intricate lore and history established in previous MCU entries.

The film's primary villain, Dar-Benn, suffers from underdevelopment and a lack of charisma, making her one of the weakest antagonists in the MCU. The absence of a compelling backstory and motivations diminishes the impact of her character, leaving audiences indifferent to her fate.

Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson), once a formidable and enigmatic presence in the MCU, is disappointingly reduced to a caricature of his former self, primarily serving as comedic relief. The inconsistency in his character portrayal, especially when compared to his recent appearances in the MCU, raises questions about the film's adherence to the established narrative continuity.

Carol Danvers, the central protagonist, undergoes minimal growth or development since her introduction in the first film. Her lack of relatable traits and a one-dimensional superhero persona make it challenging for audiences to emotionally invest in her journey. Teyonah Parris's portrayal of Rambeau adds little to the overall narrative, relegating her to a secondary role that fails to capitalize on the character's potential depth.

In contrast, Kamala Khan emerges as a standout character, injecting much-needed charm, relatability, and humour into the storyline. Her childlike enthusiasm and genuine passion for superheroism become a refreshing focal point, offering a more engaging perspective for viewers.

Despite the film's shortcomings, "The Marvels" delivers visually stunning and action-packed sequences. The special effects, choreography, and cinematography contribute to the film's aesthetic appeal, providing moments of spectacle that momentarily distract from its underlying issues.

The film's attempt at humour, a hallmark of the MCU, falls flat in many instances. Jokes become repetitive, contributing to the sense of 'superhero fatigue' that has become an occasional pitfall in the franchise. The editing and pacing further compound these issues, resulting in a viewing experience that feels disjointed and disconnected.

While "The Marvels" excels in flashy action sequences, these moments are overshadowed by the film's fundamental flaws. The attempt to blend disparate storylines and the lack of coherent direction make it one of the less memorable entries in the MCU.

In conclusion, "The Marvels" struggles to find its footing amidst an ambitious blend of storylines. The lack of clarity, weak character development, and uninspiring villain dilute its potential impact. While it offers visual spectacle and moments of entertainment, it falls short of achieving the narrative cohesion and emotional resonance expected from a Marvel blockbuster.

Rating: 2/5 Stars



LIAM NEESON RETRIBUTION

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MOVIE REVIEW: RETRIBUTION

In the world of action thrillers, Liam Neeson has carved a niche for himself as a reliable and commanding presence. His latest venture, "Retribution," promises a gripping hostage drama that unfolds within the confines of a car, pushing the boundaries of tension and suspense. As audiences buckle up for this high-stakes ride, Neeson's portrayal of Matt Turner, a dedicated bank executive thrust into a life-altering situation, takes center stage.

The storyline of "Retribution" revolves around Matt Turner, a committed professional whose dedication to his work eclipses his familial ties. The narrative takes a harrowing turn when Matt receives an ominous call while driving his children to school, unraveling a plot where a bomb is strategically placed beneath each car seat. As the anonymous caller coerces Matt into following their commands, the film introduces a premise that echoes the tension of the classic "Speed" but opts for a more confined and claustrophobic setting.

Liam Neeson, known for his particular set of skills in the action thriller genre, delivers a formidable performance as Matt Turner. Neeson's seasoned presence breathes life into the character, making Matt's plight more tangible and compelling. While Matt may lack the overtly heroic qualities of some of Neeson's iconic roles, the actor's charisma elevates the film, making it a captivating watch.

The supporting cast, featuring Embeth Davidtz as Matt's wife, Lilly Aspell as the daughter, and Jack Champion as the rebellious son, delivers solid performances that complement the narrative. However, the true enigma lies in the unseen antagonist, whose mysterious voice keeps the audience in suspense, questioning the true nature of Neeson's character.

"Retribution" excels in crafting an action-packed hostage drama within the confines of a car, maintaining relentless tension. The film's pacing is commendable, offering a concise runtime that keeps viewers engaged. While the script could benefit from a bit more depth, the screenplay finds support in Flavio Labiano's impressive camerawork and Steven Mirkovich's sharp editing.

Set in Germany but spoken in English, the absence of subtitles during German-speaking portions may pose a challenge for some viewers seeking additional context. The film introduces a peculiar dynamic with the character of the Interpol female police boss, who holds crucial information yet remains resistant to Matt's pleas for assistance. Additionally, a recurring issue is the persistent refusal of characters to heed Matt's urgent appeals, creating moments of frustration for both the character and the audience.

While "Retribution" may not reinvent the action thriller genre, it offers a riveting and compact cinematic experience. The film's masterful twist with the revelation of the antagonist and its visually impressive explosions add cinematic flair. Despite some narrative gaps, the film's editing and brisk pacing maintain non-stop suspense.

For fans of Liam Neeson, "Retribution" is a must-watch journey that showcases the actor's enduring prowess, even if it doesn't break new ground. The film's tight 90-minute runtime ensures a brisk and electrifying ride, making it a solid addition to Neeson's action-packed filmography. As Neeson's charisma continues to dominate the screen, "Retribution" stands as a testament to his unwavering ability to keep audiences on the edge of their seats.

Rating: 2.5/5 Stars

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