

KINO LORBER



BLACK ZOMBIE

A Film by Maya Annik Bedward



Canada | 2026 | 90 minutes | English, French, Haitian Creole

WORLD PREMIERE – SXSW 2026

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Hot Docs 2026

Fantasia Film Festival 2026

BlackStar Film Festival 2026

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LOGLINE

From the flickering screens of Hollywood horror, to the haunted cane fields of colonial Haiti, *Black Zombie* unearths the buried origins of the zombie, reclaiming it as a symbol of survival and spiritual resistance.

SYNOPSIS

Black Zombie digs beneath the blood-soaked spectacle of modern horror to uncover the zombie's buried and unsettling origins. Long before it became associated with flesh-eating ghouls, the zombie was a living metaphor for slavery: not a monster, but the ultimate victim of colonial power. A symbol of stolen agency was recast as an object of fear, while Black spiritual traditions were distorted, sensationalized, and erased. Director Maya Annik Bedward traces the evolution of the zombie from colonial Haiti to contemporary Hollywood, reconsidering iconic films like *White Zombie*, *Night of the Living Dead*, and *The Serpent and the Rainbow* alongside archival footage, vérité scenes, and interviews with cultural historians, artists, and genre legends including Yves-Grégory Francois, Mambo Labelle Déesse, Slash, Tom Savini, and Zandashé Brown. Part cultural reckoning, part horror remix, *Black Zombie* exposes how a figure born from enslavement, spiritual belief, and resistance was transformed into one of pop culture's most profitable monsters.

DIRECTORS STATEMENT

I am an Afro-Caribbean Canadian. My father and his family are from Jamaica, and for as long as I can remember, I have been searching for the history that came before us, before the transatlantic slave trade severed language, lineage, and land. Where did our people come from? What did we call ourselves? What stories shaped our worldview?

As a child, I was often told that these histories were simply lost. That there were no records and we would never know. But as I grew older, I began to see that the past had not disappeared. It had transformed. Clues could be found in our food, our music, and most powerfully in our spiritual traditions. Much of my artistic practice has been devoted to tracing these connections and understanding how our history continues to live in the present.

When I first encountered the Haitian origin story of the zombie, I was stunned. I had no idea that the mindless, flesh-eating monster of popular culture carried such profound cultural meaning. In Haitian Vodou cosmology, the zombie is not a villain but a victim, a person condemned to eternal enslavement, stripped of will and agency. It is a metaphor born from the brutality of slavery, and a fate worse than death.

Suddenly, the zombie was no longer arbitrary for me. It embodied the historical and ongoing rupture of Black freedom, culture, and identity. It reflected the very disconnection I had long felt from my own heritage. From that moment, I knew I had to tell this story. I began researching the connections between the zombie, Haitian Vodou, and the transatlantic slave trade, and what I learned was deeply unsettling.

Although few people know the zombie's true origins, its distortion in early Western literature and film shaped global perceptions of Vodou. Early twentieth-century zombie stories, largely created by white men, introduced Haitian Vodou to Western audiences through a lens of fear and fantasy. These works cemented enduring tropes of sorcery, blood rituals, and human sacrifice. Even as the zombie later evolved into a different kind of monster, the damage to how Vodou and Black spirituality were perceived remained.

BLACK ZOMBIE examines the long history of appropriation and the systematic vilification of Black spiritual traditions. Vodou, Candomblé, Santería, and Obeah are living religions practiced throughout the Caribbean and across the Americas. They are complex systems of philosophy, cosmology, and community care. Yet in popular imagination, they have too often been reduced to "black magic," with Vodou in particular cast as something dangerous and evil.

In truth, Vodou was a catalyst of the Haitian Revolution, one of the most significant acts of Black liberation in world history. With this film, I wanted to bring Vodou into the light of day, to show it not as something secretive or confined to the shadows, but as a living, vibrant faith practiced openly within communities. By centering the voices of contemporary practitioners, I hope to show that Vodou is not only surviving but continuing its resistance to colonial power through reclamation, narrative sovereignty, and collective healing.

This film is my expression of gratitude to the knowledge keepers who have safeguarded these traditions and carried these histories forward. It is an invitation to look again at a figure we think we know and to confront the histories buried within it.

Maya Annik Bedward — *writer, director, producer*

CREW BIOGRAPHIES



MAYA ANNIK BEDWARD | DIRECTOR & WRITER

Maya is an Afro-Caribbean-Canadian film director whose work blends history, resistance, and pop culture through bold, genre-bending storytelling. Her work has screened at TIFF, Hot Docs, BlackStar, and the New Orleans Film Festival. Her credits include the short films *The Haircut* (2018) and *Why We Fight* (2021), as well as the TV series *LIDO TV* (2022) and *BLK: An Origin Story* (2022). She is a founding member of the Black Screen Office, championing stories that center Black creativity and power.



KATE FRASER | PRODUCER

Kate Fraser is a Toronto-based film producer with a background in social work and community-based arts programming. She is a producer at Third Culture Media, where she has produced multiple award-winning short documentaries, including *Patty vs. Patty* (CBC). The film premiered at the Hot Docs International Documentary Film Festival, won the 2023 Canadian Screen Award for Best Short Documentary, and has surpassed one million views on YouTube. Kate is also a producer on the feature-length documentary *Black Zombie* (Documentary Channel), which will have its world premiere at SXSW 2026.



HANNAH DONEGAN | PRODUCER

Hannah Donegan is an award-winning documentary producer whose work includes: Hot Docs 2021 Opening Night film *A.RTIFICIAL I.MMORTALITY*; Emmy-nominated and Oscar-shortlisted *MY ENEMY, MY BROTHER*; three-time Canadian Screen Award winner *THE DEFECTOR*. Her directorial debut was CBC's *SUGAR SISTERS*. She was showrunner for the CBC Gem series *STAY TOONED*, and recently released Crave's *IT'S ALL GONNA BREAK* about the band Broken Social Scene, CBC's *THE LONELIEST RACE* (Sheffield DocFest 2025), and is premiering *BLACK ZOMBIE* at SXSW 2026.



JEN HOLNESS | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Jen Holness brings a fresh, authentic perspective to telling powerful, thought-provoking stories. She writes, produces, and directs. Jen is the first Black woman in Canada to win a Canadian Screen Award (CSA) for writing on a mini-series she created, *Guns*. She recently produced the critically acclaimed feature, *40 Acres*, that sold to Hulu and is nominated for five NAACP Awards, including Outstanding Independent Motion Picture and Outstanding International Picture.

#WhileBlack, a feature documentary she co-directed, premiered at SXSW this year along with *Black Zombie*, a doc film she executive produced. Her previous feature, *Subjects of Desire*, was a Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) Top Ten film, traveled extensively in festivals where

it won numerous awards and sold to Starz and Hulu. BLK: An Origin Story, a documentary series that she created, produced, and directed won 5 CSA, including Best Director for her episode.

Jen's films and TV shows have screened and sold globally, earning prizes from major film festivals. A CMPA Indiescreen Producer of the Year, Jen also received WIFT's Creative Excellence Award and The Hollywood Reporter profiled her as one of the 40 Most Influential Women in International Film.

CREDITS

Written and Directed by

Maya Annik Bedward

Produced by

Maya Annik Bedward
Kate MacCallum Fraser
Hannah Donegan

Executive Producers

Jennifer Holness
Maya Annik Bedward
Kate MacCallum Fraser
Michael Paszt
Andrew Thomas Hunt
James Fler
Slash

Associate Producers

Gregorio Rodriguez
Jay Cheel

Produced with the Participation of CANADA MEDIA FUND

Produced with the Participation of TELEFILM CANADA

Produced with the Participation of ROGERS DOCUMENTARY FUND

Director of Photography

Duraïd Munajim
Ricardo Diaz

Edited by

Avril Jacobson
Jay Cheel
Peter Denes
Lawrence Jackman

Original Score

David Arcus

Additional Music

Mélissa Laveaux
Lister Haussman

**Featuring
(in order of appearance)**

Yves-Grégory Francois
Tananarive Due
Slash
Tom Savini
Leanne MacRae
Joe Ollmann
John Cussans
Dominique Taffin
Zandashé Brown
Thea Munster
Kaiama L. Glover
Erol Josué
Mambo Labelle Déese Botanica
John Russo
Wade Davis

Recreation Cast

Lead Zombie

Anderson Mojica

Field Zombies

Eduardo Charles
Heroína Charles C.
David Herasme
Deristen Noelsaint
Santo Plererie
Rosita Vasquez C.

Slave Master

Maximilliano Cimarro

Dancers

Jean Baptiste Aroudson
Marc Karl Flambert
Roodelyne Pierre

Drummers

Mackenson César
Wilcliff Cesar
Esaï Delva
Job Jouissance

Story Consultant

Lina Cino

Story and Cultural Consultant

Zenzii Michelle Sérieux

Additional Editors

Luke Mistruzzi

Maya Annik Bedward

Assistant Editor

Michal Heuston

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Demo Editors

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Tiffany Beaudin

Michael Huston

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David Arcus

Visual Research

Jessica Joy Wise

Research

Jalana Lewis

Melissa Vincent

Translation

Yves-Grégory Francois

Eric Geringas

Huguens Santil

Meagan Silencieux

Andrew Bigosinski

Development Assistant

Jess Stewart-Lee

For UNDERSTORY FX

Art Direction

Luke Mistruzzi

Animation

Sasha Iliach

Compositing and VFX

Luke Mistruzzi

Illustration

Ramon Charles

Graphics and Titles

JP Spanbauer

MAIN Unit

Additional Camera

Luke Mistruzzi

Christopher Yapp

Sean Liliani

1st Assistant Camera

Brendan Moffit

Sound

Michael Filippov

Coby Degroot

Marco Fania

Production Assistant

Gina Minugh

Claireandean Humphrey

HAITI Unit

Camera

Ricardo Tranquillin

Sound

Antonio Dieubon Lefevre

Production Manager

Huguens Santil

Production Coordinator

Mackenson César

Production Services

JAKO Media

FRANCE Unit

Sound

Antoine Fontaine

Fixer

Anna Rabemanantsoa

NEW ORLEANS Unit

Sound

Lee Garcia

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC Unit

1st Assistant Director

Jeissy Trompiz

B Camera & BTS

Ricardo Tranquillin

1st Assistant Camera

Eduardo Esteves

Gaffer

Franmiris Gomez

Electrical

Yovanny Chacon

Joan Vazquez

Grip

Sely Michael Novas Peguero

Sound

Carlos Miniño

Antonio Dieubon Lefevre

Production Manager

Gregorio Rodriguez

Production Coordinator

Laura “Roca” Morales

Mackensen Cesar

Set Production Assistant

Jeffry Henríquez

Prop master

Keudy Mendez

Still photographer

Manuela Hidalgo

Makeup

Kiara Saviñon

Transportation

Mario De Oleo

July De Oleo

Equipment provider

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Catering Yajaira

Moises Javier

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ADR Coordinator

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Director of Sound Services

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Head of Production

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Denise Zanello

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