




BFI Black Star Film Season

The **British Film Institute** recently published a list of '10  *Great Black British Films*' – films about the black British experience. I'm afraid I'd only seen one of them, heard of maybe two or three others. You can see the full list [here](#) – maybe you'll do much better than me – but it's my guess most of you won't. At a time when #BlackLivesMatter has become 'not a Moment but a Movement', the BFI's timely **BLACK STAR** season is celebrating the range, versatility and power of black actors on film and television, spotlighting great performances by black actors on screen. But BLACK STAR goes further than that; at the season's launch **Heather Stewart**, BFI Creative Director, said;

'With BLACK STAR we are celebrating great performances and bringing them back to the big screen for everyone to enjoy. And we are also asking searching questions, of our industry and of ourselves, driven by a passion to meet the expectations of audiences who rightly expect to see their stories and aspirations reflected on screen.'

 The focus will be not only on great black actors of the past and present, but also on black stars as political activists (Paul Robeson, Danny Glover, Beyoncé), star names who have dominated music and film stories (from Sammy Davis Jnr to Ice Cube [left]), new talent (John Boyega, Michael B Jordan, Gugu Mbatha-Raw and Lupita Nyong'o), and stars emerging out of Nollywood (the fast growing Lagos-based Nigerian film industry).

 While BLACK STAR is centered around the BFI on London's South Bank, screenings and other events will take place throughout the UK. BLACK STAR events in Scotland fall into three distinct strands: *Africa in Motion's* **Nollywood Nights**, Glasgow Women's Library's **Celebrating Black On Screen Talent** (which invites audiences to watch and discuss with


black female cultural figures films that have been selected for a wide audience), and Document Film Festival's retrospective **Marlon Riggs: Freaky Free**. Further screenings will also take place in other venues across the country.


Earlier this month at the launch of the BLACK STAR  Symposium, the London Film Festival's headline industry event, British actor and producer **David Oyelowo** joined others to explore why opportunities for black actors to shine on screen in the US and the UK remain limited, and debate what more can be done to effect positive change. Oyelowo said;

'I'm really hopeful we're about to segue from talking about diversity to actually doing it.'

In Edinburgh screenings include ***The Champagne Room***, showing at the Bedlam Theatre this Sunday (30th October) as part of *Africa in Motion*, and ***Sister Act*** at the Cameo on 6th November. **Olumide Fadeybi's *The Champagne Room*** (15) follows several interrelated stories from in and around Glasgow, looking at experiences of domestic violence, child abuse, human trafficking, forced marriages, immigration and drug crimes.

Now nearly 25 years old, **Emile Ardolino's *Sister Act*** (PG) may be seen as a case study as much as an entertainment; it stars **Whoopi Goldberg** as a lounge singer who has to pretend to be a nun to avoid the Mafia. Meanwhile in Glasgow a **Nollywood Red Carpet Premiere Double Bill** will include ***The Road to Yesterday*** (15), a modern day love story/road movie by **Ishayo Bako**, and **Kunle Afolayan's *The CEO*** (15). As part of **Black History Month Glasgow Women's Library** will show ***The Color Purple*** (15) (a very different outing for Whoopi Goldberg) and ***Belle*** (12), the story of the mixed race daughter of an admiral who is brought up by her aristocratic great-uncle in 18th century England.

Television will play a huge part in BLACK STAR. BBC Two  will screen a **BLACK STAR Movie Night** in November, films will be available on BBC iPlayer, and over 50 titles will be

made available online to audiences through **BFI Player**. There will be new BFI Blu-ray and DVD releases, including the first ever Dual Format Edition of Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game*  (1992), and a Blu-ray release of *Carmen Jones* (Otto Preminger, 1954), plus Dual Format Editions of *Odds Against Tomorrow* (Robert Wise, 1959) and *Paris Blues* (Martin Ritt, 1961), a DVD release of *The Glass Shield* (Charles Burnett, 1994) and separate Blu-ray and DVD box sets of *Pioneers of African-American Cinema*.

'Most people go to the movies to escape, to see the real world changed into something more magical. And like it or not, watching films teaches us things – the images we seen on screen give us a sort of filter for how we see the world. Guillermo Del Toro compares the cinema to church, it distracts us from and helps us navigate the world and where we fit. BLACK STAR is a season that gives a place for all the stories often left out of the narrative.' (Reba Martin, [Rife Magazine](#) – read more of Reba's excellent article *Making Monsters: On Black Lives on Film* [here](#).)

More information about BLACK STAR can be found on the BFI's website [here](#).

