



For Immediate Release

AMERICAN BLACK FILM FESTIVAL HONORS ANNOUNCES 2023 HONOREES

**Emmy® Award-Winning Producer, Director and Actor Kerry Washington;
Two-Time Emmy Award-Winning Actor Courtney B. Vance;
Oscar® Nominee Charles D. King and
Grammy-Nominated Artist and Actor Janelle Monáe**

Classic Cinema Award Honoree: *Eve's Bayou*

LOS ANGELES – (February 13, 2023) –The 5th American Black Film Festival (ABFF) Honors today announced the honorees of its annual awards ceremony that recognize excellence in the motion picture and television industry. The awards and recipients are: **Excellence in the Arts Award (Female)** - Emmy-winning SAG and Golden Globe-nominated actor, director and producer **Kerry Washington** (*Little Fires Everywhere, Scandal*); **Excellence in the Arts Award (Male)** - two-time Emmy Award-winner **Courtney B. Vance** (*People vs. OJ Simpson: American Crime Story, 61st Street*); **Industry Leadership Award**, MACRO Founder and CEO **Charles D. King**; and **Renaissance Award** - eight-time GRAMMY nominated artist, producer and actor **Janelle Monáe** (*Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery, Hidden Figures*). **ABFF Honors 2023 Classic Cinema Award** recipient is the 1997 drama *Eve's Bayou* celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Presented by **ABFF Ventures**, **2023 ABFF Honors** will take place on Sunday, March 5 hosted by Emmy-nominated writer, actor and comedian **Deon Cole** (*black-ish, Charleen's Boy*). Guests at the intimate, non-televised dinner include ABFF honorees and festival partners.

“This year’s ABFF Honorees, **Courtney, Kerry, Janelle** and **Charles** are unquestionably amongst the best in our industry and it brings us a great deal of pleasure to illuminate their stellar careers said, **Jeff Friday**, **ABFF Ventures founder and CEO**. “*Kasi Lemmon’s Eve’s Bayou* is a cinematic gem that deserves this recognition in its 25th anniversary year.

Excellence in the Arts (Female) honoree **Kerry Washington** has received high acclaim for her work in film, television, theater, digital media, advocacy and beyond. In her role as crisis manager Olivia Pope on the hit ABC drama *Scandal*, Kerry is known for breaking barriers as the first Black woman since 1974 to headline a network TV drama. She earned two Emmy nominations, a Golden Globe nomination, a SAG nomination, and two NAACP Image Awards for her role on the Peabody Award-winning series. Other accolades, include nominations for the SAG Awards, Golden Globes, Independent Spirit Awards, People's Choice Awards, MTV Movie Awards, and wins for the Primetime Emmy Awards, NAACP Image Awards, BET Awards, and Teen Choice Awards. Her film credits include: *The Prom*, *Cars 3*, *Django Unchained*, *Ray*, *The Last King of Scotland*, *Save the Last Dance*, *Lift*, *For Colored Girls*, *Night Catches Us*, *Peeples*, *The Details*, *Mother and Child*, *Life is Hot in Cracktown*, *Lakeview Terrace*, *Miracle at St. Anna*, *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver*, *I Think I Love My Wife*, *The Dead Girl*, *Fantastic Four*, *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*, and *Our Song*. Projects from her Simpson Street production company include HBO's Emmy, Critics' Choice, and Writers Guild Award-nominated *Confirmation*, starring Kerry as Anita Hill. In 2020 the company released the Emmy-nominated series *Little Fires Everywhere* with Hulu. Washington starred alongside Reese Witherspoon and earned Emmy and SAG nominations for her performance. Other projects include *Five Points*, *American Son*, and the Emmy award-winning second edition of the ABC special *Live in Front of a Studio Audience* which re-imagined the classic sitcoms *All in the Family* and *Good Times*. Washington can most recently be seen in Netflix's *The School for Good and Evil*. Next Kerry can be seen starring in *Unprisoned*, a comedy series for which she also serves as an executive producer and film, *Shadow Force*, which she both stars in and executive produces.

Excellence in the Arts (Male) honoree **Courtney B. Vance** is a Harvard scholar and Yale School of Drama-trained actor whose extraordinary career showcases his passion, talent, and intellect, from the theater to the silver screen. His stunning portrayal of Johnnie Cochran in *The People vs. OJ Simpson: American Crime Story* earned him Emmy, Critics Choice, and NAACP Image awards, as well as SAG and Golden Globe nominations. His role in HBO's critically acclaimed drama horror series *Lovecraft Country*, earned him an Emmy Award for Outstanding Guest Actor Drama Series and a Hollywood Critics Association nomination. He also starred in *Genius: Aretha* in which he portrays Aretha Franklin's father, earning him an NAACP Image Award, with nominations from the Hollywood Critics Association and Critics Choice Awards. Other projects include, AMC Network's *61st Street*, *Heist 88*, a feature film in which he stars and is under Bassett/Vance Productions, the production company he co-founded with his wife Angela Bassett, Universal/Will Packer romantic drama *The Photograph* with Issa Rae and LaKeith Stanfield and Netflix Original *Uncorked* with Niecy Nash and Mamoudou Athie. For his stage work, Courtney received Tony Award nominations for *Fences* and his starring role in *Six Degrees of Separation*. He won a Tony Award for his stellar performance in *Lucky Guy*. Additionally, Courtney earned a GRAMMY nomination for his narration of *Accessory to War*.

In his role as founder and CEO of MACRO a multi-platform media company representing the voice and perspectives of Black, indigenous and people of color, **Industry Leadership Award** honoree and Oscar nominee **Charles D. King** casts the company's overall vision, mission and strategic goals for its business verticals including MACRO Film Studios, MACRO Television Studios, M88, UNCMNN and MaC Venture Capital. Formerly a partner/senior agent at William Morris Endeavor, Charles was the first-ever Black partner in the company's 100+ year history and the first Black partner at any major talent agency. Known industrywide for his innovative deal-making and strategic long-horizon thinking, his list of notable clients

spans every sector of the entertainment industry. Charles also made history in 2021 when with the Best Picture Oscar nomination for the film *Judas and the Black Messiah* he was, along with Ryan Coogler and Shaka King, part of an unprecedented all-Black team of nominated producers for an Academy Award. The company's film projects have garnered fifteen Oscar nominations and three wins. He is also a dedicated philanthropist, member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Science and the Television Academy. King is a graduate of Vanderbilt University and Howard University School of Law.

Janelle Monáe is an eight-time GRAMMY-nominated singer, songwriter, producer, author, actor and **ABFF Honors' 2023 Renaissance Award** honoree. She is known worldwide for her inimitable style and visionary sound, which celebrates the spectrum of identity. Monáe's album *Dirty Computer* was nominated for two Grammy awards in the categories of 'Album of the Year' and 'Best Music Video'. Janelle recently announced the release of the first single since her Grammy nominated album titled, "Float," which will debut on February 16. She was recently honored as Critics Choice's 2023 SeeHer Award honoree for her work on-screen and off. Last fall, The Trevor Project honored her as their Suicide Prevention Advocate of the Year, she serves as a co-chair to Michelle Obama's When We All Vote, and has established her own initiative, Fem the Future, which aims to create opportunities for young creatives. Her first novel, *The Memory Librarian: And Other Stories from Dirty Computer*, which is a collaborative effort between Janelle and other writers, debuted on the *New York Times* Best-Seller List. As an actor, she recently starred in Netflix's *Knives Out* sequel, *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* alongside Daniel Craig, Kate Hudson, Kathryn Hahn, and Leslie Odom Jr. Other acting credits include Lionsgate's *Antebellum*, Focus Feature's biopic film *Harriet*, Disney's *Lady and the Tramp*, the Academy Award-nominated *Hidden Figures* and Academy Award-winner *Moonlight*.

ABFF Honors' Classic Cinema Award pays tribute to critically acclaimed Trimark Pictures' *Eve's Bayou*, written and directed by **Kasi Lemmons** (*I Wanna Dance with Somebody*) in her directorial debut and produced by **Caldecot Chubb** and **Samuel L. Jackson**. The story is told through the eyes of 10-year-old Eve Batiste over the course of a long, hot summer in Louisiana as she discovers her family existence is merely a façade. The drama stars **Samuel L. Jackson** (*Pulp Fiction*, *Die Hard with a Vengeance*), **Jurnee Smollett** (*Lovecraft Country*) in the lead role, **Lynn Whitfield** (*Greenleaf*) and **Meagan Good** (*Harlem*) in her first film role. Additional cast members include **Debbi Morgan** (*Merry Little Christmas*), **Vondie Curtis-Hall** (*Harriet*), **Roger Guenveur Smith** (*Do the Right Thing*) and the late **Diahann Carroll** (*Claudine*). The film won the Film Independent Spirit Award for Best First Feature and received seven NAACP Image Award nominations, including Best Picture. *Eve's Bayou* was recently selected for preservation in the Library of Congress' National Film Registry.

ABFF Honors stems from the American Black Film Festival. It is a unique awards event as there are no winners or losers. Acclaimed artists are honored alongside rising stars, creating a spirit of mutual appreciation amongst multigenerational talent in Hollywood. The first ABFF Honors was held in 2016, honoring Black artists who have made significant contributions to American entertainment through their work as well as those who champion diversity and inclusion in Hollywood.

Now in its fifth year, the **ABFF Honors'** list of celebrated award recipients include, **Denzel Washington**, **Ava DuVernay**, **Regina King**, **Tiffany Haddish**, **Ryan Coogler**, **Don Cheadle**, **Will Packer**, **Queen Latifah**, **Lena Waithe**, **Terrence Howard**, **F. Gary Gray**, **Billy Dee Williams**, **Issa Rae**, **Omari Hardwick**, **Louis**

Gossett, Jr., the late **Diahann Carroll** and the cast of classic films and television shows including ***Martin***, ***The Wire***, ***Hollywood Shuffle*** and ***Love Jones***.

ABFF Honors is executive produced by **Nicole and Jeff Friday** (ABFF Ventures) in association with **Rikki Hughes** (Magic Lemonade) and **de Passe Jones Entertainment**.

2023 **ABFF Honors** sponsors to date include Cadillac, Amazon Studios (Presenting), Sony Pictures Entertainment, Comcast NBCUniversal, Andscape (Supporting). For more information about **ABFF Honors** visit www.abffhonors.com. Follow on @ABFF on Twitter and @American Black Film Festival on Instagram and Facebook.

About ABFF Ventures LLC

ABFF Honors is a property of ABFF Ventures LLC, an entertainment company specializing in the production of live events and platforms that celebrate Black culture and achievement. The company's flagship property, the American Black Film Festival (ABFF), founded by Jeff Friday in 1997, is the leading festival of its kind showcasing Black storytelling. Dedicated to the belief that diverse artists deserve the same opportunities as their mainstream counterparts, Friday conceived the festival as a vehicle to strengthen the Black entertainment community by fostering resource sharing, education and artistic collaboration. Having premiered the work and encouraged the careers of many of today's most successful filmmakers and actors, the ABFF has become the standard-bearer of excellence for Black American creativity. Embarking upon its 27th year, the festival has become a key proponent of diversity in Hollywood, providing a platform for emerging Black artists. For more information visit, www.abff.com

Media Contact:

Chelsye J. Burrows
ABFF Ventures LLC
chelsye@abffventures.com

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