



BLACK MAGIC

DIRECTED BY CRISTIN STEPHENS



A short film by **Cristin Stephens**
2023 | USA | Color | 14 minutes | English



[instagram.com/blackmagicthefilm](https://www.instagram.com/blackmagicthefilm)



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PRESS NOTES

LOGLINE

A diversity hire in a writer's room contends with the expectations of her boss at the cost of her identity.

SYNOPSIS

Black Magic is a traumedy that follows Alicia, a Black screenwriter, as she navigates her new staff writer position on a network drama. When she realizes that she's nothing more than a fellowship diversity hire, Alicia tries to prove her worth to a room that must write in a "diverse" character to save their show. The character quickly devolves into little more than a trope, forcing Alicia to either compromise her hard-earned dream job or play nice with her colleagues and compromise herself.

AT NEWFILMMAKERS LOS ANGELES

February 22nd, 2025

Past Screenings: Austin Film Festival, Bronzelens Film Festival, Cleveland International Film Festival, Maryland Film Festival, IndieMemphis, Toronto Black Film Festival, Black Harvest Film Festival, El Paso Film Festival, Denton Black Film Festival





DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Black Magic was written during the height of the pandemic, where binge watching movies and TV shows turned into a game of spotting age-old stereotypes in some of the most popular shows. It was disheartening, to say the least, but curious how a trope like the magical negro could thrive in present day media. I began to imagine where this trope came from, and how it continues to persist. This film, for me, is a magical negro origin story. It's also a traumedy, where the main character is forced with an impossible decision at work and chooses as well as anyone might on their first day on the job. Through a dark and comedic lens, Black Magic explores the parallels between real perceptions and consequential misrepresentations of Black people. It attempts to illustrate the dangers of this popular depiction as well as draw a connection to the real world writers who – consciously or not – replicate it.

WRITER/DIRECTOR'S BIO

Cristin Stephens is a writer, director and producer from Philly. Generally speaking, her films explore unexpected intersections of black life. They bridge the comedic, off-putting, serious and sentimental, and center communities she loves. Her films have screened at festivals including San Francisco International Film Festival, New Orleans Film Festival, Cleveland International Film Festival, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Shorts México, where she received a special jury mention for short doc MEN WHO TALK. She is currently touring her short film BLACK MAGIC and was named a 2024 top screenwriter to watch by Austin Film Festival and MovieMaker magazine. Cristin currently splits her time between Brooklyn, NY and Austin, TX.

PRODUCER'S BIO

Dana Reilly is a director/producer. Her films are intimate and collaborative, exploring how work, love, and family shape women's sense of self. Her short film, *MS DIVA TRUCKER*, premiered at Big Sky Documentary Film Festival in 2021, won the Jury Award at the PBS Shorts Festival and is currently available to stream on NoBudge.com. Her most recent film, *FAVORITE DAUGHTER*, screened globally at festivals including Telluride and DOC NYC, was picked up by MTV Documentary Films, and is currently streaming on Paramount+.

CINEMATOGRAPHER'S BIO

Carlos Estrada is a Mexican-American filmmaker based in Austin, Texas. He is a 2022 ASC Heritage Award nominee for his work as a cinematographer on *EL FANTASMA*. His work has been featured at EnergaCAMERIMAGE, PBS, NPR, Palm Springs, New Orleans, New York Latino Film Fest, and Film Shortage. His work in both fiction and documentary make him a versatile visual storyteller with a focus always on the emotions within the story.

COMPOSER'S BIO

William Jae is a composer and pianist raised in LA whose music can be described as both chaotic and sublime. In 2019, his string trio composition "Alabaster Wool" premiered at the Walt Disney Concert Hall and was performed by members of the Lyrus Quartet. He received the Jack Kent Cooke Young Artists Award in 2020 and was the semi-finalist in the 2020 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composers Award. William is pursuing a degree in music composition at the Eastman School of Music, where he is also the artistic director of the Eastman Chamber Orchestra.



MAIN CAST

CORTNEY GIFT AS ALICIA

Cortney Gift is a multilingual actress born in Hartford, Connecticut. Fluent in Spanish and French, she has always had an admiration for learning and understanding different cultures. Cortney resides in Brooklyn, NY and has trained at Stella Adler Studio of Acting, Upright Citizen's Brigade, T. Schreiber Studio and The Barrow Group. Her television credits include FBI, Lincoln Rhyme, Godfather of Harlem and High Maintenance. She has collaborated with various artists including Forest Whitaker, MJ Rodriguez, Ken Leung, Zeljko Ivanek and Naturi Naughton.



LEA'H SAMPSON AS AMANDA

Lea'h Sampson is an Austin-based "Textra Millennial" comedian & actress that has opened and toured with artist such as Julio Iglesias, Mike Epps and many more. Featured on Netflix, Peacock, Caffeine Network including comedy festivals all over the country such as Moontower JFL. Her comedy is described as "relatable raw & unexpected." Lea'h tries to bring her crazy upbringing and young adult life to the stage as an open diary with dried ketchup and wine spilt on the cover and on each page.

CREDITS

Writer/Director	Cristin Stephens
Producer	Dana Reilly
Executive Producer	Dreu Dixon
Executive Producer	The Bear Production Company
Dir. of Photography	Carlos Estrada
Co-Producer	Sinead Keirans
Co-Producer	Camille Morales
Creative Producer	Alex Rosales
1st Asst. Director	Kathryn Van Buren
2nd Asst. Director	Mary Esquibel
2nd Asst. Director	An Chen
Production Designer	Em Shapiro
1st AC	Brian Molloy
1st AC	Jacob Voss
1st AC	Jacob Barajas
2nd AC	Braden Gary
2nd AC	Marie Rangel Amhrein
2nd AC	Dylan Byrne
Gaffer	Ian McGar
Gaffer	Alex Rosales
Key Grip	Jack Starks
Key Grip	Jono Dryden-Jaffe
Key Grip	Aidan Wilhite
Sound Mixer	Hannah Martinez
Sound Mixer	Arturo Jimenez
Sound Mixer	Taylor Mansmann
Boom	Michael Braden
HMU	Vickey Lee
Wardrobe	Melina Yudelka-Perez
Key PA	Aydin Haleftiras
PA	Austin Tackman
Sound Editor	Richard Hamilton
Editor	Maximillian Schirlo
Colorist	Aisha Sultanbekova
Composer	William Jae
BTS	Ziming Xie
BTS	Pamela De Marion

CREDITS CONT'D

Associate Producer	Janelle Lee Austin
Associate Producer	Derria Dixon
Associate Producer	Barry Dixon
Associate Producer	Randy Bryant
Associate Producer	Solange Benjamin-Bryant
Associate Producer	Eric Wong

CAST

Robert Fuller	Jax
Avery Merrifield	Pete
Kenzie Klem	Jen
Tyler Tipton	Dave
Ethan Goff	Ben
Trace Turner	Colin
Andrew Neylon	Cam
La'Var Veale	Trey