

**Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival**  
**continues its programming with acclaimed talents Bethann Hardison, Courtney B. Vance,**  
**Debbie Allen, Dwayne Wade, Issa Rae, Jasmine Crockett, Jennifer Hudson, Joy Reid, Keith**  
**David, Tracee Ellis Ross, and Reverend Al Sharpton as the festival continues celebrating the**  
**transformative Power of Joy!**

**Magic City: An American Fantasy - the upcoming Starz Docuseries will take center stage**

**ESPN 30 for 30 returns as the Presenting Sponsor, and New York Magazine, The Cut, debuts**  
**as the Official Media Partner**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Martha's Vineyard, MA – July 10, 2025** – The Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival (MVAAFF) proudly announces its continued lineup of dynamic programming for the 23rd annual celebration, taking place August 1–9, 2025.

On Tuesday, **August 5**, at 3:00 pm, MVAAFF will host an extraordinary panel featuring award-winning actor, producer, and author **Courtney B. Vance**, the incomparable **Keith David**, **Lionel Boyce**, and Lynnette Ramirez, President of Bassett Vance Productions. Together, they will present The Black Storytellers Panel, a compelling discussion in collaboration with the **Effie LIONS Foundation**, **FX**, and **Bassett Vance Productions**. This intimate and thought-provoking conversation, moderated by The Cut's Deputy Culture Editor **Brooke Marine**, will take place in the Vineyard Lounge. Attendees will get a behind-the-scenes understanding of the content creation process, maintaining cultural resonance and relatability in a challenging landscape, and continuing to build collaborative and profitable businesses in a less-is-more resources environment.

The event follows the recent launch of the **Effie LIONS Foundation**, a global nonprofit organization dedicated to building a more creative and effective marketing industry open to everyone. In partnership with global educational institutions and brands, the Foundation provides access, training, and hands-on experience to help college students excel in today's rapidly evolving marketing industry.

Later that evening, at 5:00 pm, **Warner Bros. Television Group** presents a very special edition of *A Color of Conversation*, featuring **Jennifer Hudson**, the multi-talented EGOT winner and host of "The Jennifer Hudson Show." Hudson returns to MVAAFF after her powerful 2021 appearance promoting *RESPECT*. Best known for her Academy Award-winning role in *Dreamgirls*, Hudson has also earned a Grammy, Golden Globe, BAFTA, SAG Award, and an Emmy. Her Broadway debut in *The Color Purple* further solidified her status as a generational talent. This conversation will celebrate Hudson's artistry, resilience, and impact on culture.

At 7:00 PM, fashion revolutionary **Bethann Hardison** will sit with The Cut's editor-in-chief **Lindsay Peoples** for a *Color of Conversation* followed by a screening of *Invisible Beauty*. The essential memoir of Hardison, *Invisible Beauty* shines a light on one of the industry's most influential icons who, as a pioneering Black model, modeling agent and entrepreneur, has pushed the boundaries of fashion culture and has been at the forefront of progress throughout her career. The conversation and screening are presented and supported by *Women In Motion*, a **Kering** program created in 2015 to celebrate women in the arts and culture.

At 10:30 PM, festival goers will be treated to an exclusive screening of **Ryan Coogler's** critically acclaimed thriller ***SINNERS***. The film debuted at #1 with a \$45.6 million opening and has surpassed \$300 million worldwide. Praised for its emotional depth and visual brilliance, *SINNERS* showcases the creative excellence of cinematographer **Autumn Durald Arkapaw**, production designer **Hannah Beachler**, costume designer **Ruth E. Carter**, and composer **Ludwig Göransson**. The film is generating significant Oscar buzz and is widely considered Coogler's most ambitious work to date.

On Wednesday, **August 6**, the Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival will host its third annual Men's C-Suite Luncheon, presented by **McKinsey & Company**, **The Nature Conservancy**, **The Walt Disney Company**, and **Intuition by Aramis**. As part of the program, Intuition's Global Ambassador and face of the brand, **Dwyane Wade**, will make a special appearance to debut the new fragrance. This special luncheon, coined the *Bonds of Brotherhood*, brings together industry leaders to discuss leadership, legacy, and cultural capital in today's media landscape.

At noon, **Lincoln** hosts a fireside chat in the Vineyard Lounge entitled: A Moment of Pause with **Joshua Kissi**, photographer, director, and Lincoln Brand Ambassador. This discussion delves into the impact and power of storytelling, authentic partnerships, and the importance of trusting the creative process, evident in his recent collaboration with Lincoln.

The Festival's Centerpiece presentation of the Starz docuseries "**Magic City: An American Fantasy**" takes the stage at 5:00 pm. A five-part docuseries that unveils the untold stories behind Atlanta's most influential Black cultural hub, *Magic City*. For four decades, Magic City has been more than just a strip club—it has been a cultural institution, shaping the landscape of music, entertainment, and business in Atlanta and beyond. Through an alluring, dynamic, and artistic lens, the docuseries immerses viewers in the Magic City phenomenon, exploring its historical significance, its role in the rise of Southern hip-hop, and its impact on women's empowerment in the industry. *A Color of Conversation* will follow with executive producer Cole Brown and director Charles Todd.

The docuseries is created and executive-produced by Cole Brown. Drake's DreamCrew Entertainment, Jermaine Dupri, and Jami Gertz serve as executive producers. The series is directed by Charles Todd and produced by Scheme Engine with showrunner and executive producer Bayan Joonam, executive producers Devin Amar and Alex Kaplan, and producers Ashley Brooke and Marlowe Blue.

On Thursday, **August 7**, **Google**, **L'Oréal Groupe**, and **The Walt Disney Company** host this year's Women's C-Suite luncheon themed POWER, featuring a fireside chat with **Joy Reid** of The Joy Reid Show moderated

by **Jotaka Eaddy**. The luncheon is also sponsored by Absolut, Amazon, MGM Studios, Audible, and McKinsey & Co.

11:00 am in the Vineyard Lounge, join OpenAI for an illuminating conversation that pulls back the curtain on artificial intelligence, exploring its power to inspire, transform, and elevate storytelling. A dynamic panel of creative visionaries, including **Cori Murray (EBONY)**, **King Willonius (Comedian and AI Storyteller)**, **Lindsay Peoples (The Cut)**, and others, will dive into the new possibilities AI unlocks for artists and storytellers. Don't miss this timely discussion at the intersection of technology and imagination. The conversation will be followed by a lively reception.

At 1:30 pm, **McKinsey & Company** hosts a special screening of *Wait Until Tomorrow*, directed by Osato Dixon and produced by Kelley Robins Hicks and Jamund Washington. This poignant feature documentary follows Black families as they navigate the pursuit of economic progress across generations, grappling with structural barriers, legacy, and hope. Inspired by the research and work of the McKinsey Institute for Economic Mobility, the film blends intimate vérité storytelling with systemic insight, illuminating what progress looks like—and who gets to claim it. The screening will be followed by a talk-back conversation on the film as well as pathways, barriers, and breakthroughs for Black wealth.

**Netflix's The Perfect Neighbor** follows at 4:00 pm. Centered on the tragic killing of Ajike Owens and the devastating impact of Stand Your Ground laws, the film explores the intersection of race, surveillance, and justice in America. In partnership with Brown Girls Doc Mafia, this discussion will feature director Geeta Gandbhir, executive producer Soledad O'Brien, producer Alisa Payne, and Pamela Dias, the mother of Ajike Owens. Moderated by Iyabo Boyd, this *Color of Conversation* will examine how the storytelling choice of utilizing police body cam footage paints a full picture of the events leading up to the tragedy and how this documentary can help drive impact and conversation.

At 5:00 PM, in the Vineyard Lounge, Civil Rights icon **Rev. Al Sharpton** and **Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett** engage in a fireside chat on the current political landscape. This intimate dialogue promises powerful perspectives and bold solutions. Later that evening, don your finest attire for MVAFF's signature **White Party**, hosted at the Island Inn and sponsored by **ESPN 30 for 30**. All Festival Pass holders are welcome!

The evening concludes with a special presentation from **HBO Max** with an exclusive advance screening of **The Gilded Age Season 3**, Episode 1, titled "*My Mind is Made Up*." Despite objections from Mrs. Astor, Bertha finalizes the guest list for the ball – and finally faces the fallout of her actions. Meanwhile, Dr. Kirkland makes a decision about his future with Peggy, Oscar reconnects with a previous ally, and Marian struggles to move forward. *The Gilded Age* is created by Julian Fellowes and executive produced by Julian Fellowes, Gareth Neame, David Crockett, Michael Engler, Bob Greenblatt, Sonja Warfield, and Salli Richardson-Whitfield.

Taking the stage at 2:00 pm, on Friday, **August 8**, will be a screening and *Color of Conversation* presented by **W.K. Kellogg Foundation & Ralph Lauren** on the rich history of Oak Bluffs as a coastal haven and sacred healing space for Black communities for more than a century.

At 6:30 pm, **Tyler Perry Studios** presents **OLD GRAY MARE**, written and directed by **Courtney Glaudé**. The film focuses on Dementia — something many families face — an unwelcome shadow that slips in quietly as our loved ones age. We tell ourselves it's normal when they forget names or misplace keys. Just part of getting older. But when Steven and Robin stop by Eileen's house after returning from a relaxing cruise, their lives will never be the same. This time, it's not just forgotten groceries or a misplaced phone. After this, they'll wish they could forget...Joining Courtney Glaudé on the Performing Arts stage for an engaging talk back are **Devale Ellis** (*Sistas, Zatima*) and **Antoinetta Stallings**, VP of Development & Acquisitions, Tyler Perry Studios.

At 8:00 pm, **Tracee Ellis Ross** will present her forthcoming **Roku** travel series **TRAVELING SOLO**, offering a sneak peek into this exciting new project that blends storytelling, culture, and discovery in the Performing Arts Center, followed by a *Color of Conversation*.

On Saturday, **August 9**, at 10:00 am, the annual Directors' Brunch marks the culmination of an exhilarating week of Oscar-qualifying Shorts and Documentaries. This exclusive celebration honors emerging filmmakers and distinguished VIP guests and is proudly sponsored by **Xfinity**. A fan-favorite tradition, the Brunch also features the official announcement of this year's winning films, capping off a powerful week of cinematic excellence.

Join Audible for lunch at 12:00 pm in the Vineyard Lounge as they present **From Vision to Voice: DeVon Franklin on Storytelling through Sound**

As a bestselling author, actor, producer, and one of Hollywood's most influential inspirational storytellers, DeVon Franklin is known for bringing powerful, purpose-driven stories to life—from his upcoming love story film *Ruth & Boaz* and his rom-com *Relationship Goals*, to bestselling books like *Produced By Faith*. Audible will host an intimate fireside chat with DeVon and Aisha Glover, Audible's Global Head of Urban Innovation, to discuss his creative path and *Be True*—his first one-man show at Audible's Minetta Lane Theater and the upcoming Audible Original in which he shares one of the most transformative chapters of his life. DeVon will reflect on his creative journey and how audio storytelling can unlock new dimensions of a creator's work and empower the next generation of voices to connect more deeply with their audiences.

A nostalgic tribute to *A Different World* with the legendary **Debbie Allen**, and a special *Color of Conversation* in the Vineyard Lounge takes place at 2:30 pm, moderated by **Mara Brock Akil**.

At 8:00 pm, fan-favorite *Insecure* creator and executive producer **Issa Rae** closes the festival with a *Color of Conversation* to preview Part 2 of *SEEN & HEARD*, a film by director & producer Giselle Bailey. Rae and Bailey will also be joined by director & producer Phil Bertelson and executive producer and president of development and production for Hoorae Media, Montrel McKay. The two-part documentary travels through time, creating a kaleidoscopic portrait of Black talent being "seen," to Black creatives being "heard," shaping today's Golden Age of Black television.

Our 2025 sponsors include A24, Absolut, Amazon MGM Studios, Audible, American Heart Association, Apple TV+, Aramis, An Estée Lauder Company, Bassett Vance Productions, College Board, Delta Air Lines®, Effie

LIONS Foundation, ESPN 30 For 30, Everytown Community Safety Fund, From A2B Studios, FX, Google, L'Oreal Groupe, Library of Congress, Lincoln, McDonald's, McKinsey & Co, National Museum of African American History & Culture, Netflix, Roku, Starz, The Nature Conservancy, The Walt Disney Company, TV One, Tyler Perry Studios, UWG INC., W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Warner Bros. Discovery, Water Colors, When We All Vote, and Xfinity. Their generosity and partnership help make the festival a vibrant celebration of film, culture, and community, ensuring that this year's event is memorable for all who attend.

The Festival is located on the campus of the **Martha's Vineyard Performing Arts Center (MVPAC)** and the Vineyard Lounge (VL), 100 Edgartown Road, Oak Bluffs, MA 02557. For the full schedule and more information, visit [www.mvaaff.com](http://www.mvaaff.com).

#### **About the Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival**

Founded in 2002, MVAFF is an OSCAR®-qualifying festival in the short film category. Over nine days, MVAFF provides a stage for independent and established African American filmmakers to screen, promote, and celebrate feature films, documentaries, and shorts from around the world. Founded by Floyd and Stephanie Rance, the festival creates a supportive environment for filmmakers and gives sponsors access to a sophisticated community of people of color.

#### **About Run&Shoot Filmworks**

Run&Shoot Filmworks, the team behind MVAFF and the Color of Conversation Film Festival (COCFF), is known for producing standout visual content for clients like HBO, Martell Cognac, Reebok, NBC Sports, Hallmark Channel, and Footlocker. For over 20 years, Run&Shoot has championed spaces where filmmakers can share ideas and stories.

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