

# Rza, Misty Copeland, Yvonne Orji & More At Urbanworld Film Festival 2023 (Photos)



NEW YORK, NEW YORK – NOVEMBER 03: (L-R) RZA, Karen McMullen and Gerald Barclay attend the 2023 Urbanworld Film Festival – Day 3 at AMC 34th Street on November 03, 2023 in New York City. (Photo by Dominik Bindl/Getty Images)

Rza, Misty Copeland, Yvonne Orji, and more appeared at the 2023 Urbanworld Film Festival. The Wu-Tang Clan member was the ambassador for the festival and the co-director of *A Wu-Tang Experience: Live From Red Rocks Amphitheatre* with Gerald Barclay. The event is on day three of the five-day event. Various industry people have attended, including Nelson George, Misty Copeland, and Leyla Fayyaz, the producers of the film *Flower*. Benny Boom, who directed *A Love Letter To Hip-Hop*, also attended the festival in New York City. Orji made her debut as a director with the feature *JAMAAL*. dream hampton's *Freshwater* and the experimental film *Paradise* from

Terrace Martin & Alex Isley will also be presented at the festival. *American Fiction* director Cord Jefferson received the Visionary Award on opening night. Gina Prince-Bythewood and Reggie Rock Bythewood attended the screening and Q&A for *Genius: MLK/X*, which they executive-produced. The festival is in its 27th year and is the nation's largest multicultural competitive film festival. This year, the festival screened 73 official selections, 7 spotlight screenings, 3 spotlight conversations, and featured 5 Urbanworld Innovation sessions and 4 original screenplay finalists. The winners have been announced.



American Fiction director Cord Jefferson accepts the Visionary Award





American Fiction Opening Night



Urbanworld Founder Stacy Spikes (left) joins Gano Grills, The RZA, Thembisa Mshaka, and Gerald Barclay for a quick photo opp

following the 'Wu-Tang Experience' Q&A





Leyla Fayyaz, Nelson George, and Misty Copeland



Benny Boom and Rza



NEW YORK, NEW YORK – NOVEMBER 03: (L-R) Marija Juliette Abney, Derrick A. King, and Yvonne Orji attend the 2023 Urbanworld Film Festival – Day 3 at AMC 34th Street on November 03, 2023, in New York City. (Photo by Dominik Bindl/Getty Images)



Screening Of A Love Letter To Hip Hop





The team from Maxine's Baby, Erick Sasso (producer), Asante White (producer), Gelila Bekele (director), Jasmine K. White (producer), Armani Ortiz (director), and Karen McMullen (Urbanworld Festival Director)



Retired Astronaut Leland Melvin (Executive Producer, 'The Space Race')



NEW YORK, NEW YORK – NOVEMBER 04: (L-R) Raphael Jackson Jr., Gina Prince-Bythewood, Reggie Rock Bythewood, and Damione Macedon attend day 4 of the 2023 Urbanworld Film Festival at AMC 34th Street on November 04, 2023 in New York City. (Photo by John Nacion/Getty Images)

## **2023 Winners**

**BEST NARRATIVE FEATURE (U.S.)** – Frybread Face and Me –  
Directed by Billy Luther

THE JURY:

Darcy Heusel – VP of Audience Engagement and Impact, NEON

Efuru Flowers – Founder and CEO, Flourishing Films

Sue Ellen Chitnuya – Filmmaker and Academy Member

**BEST NARRATIVE FEATURE (WORLD)** – Sira – Directed by Apolline Traoré

Honorable Mention: Inky Pinky Ponky – Directed by Damon



Fepulea'i and Ramon TeWake

THE JURY:

Darcy Heusel – VP of Audience Engagement and Impact, NEON

Efuru Flowers – Founder and CEO, Flourishing Films

Sue Ellen Chitnuya – Filmmaker and Academy Member

**BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE** – Brief Tender Light – Directed by Arthur Musah; Presented by ESPN Films

THE JURY:

Jackie Glover – Emmy-Winning Executive Producer

Leslie Fields-Cruz – Executive Director, Black Public Media

Sarah Eshaghian – Coordinator, HBO

**BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT** – Slice – Directed by Zaire Love

Honorable Mention – Things Long Left Unsaid – Directed by Antonia Thornton

THE JURY:

Jackie Glover – Executive Producer

Leslie Fields-Cruz – Executive Director, Black Public Media

Sarah Eshaghian – Coordinator, HBO

**BEST YOUNG CREATOR** – The Old Young Crow – Directed by Liam LoPinto

Honorable Mention – Shallots and Garlic – Directed by Andrea Nirmala Widjajanto

Presented by The Walt Disney Studios

THE JURY:

Ramona Wright – Founder and CEO, WrightOne Media Group

Phillip Domfeh – Senior Manager, Disney+ Launchpad

Julian Newman – Founder and CEO, Culture Creative

Will Schnable – Programs Manager Equity and Inclusion, Warner Bros. Discovery

**BEST NARRATIVE SHORT (U.S.)** – Spaceship – Directed by Jorge G. Camarena

Honorable Mention – Jerome – Directed by Gianfranco Fernández-Ruiz; Death and Ramen – Directed by Tiger Ji

THE JURY:

Amanda Ross – Director, TV Programming DEI, NBCUniversal

Kecia Cole – Director, Fiction, BRIC

Kierna Mayo – Writer, Editor, and Media Executive

Marquis Daisy – Producer, ESPN Films

**BEST NARRATIVE SHORT (WORLD)** – Yellow – Directed by Elham Ehsas

THE JURY:

Tamara McCaw – Chief Civic Program Officer, The Shed

Ivonne Cotorruelo – Film Programmer

Amy Andrieux – Executive Director, Chief Curator, Mocada

**BEST ANIMATION SHORT** – Tomato Kitchen – Directory by Junyi Xiao

Honorable Mention – Lil Ruby – Directed by Bartek Kik

THE JURY:

Ramona Wright – Founder and CEO, WrightOne Media Group

Phillip Domfeh – Senior Manager, Disney+ Launchpad

Julian Newman – Founder and CEO, Culture Creative

Will Schnable – Programs Manager Equity and Inclusion, Warner Bros. Discovery

**BEST EXPERIMENTAL FILM** – Quiet As It's Kept – Directed by Ja'Tovia M. Gary

THE JURY:

Tamara McCaw – Chief Civic Program Officer, The Shed

Ivonne Cotorruelo – Film Programmer

Amy Andrieux – Executive Director, Chief Curator, Mocada

**BEST SCREENPLAY** – Long Live AJ – Written by Marvin Van Buren

Honorable Mention – The Washroom – Written by Elie El Choufany and Omar Al Dakheel

THE JURY:

Tracey Moore – EP, The Spirited Actor Podcast (iHeart Radio); Celebrity Acting Coach

Sonja Perryman – Writer, Producer, Actress

Joshua Sanchez – Screenwriter + Member of Writers Guild of America, East

Jenny Mayer – Screenwriter, Playwright + Member of Writers Guild of America, East

**URBANWORLD AUDIENCE AWARD BEST SHORT** – Homing – Directed by Ricardo Varona

**URBANWORLD AUDIENCE AWARD BEST FEATURE** – Brief Tender Light



– Directed by Arthur Musah

**NYWIFT AWARD for BEST FEMALE DIRECTOR, US NARRATIVE FEATURE**

Sira – Directed by Apolline Traoré

Presented by New York Women In Film & Television

**NYWIFT AWARD for BEST FEMALE DIRECTOR, US NARRATIVE SHORT**

Lunch Box – Directed by Anne Hu

Reunion – Directed by Zainab Jah

Presented by New York Women In Film & Television

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## **Surviving R. Kelly: The Impact To Air On Lifetime**

[youtube id="tIsvUvVgC0Q"]*Surviving R. Kelly* was one of the most talked about topics in January when it reached more than 26 million viewers. There had never been such a serious public discussion about sexual abuse in the music industry. The documentary emerged in the midst of the #metoo Movement and was also supported by the #MuteRKelly activists who successfully campaigned to have Kelly dropped from his record label. Phonecalls to sexual abuse hotlines went up and more women came forward with more abuse allegations against the singer. Kelly was indicted on 10 counts of aggravated sexual assault and spent a few nights in jail for failure to pay child support.Â

Soledad O'Brien will host *Surviving R. Kelly: The Impact*.

Journalists, psychologists, non-profit organizations and legal experts will talk about the aftermath of the documentary. Kelly's interview with Gayle King will be analyzed as well as the young women who still live with him.Â

*Surviving R.Kelly* won the 2019 LA Press Club President's Award for Impact on Media. dream hampton, who is one of the executive producers, was recognized as one of Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People.Â

*Surviving R. Kelly: The Impact* will air on Lifetime Saturday, May 4th at 10 PM ET.Â

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## Media Questions Of The Week



1. Isn't it cool that Janelle Monae is a Covergirl now?



2. Why is Zoe Saldana being cast to play Nina Simone when there are so many better choices like Aisha Hinds, Adepero Oduye and Viola Davis? And how can they make this movie without consulting Simone's estate?



3. Did Jay Electronica and

stic.man ghostwrite for  
Nas?



4. Is Azealia Banks' cover for Dazed and Confused really that controversial where it needs to be banned in 7 countries?

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## Versus Hip Hop On Trial Debate

[youtube]r3-7Y0xG89Q[/youtube]

A cast of thinkers, rappers, poets and academics assembled in London on June 26th at the Barbican for the Intelligence Squared and Google+ debate titled, 'Hip-Hop on Trial: Hip-Hop Doesn't Enhance Society, It Degrades it.' The debate was streamed live and moderated by Jemima Khan who took questions from online posters. The problem with all of these 'Hip-Hop is bad, dead or going to the dogs' debates is that they are always centered around a very slim segment of corporatized hip-hop. So what happens is that people are debating the merits of hip-hop based on a small section of music instead of "Is The Corporation Promoting A Certain Kind Of Hip-Hop And Why." It is especially shameful that Versus would promote this kind of discourse in 2012 when we live in a digital age where people are grabbing all kinds of music from everywhere. And this kind of focus keeps hip-hop in a subjugated place when it is still empowering people all around the world. How can the



most popular art form of the past 30 years not function at all as folk music because of the music business establishment? These type of “intellectual” notions are the reason why Ice-T just released *Something From Nothing: The Art Of Rap*. No matter how ridiculous Lil’ Wayne may look hip-hop still saved his life and is doing the same for several kids around the globe who will never reach his commercial status. It is also important for hip-hop fans to understand that hip-hop is the only popular art form that Blacks still dominate hence the singularity of Eminem. So to say that the music is “dead” destructive” etc. is tantamount to racism because you are blaming people of color creatives for society’s problems. The nasty things that some rappers say may not be pleasant to hear but it’s important that society hear their outsider status because it tells us what needs to improve. These kind of propaganda attacks disguised as “debates” totally ignore the fact people on this very panel like Q-Tip, KRS-One and The Roots defy all of these static ideas about hip-hop.