

KINO LORBER



Story Ave

A Film by Aristotle Torres
A Story by The Bronx

Starring Asante Blackk, Luis Guzmán,
Alex R. Hibbert, Cassandra Freeman, Coral Peña, and Melvin Gregg



U.S.A | 2023 | 94 min | Color | English

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SYNOPSIS

South Bronx teen Kadir (Asante Blackk) is a gifted visual artist who loses his way following the death of his younger brother. Overcome with grief and struggling with the pressures of school and family, he escapes into the thrilling yet dangerous world of graffiti gangs. To prove himself and join his neighborhood's ruling gang, Kadir tries to rob no-nonsense MTA conductor Luis (Luis Guzmán), but is caught off guard when Luis agrees to give Kadir cash if he'll sit down to have a meal with him. Following their conversation and the delicate, transformative friendship that grows out of it, Kadir sees for the first time how his artistic talent could lead to a better life.

Winner of the Best Cinematography prize at SXSW, this moving and authentic portrait of the South Bronx announces an exciting new cinematic voice in Aristotle Torres and offers a welcome showcase for beloved character actor Guzman and rising star Blackk (*This Is Us*), alongside a supporting cast of up-and-comers including Alex R. Hibbert (*Moonlight*), Cassandra Freeman (*Bel-Air*), Coral Peña (*For All Mankind*), and Melvin Gregg (*The Blackening*).

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

My vision for *Story Ave* was to bring discovery and understanding to a world that thrives at night, right under our noses. A world where artists risk their lives and freedom for the right to have their name highlighted high on tall buildings, trains and bridges for all to see. Where kids engage in no greater American fight than the fight for real estate. A world that allowed a rebellious talent from Brooklyn to go on and sell the highest painting ever at Sotheby's. Having grown up in The Bronx myself, *Story Ave* relates to me personally on a variety of levels: I'm also an orphan, having run away from home at 15, so I understand what it's like to feel lost and looking for guidance in untraditional places. I grew up in street culture—from graffiti, to hip-hop, to fashion. I've also traveled extensively—from living in Taiwan for six months to create my third short film, to visiting Barcelona for the sole purpose of taking in how Gaudi approached his art, fusing it with nature. I know how this world tastes, smells and feels. This is literally my backyard.

In making this film, I sought to change the perception around graffiti culture being all about unbridled vandalism by vagrants. That isn't accurate. There is a hierarchy, a philosophy, and rules to follow in the sphere of graf. Tonally, it was important to convey this world with its raw edges, all while being relatable across races, genders, and various backgrounds. For those who have never met an artist on a street or gallery level, it was our hope they would come away from this film understanding the conflict, drawing connections to their own life.

I believe that this film gives hope in a time when we need it most by conveying the power of compassion and empathy forged through a connection between strangers. I consider it an honor to share a positive story about my heritage, hometown, and the subculture of graffiti.

– Aristotle Torres

ABOUT THE CAST

ASANTE BLACKK (HE/HIM) | 'KADIR'

Asante Blackk is best known for his critically acclaimed performance in Ava DuVernay's Netflix series WHEN THEY SEE US which garnered both Emmy and Critic's Choice nominations.

On the feature side, Blackk stars opposite Tiffany Haddish in Cory Finley's LANDSCAPE WITH INVISIBLE HAND for MGM and Plan B which premiered at Sundance 2023. The Guardian praises Blackk as "... an extremely charming lead with instant movie star magnetism."

Next, he will be seen in Aristotle Torres' feature adaptation of his short STORY AVE which premieres at SXSW 2023. The project was developed in the 2019 Sundance Directors Lab and is being produced by Jamie Foxx and Datari Turner.

Asante can also be seen in NBC's THIS IS US opposite Sterling K. Brown and Mandy Moore in which he was also nominated for a Critics' Choice Award.

LUIS GUZMÁN (HE/HIM) | 'LUIS'

LUIS GUZMÁN is an award-winning actor with over 150 feature film and television roles to his credit.

Mr. Guzmán has recently filmed "Beverly Hills Cop: Axel Foley" with Eddie Murphy and "You Are So Not Invited To My Bat Mitzvah" alongside Adam Sandler for Netflix. Prior to these Mr. Guzmán appeared in "Poker Face", an anthology series for the Peacock Network as well as "Justified: City Primeval" opposite Timothy Olyphant for FX.

Mr. Guzmán will appear this Thanksgiving in the role of Gomez Addams, alongside Catherine Zeta Jones' Morticia Addams, in Tim Burton's Addams Family series entitled "Wednesday" for Netflix and plays a supporting role in "Wile E. Coyote" alongside John Cena for Warner Bros. Prior to that Mr. Guzmán completed the feature, HAVOC, with Jason Statham and Forest Whitaker for Netflix.

During the pandemic, Mr. Guzmán voiced characters in two animated series: Kid Cudi's Entergalactic for Netflix and Steve Conrad's Mega City Smiths for AMC Networks. As

well as “Hightown” for Lionsgate/Starz. He also played a recurring role on the 2020 season of “Shameless” for Showtime.

Mr. Guzmán played the co-lead in the cable series “Our Lady of Perpetual Grace” alongside Oscar Winner Ben Kingsley for EPIX as well as a supporting lead in the EPIX SERIES “Godfather of Harlem”, created by Chris Brancato (Narcos) alongside Oscar Winner Forest Whitaker.

Mr. Guzmán’s extensive feature credits include the Adam Sandler comedies “The Do Over,” and “Sandy Wexler,” Key & Peele’s “Keanu” and the independent feature “Puerto Ricans in Paris,” which Guzmán starred in and executive produced. “Puerto Ricans in Paris,” was released through Focus. Mr. Guzmán also played a supporting regular role on the Netflix original series “Narcos,” about Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar.

Guzmán won a Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Award as a member of the ensemble cast of Steven Soderbergh’s award-winning drama “Traffic.” He received an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor for his performance in Soderbergh’s “The Limey.” Guzmán has also teamed with the director on “Out of Sight” and “Welcome to Collinwood,” the latter of which Soderbergh produced with George Clooney.

In addition, Guzmán shared in two SAG Award cast nominations for his performances in the Paul Thomas Anderson’s critically acclaimed films “Magnolia” and “Boogie Nights,” and went on to work with Anderson again on “Punch-Drunk Love.” His multiple collaborations with other directors include “Snake Eyes” and “Carlito’s Way” for Brian De Palma, and “Family Business,” “Q&A” and “Guilty as Sin” for Sidney Lumet.

Guzmán’s feature work includes “Top Five,” with Chris Rock; “We’re the Millers,” with Jennifer Aniston and Jason Sudeikis; “The Last Stand,” starring Arnold Schwarzenegger; “Journey 2: The Mysterious Island,” with Dwayne Johnson; and Tony Scott’s “The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3,” with Denzel Washington and John Travolta. Among his many other credits are the timeless classics “Carlito’s Way” and “Boogie Nights”.

The list continues with “Maldeamores,” produced by Benicio Del Toro; Todd Phillips’ “School for Scoundrels”; “Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events” opposite Jim Carrey; “Anger Management,” with Adam Sandler and Jack Nicholson; Kevin Reynolds’ “The Count of Monte Cristo”.

Born in Puerto Rico, Guzmán grew up in Manhattan and graduated from City College.

He worked as a youth counselor while performing in street theater and independent films. His first break was a guest role on the hit series “Miami Vice,” followed by guest appearances on numerous television shows. He also had recurring or regular roles on the HBO series “Oz,” “John from Cincinnati” and “How to Make it in America,” executive produced by Mark Wahlberg.

ALEX HIBBERT (HE/HIM) | ‘MAURICE “MOE” HERNANDEZ’

Alex made his incredible screen debut as Little (young Chiron) opposite Mahershala Ali in Barry Jenkins’ Oscar winning film **“MOONLIGHT”**. His sensitive performance landed Alex several Best Young Actor nominations from the Young Artists Awards, National Critics Choice, Broadcast Film Critics, Black Critics Award and Seattle Critics' Awards. Shortly thereafter, Alex was cast in the pivotal leading role of Kevin in Showtime’s riveting Chicago based series **“THE CHI”** now shooting it's 5th season. He has been recognized twice with NAACP nominations for Best Actor for his work in The Chi.

Alex was also seen in **“BLACK PANTHER”**, in a role that Ryan Coogler specifically created for him. Recently, Alex will be seen in the film **THE GRADUATES** for director Hannah Peterson and exec. producer Chloé Zhao. Alex will also be seen in the edgy street graffiti film **STORY AVE.** for director Aristotle Torres. The film will premiere at SXSW 2023.

CORAL PEÑA (SHE/HER) | ‘GLORIA’

Coral Peña can currently be seen as a series regular role on the AppleTV+ series FOR ALL MANKIND, which was recently renewed for a fourth season. Up next, she will be seen starring in Aristotle Torres’ STORY AVE opposite Asante Blackk and Luis Guzmán. The film follows a teenage graffiti artist who, after running away from home, holds up an unsuspecting MTA worker in a robbery that changes their lives forever. Additional film credits include the Amazon film CHEMICAL HEARTS, opposite Lili Reinhart and Austin Abrams, and Steven Spielberg's THE POST and THE PIRATES OF SOMALIA, with Al Pacino (Tribeca 2017). Her other television credits include a regular role on Fox's 24: LEGACY, a major recurring role on the NBC series THE ENEMY WITHIN, and THE RESIDENT, BLUE BLOODS, and THE BLINDSPOT.

Peña is a graduate of NYU Tisch's School of the Arts and was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

MELVIN GREGG (HE/HIM) | ‘SEAN “SKEMES” HERNANDEZ’

Melvin Gregg can be seen in Hulu’s NINE PERFECT STRANGERS, opposite

Nicole Kidman and Melissa McCarthy, with all episodes directed by Jonathan Levine. The series is based on BIG LITTLE LIES author Liane Moriarty's latest book. He most recently wrapped the feature STORY AVE, starring opposite Luis Guzman and Asante Blackk. Aristotle Torres wrote and directed the film with Jamie Foxx, Datari Turner, and Patrick Paymond producing. He also recently wrapped the Showtime pilot THE WOOD and the MRC feature THE BLACKENING, directed by Tim Story. Melvin will be seen in the HBO Max feature HOUSE PARTY, a reboot of the classic 1990 film, opposite Jacob Latimore and Tosin Cole, and produced by LeBron James and Maverick Carter. He will soon be seen in the lead role of 'Man', opposite Bradley Whitford and Alice Braga, in the Traveling Picture Show Company feature SHARE, which he also executive produced.

Melvin can be seen as 'Joe Guy' in Lee Daniels's feature THE UNITED STATES VS. BILLIE HOLIDAY for Hulu, and can be seen as 'Manboy' in Seasons 3 and 4 of the hit FX series SNOWFALL, executive produced by John Singleton. He starred in Gavin O'Connor's THE WAY BACK, opposite Ben Affleck for Warner Bros. In 2019, Melvin played the lead opposite Andre Holland and Zazie Beetz in Steven Soderbergh's HIGH FLYING BIRD, written by Oscar-winning MOONLIGHT scribe Tarell Alvin McCraney, released on Netflix. He starred in a stand out lead role in Netflix's AMERICAN VANDAL Season 2.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

ARISTOTLE TORRES (HE/HIM) | WRITER, DIRECTOR

Aristotle Torres is a writer/director out of NYC who developed STORY AVE first as a short film and then through the prestigious Sundance Labs. An accomplished music video director in the past, Aristotle has worked with artists such as J Cole, Nas, 2Chainz, and Ludacris. He has directed commercials and campaigns for brands such as Pepsi, Red Bull, Under Armour, and Starbucks. He also has written and directed short films that have played at various festivals across the world.

LIZZIE SHAPIRO (SHE/HER) | PRODUCER

Lizzie Shapiro is a producer based in New York. She most recently produced the 2022 Independent Spirit Cassavetes Award winner *Shiva Baby* (SXSW '20, TIFF '20) and *Mickey and the Bear* (SXSW '19, Cannes '19) that both premiered to critical acclaim and were distributed by Utopia Films. She is currently in post-production with Brittany Snow's directorial debut *Parachute* and Aristotle Torres's *Story Ave* that she produced alongside Jamie Foxx's *Foxxhole* Entertainment. Both films will premiere in competition at the 2023 South by Southwest Film Festival. Lizzie is also serving as a Co-Executive Producer on the Adam McKay/Emma Seligman *Sugar Baby* series currently in development at HBO. She is the 2022 recipient of the Independent Spirit Piaget Producing Award.

CREDITS

Directed by

Aristotle Torres

Written by

Bonsu Thompson and Aristotle Torres

Produced by

Lizzie Shapiro

Datari Turner

Jamie Foxx

Aristotle Torres

Executive Produced by

Michael D'Alto

Gus Deardoff

Robert Aguilar

Claude Amadeo

Martin Cabrera

Cemí Guzmán

Luis Guzmán

Randal Sandler

Chris Triana

Jan McAdoo

Starring

Asante Blackk

Luis Guzmán

Alex R. Hibbert

Melvin Gregg

Coral Peña

Cassandra Freeman

Hassan Johnson