



BRON RELEASING
PRESENTS
A CONQUERING LION PICTURES & HAWKEYE PICTURES PRODUCTION

BROTHER

LAMAR JOHNSON AARON PIERRE KIANA MADEIRA AND MARSHA STEPHANIE BLAKE
CASTING DEIRDRE BOWEN MUSIC SUPERVISOR JODY COLERO MUSIC COMPOSER TODOR KOBAKOV
COSTUME DESIGNER HANNA PULEY PRODUCTION DESIGNER JASON CLARKE EDITOR KYE MEECHAN
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY GUY GODFREE csc SUPERVISING PRODUCER MATT CODE LINE PRODUCER KRISTY NEVILLE
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS AARON L. GILBERT STEVEN THIBAUT LAURIE MAY NOAH SEGAL
PRODUCED BY DAMON D'OLIVEIRA AESCHYLUS POULOS SONYA DI RIENZO CLEMENT VIRGO
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY DAVID CHARIANDY WRITTEN BY CLEMENT VIRGO DIRECTED BY CLEMENT VIRGO

Produced with the participation of TELEFILM CANADA THE CANADA MEDIA FUND, ONTARIO CREATES, SHAW ROCKET FUND
Produced in association with CRAVE and SUPER ECRAN, DIVISIONS OF BELL MEDIA INC., CBC FILMS



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Logline

Brother is the story of Francis and Michael, sons of Caribbean immigrants maturing into young men amidst Toronto's pulsing 1990's hip-hop scene. A mystery unfolds when escalating tensions set off a series of events which changes the course of the brothers' lives forever.

Synopsis

Propelled by the pulsing beats of Toronto's early hip hop scene, *Brother* is the story of Francis and Michael, sons of Caribbean immigrants maturing into young men. Exploring themes of masculinity, identity and family, a mystery unfolds during the sweltering summer of 1991, and escalating tensions set off a series of events that change the course of the brothers' lives forever. *Brother* crafts a timely story about the profound bond between siblings, the resilience of a community, and the irrepressible power of music.

Brother Press Kit

Clement Virgo and Damon D'Oliveira of Conquering Lion Pictures along with Sonya Di Rienzo and Aeschylus Poulos of Hawkeye Pictures are very pleased to present **Brother**, the feature film written and directed by Clement Virgo (*RUDE*, *The Wire*, *Billions*, the upcoming *Monster* from Ryan Murphy and Apple's *Dear Edward*), based on David Chariandy's celebrated novel of the same name. Executive Producers are Aaron L. Gilbert and Steven Thibault of BRON and Laurie May and Noah Segal of Elevation Pictures.

Brother stars Lamar Johnson (*The Hate U Give*, *Your Honor*, *Kings*), Aaron Pierre (*The Underground Railroad*, *Old*, *Krypton*), Kiana Madeira (*Fear Street* Trilogy, *Trinkets*, *After We Fell*, *After Ever Happy*), and Marsha Stephanie Blake (*When They See Us*, *Ptolemy Grey*, *The Laundromat*). It was filmed in Toronto and Scarborough, Canada.

Brother is produced by Damon D'Oliveira (*The Book of Negroes*, *Wildhood*, *The Grizzlies*, *RUDE*), Aeschylus Poulos (*Sleeping Giant*, *Mary Goes Round*, *22 Chaser*, *The Book of Negroes*), Sonya Di Rienzo (*The Young Arsonists*, *Queen of the Morning Calm*, *Propaganda: The Art of Selling Lies*) and Clement Virgo.

Cinematography by Guy Godfree (*Wildhood*, *Maudie*, *Let Him Go*) with production design by Jason Clarke (*The Righteous*, *The Book of Negroes*, *People of Earth*), costume design by Hanna Puley (*Nine Films About Technology*, *Run This Town*, *Octavio is Dead!*), editing by Kye Meechan (*ARQ*, *Kim's Convenience*, *The Book of Negroes*) and music by Todor Kobakov (*Born to Be Blue*, *Bitten*, *Ransom*).

Brother is distributed in Canada by Elevation Pictures. Foreign Sales are handled by BRON Releasing.

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BROTHER Production Notes

In 1995, aspiring writer/director, Clement Virgo, carved out a lasting piece of territory in the landscape of Canadian film with his feature film directorial debut, *RUDE*, a surreal, vivid triptych of three characters struggling for redemption on an Easter weekend in the inner city.

27 years later, Virgo has bookended *RUDE* with *Brother*. Set in roughly the same time period, the thematic similarities are evident. Both films look at the relationships between two brothers, both are set in Toronto neighborhoods, and both deal with that moment in young black men's lives where they cease being a child and are perceived to be men, sometimes tragically at much too early an age.

"It's inevitable that anyone who knows my work will see an overlap between the world and the feelings in *RUDE* and in *Brother*," said Virgo. "Looking at *RUDE* now, I see a movie made by a younger man. It has so much energy in it, so much excitement and there's a sense of youthful exuberance and propulsion in it. *Brother* is made by an older person, more meditative and controlled, and for me a much more reflective, muscular film."

It is through Michael reconciling his grief and memory of his older brother, Francis, that we take in the story of *Brother*. The richness of thematic content in this film is multi-dimensional. Anchored in humanizing the immigrant narrative, *Brother* focuses on a family led by Ruth, a strong, single, Jamaican mother whose view of the world is divergent from those of her sons and how they perceive the reality of Canada.

The story unfolds to reveal the characters in increments. There are moments of elation, of violence, of immense grief and of healing. The two brothers wrestle with different ways of being a man according to the many toxic scripts of masculinity that circulate in the world in which they live. There is also the masculinity that is about tenderness, about care and love, all the more powerful because it comes from young men who, because of the way the world treats them, exhibit a toughened exterior.

"*Brother* looks at growing up with a certain gaze upon you and being made to feel uncomfortable in the city in which you've always lived," said Virgo. "These are themes not only of decades past, but of today, and not only ones that relate to young black men, but to all of us. When filmmakers are interested in a subject, you'll see them revisit it over and over again. Stories about immigrants, alienation and masculinity, those are what I'm interested in."

Art Processing Reality

Another point of inescapable comparison between Virgo's earlier work and now are events which took place in the late 1980s, early 90s and 2001 which resonate with events taking place today.

In 1988, 17-year-old Erindale Secondary School student Michael Wade Lawson was shot in the back of the head and killed by two Peel police officers. "I was struck by that incident," Virgo recalled. "It worked its way into the elements of *RUDE*, that sense of how a young black man moves through this world and how he's perceived by others and how he perceives himself."

Brother is less a story of police killing, which does occur in the film, and much more about the collective response to it. The condition of complicated grief, (as of January '22, now a diagnostic disorder) occurs when someone suffers a loss so profound, they do not know how to overcome it or how even to acknowledge the loss to themselves or others. Both Ruth and Michael suffer from this. When Francis is killed, they closed the door on their apartment and for 10 years, it effectively becomes a place where time has frozen and life stands still because they are not addressing the grief until Aisha returns, forcing them to move forward. *Brother* explores how they try to account for this loss and the strength of a whole community as they rebuild the relationships that they've had.

Brother is full of life propelled by the brothers' dreams and desires, the pulsing beats of early hip hop and ultimately the love of a family and resilience of a community. Coincidentally, the development of this project and the killing of George Floyd did cross over, noted producer Damon D'Oliveira. "And I feel that moment in our collective history has influenced the way we approached the telling of this story in the film."

***Brother* - How the Novel Came to Clement Virgo**

In 2017, producer Sonya Di Rienzo, one of the principals at Hawkeye Pictures, read David Chariandy's book, *Brother*, when it was first published. Having gone to high school in the 90's in Ajax, Ontario (next door to the setting of the book) she was immediately drawn to it. What she didn't anticipate was her reaction. "I read the book in one sitting and was moved to tears and elated, in a way that just doesn't happen. The characters were so complex and vibrant. The piece is so cinematic, full of music and life - so perfect for an adaptation." The moment she finished, she called Aeschylus Poulos, her partner at Hawkeye, because he'd been looking for a project to do with Damon and Clement at Conquering Lion. "I had loved working with Clement and Damon in the past and knew this was the perfect project."

In this business, there is a predestination to some projects. Maxine Bailey, now executive director at the Canadian Film Centre was also reading Chariandy's novel. She also recommended it to Virgo, and he had a chance, while on holiday, to finally read it.

"I thought it was a great, great book. I know this world that David created," Virgo attested. "The story of Michael and Francis takes place in a West Indian immigrant household in a low-income housing complex in Scarborough in the early 90's. I'm an immigrant. I grew up a decade earlier and a dozen miles away, in the inner-city Regent Park. Like the two brothers, I was raised by a disciplinarian single mom who spent most of her waking hours working menial jobs in far corners of the city. And like them, I came of age into the world where young black masculinity is seen as an offense. I grew up questioning how you come to understand yourself when the world expects you to be a criminal just because you're black? How do you come to know your own emotions when you're expected to have none, a stoic? How do you transcend the prejudices and expectations that confront you daily?"

The Adaptation

Over the 30 years of Virgo's career as a writer/director, he has authored his own screenplays, directed the works of others, and adapted the scripts for *Love Come Down*, based on his short film *Save My Lost Nigga Soul*, *Lie with Me*, from Tamara Faith Berger's novel, *Poor Boy's Game*, from a play by Chaz Thorne as well as Lawrence Hill's 511-page epic, award-winning novel, *The Book of Negroes*. In the case of *Brother*, the adaptation was the easiest and fastest script Virgo had ever written.

Book-to-film adaption is fraught with challenges, none of which are simple or straight-forward, but all of which warrant their own category for the Oscars. Each adaptation hinges on the relationship with the author to the source material. "It's a gift to be able to take a great piece of writing and adapt it to the screen," said D'Oliveira, who has been through the process with Virgo many times before, "It's a complicated process, and this time it was very different than the adaptation for *The Book of Negroes*. *Brother* is such an efficient book, written in the most precise language and coming in at 192 pages. The adaptation literally flew out of Clement. He'd also been working in television for a decade and was so thrilled to be able to work on a feature film script again."

As they got closer to principal photography, the producers looked through the script for efficiencies - because that is what producers live to do. "We found that there was good reason for every scene in the script and strong connective tissue between each scene," recalled producer Aeschylus Poulos. "*Brother* takes place over three different time periods with locations around Toronto and in Scarborough. It was important for us to honor that authenticity whenever we could. It was an exciting challenge, but everyone rallied to deliver the film that Clement wanted to make."

Chariandy's Reaction to His Book Being Adapted to Film

David Chariandy's novel exists in a world of police violence that is irrefutable. "But I did not write the book to represent that. It is life that I am interested in portraying. I want to honour the humanity of people who have been robbed of that in gross and subtle ways both in the past and to this very moment," said the award-winning author.

"In the book, through description and through tricks of language, I hoped to show the unspoken gestures of intimacy and the moments of joy etched out in ordinary circumstances," Chariandy continued. "But to see experienced actors find their own ways to expressing those intimacies, those acts of everyday tenderness in a narrative that is also about catastrophic loss, *that* is extraordinary. It is the most powerful experience to watch these actors, the director and producers and cinematographer work."

In reading Virgo's adaptation, Chariandy said: "It was a great act of generosity and faith for him to share his work with me. I had, and have, great confidence that Clement can turn a book into a film which is a completely different thing, while respecting the story I wanted to tell. My confidence came from seeing Clement's work, first and foremost, understanding what he has been doing for a significant amount of time in drawing attention to and creating paradigmatic works of Black film in Canada. How could one not have a sense of confidence?"

The Jamaican Connection

The most significant departure from the novel is the change from a Trinidadian family to a Jamaican family, but this only happened after the role of the mother, Ruth, was locked in. "The important consideration was to find an authentic Black actress of Caribbean extraction," explained D'Oliveira. And they did, with Marsha Stephanie Blake who is the child of Jamaican parents.

With Ruth cast, the producers reached out to Chariandy about changing the nationality of the family – to which he agreed. It made perfect sense. In addition to Blake, Virgo is from Jamaica, Lamar Johnson was born in Scarborough, Ontario to a Jamaican family and grew up in that very specific environment of a Jamaican home.

The Jamaican diaspora in Canada has not been the subject of many films before. "I'd say we're probably a first in some ways," estimated Virgo. "This story of second and even third generation families is something that needs to be told. There's a genuine interest out there in audiences who can relate to the experience. This film is definitely going to appeal to people who embrace stories about families. And this one happens to be Jamaican."

The Virgo Style

You know you're on a Clement Virgo set when you stand by the monitor and watch the gentle, rhythmic way the director moves his hands as a take rolls. "Clement has very clear ideas of how each scene is moving and how the characters are emotionally moving through the space. There's a visual choreography that matches the emotional choreography, and he moves his hands, pacing and guiding. It's very beautiful to watch the process. This whole film is about rhythm," observed Di Rienzo.

This is the very reason why working with cinematographer Guy Godfree was an ideal match. D'Oliveira had just executive produced the feature, *Wildhood*, which Godfree shot, and wanted him on *Brother* because he has the subtle skill of being able to affect mood without distracting the audience. The visual and very organic ballet of Godfree's approach was evident throughout principal photography.

"Clement is very involved in how the camera is placed and how it moves," noted Godfree. "His purpose for *Brother* was to find a 'muscularity' to the images, the camera moving with a psychologically autonomous subtlety. This visual choreography loaded the emotional performances of each scene.

Many scenes utilized symmetrical framing, an indication of Clement's willingness to have the filmmaking be felt throughout the film. The use of visual affinity throughout the film made the feeling of being trapped foundational to the feeling of the images. As the story has multiple eras, the attention to paralleling and making them distinct had so many approaches. We worked to find overlapping similarities in framing and movement and left the contrasts of decades moreso to colour and light. These aspects also mirrored the emotional arc of the characters as well."

When he is not at the monitor, Di Rienzo noted, "Clement's right in the room with the actors to be close to them, to have that connection to what is going on in the scene, to adjust and really feel it. He's wonderful with the actors."

Casting *Brother*

Lamar Johnson/Michael

In casting Francis and Michael, the objective was not to find two actors who physically resembled each other, but rather the much more elusive goal of finding two men with emotional resonance. "We met Lamar Johnson and almost immediately knew we had our Michael," said D'Oliveira." He's done consistently brilliant work over the last three, four years and we fell in love with him. He's like a young Sidney Poitier."

Michael has an intense internal life, which, on the surface presents as quietly contemplative and introspective. For a significant portion of the film, he's recovering from a tragic loss as best as he knows how, which is to cut himself off from his emotion and wall himself off from everyone including, Aisha, his first love. This meant Johnson was going to have to carry the film (he is in almost every scene) without the aid of excessive dialogue.

For this reason, Virgo wanted was an actor who would let audiences *feel* what he was thinking. "Everything in the movie is off Michael's gaze. He's the one who takes us through the story, and audiences have to be able to identify with him. With Lamar, I just liked him. I liked who he is as a person."

This is a story of two brothers who are, as Johnson described it, very close, but very different. The entire story is told through Michael's perspective, and audiences see everybody, Francis, Aisha and Ruth, the way that Michael sees them. "I think it's special that way because Michael sees the good in everyone. He's very optimistic in '91 and green. He idolizes his brother who helps him build confidence. Gathering up the courage, Michael makes the move with Aisha which becomes a beautiful, budding relationship until the killing of his brother which happens right in front of him. The trauma is severe. Francis, who had always been the family's protector, is gone, and now Michael has to protect himself and his mother. His heart turns cold, he shuts down and stays that way for 10 years until Aisha reappears in his life," said Johnson.

"What we saw in Lamar's performance was that he could play that innocence of youth and the more wounded Michael of later," said Di Rienzo. "Lamar has a verifiable presence of being grounded and a leader in "real life" – he really knows himself. He's a solid professional."

For Johnson's part, that he has lived the Scarborough experience contributed to the authenticity of his audition. He understands the texture of the community, the tapestry. "Scarborough molded me. It made me: the art, the people, the culture," he said. "To be a part of this story, I'm just very honored and grateful. There's a depth to Scarborough that this story highlights, a side that you don't get to see from newspaper headlines. Yes, there's tension there, and ultimately, it is rooted in people trying to get by, trying to put food on their table. Scarborough is a melting pot of everything. There's camaraderie, there's love, there's compassion. I think is very unique, and it's beautiful."

Aaron Pierre/ Francis

In the search for Francis, the producers sent a script to Aaron Pierre right before he started working with Barry Jenkins' *The Underground Railroad*. The response was immediate. "I think the material spoke to Aaron. He's such a thoughtful, meticulous actor and he'd done his homework. Aaron nailed the character of Francis in his first audition," said D'Oliveira. Plans to shoot *Brother* in 2020 were sidelined by COVID, and "Aaron waited for us until we were ready to go in 2021. From the moment we met both Lamar and Aaron, we realized these guys were our brothers in spirit." And as luck would have it, Pierre spent some of his teenage years in Toronto with his family and had quite a few experiences in Scarborough before moving back to London to attend drama school.

As for that resonance the director and producers were looking for, Aaron Pierre summed it up here, "Lamar and I met for the first time on this job, and I feel like I have known him forever. We have bonded as friends and now have a brotherly friendship. It's been a real blessing, a real pleasure, and a real honor to work with him. He's an incredible individual."

"Aaron has an old school movie star quality about him, like Montgomery Clift," pointed out Virgo. "He's got that combination of masculine strength with a vulnerability that I loved, and knew I'd need for Francis. This is a character who is trying to figure out how to be a man in a world hostile to his manhood. When he's around people like his brother or Jelly, he brings down that armor. He's emotionally available and he can share intimacies with them."

"Francis is, in some ways, a frustrated artist. He has all the ambition and all the drive, but the world is saying, no, you can't have it. That's why the audition scene is so painful for me," Virgo continued. "Francis has all this ambition, and what do you do with it? How do you self-actualize in a world that may not want you? The music is an extension of all that."

During filming, Pierre was always accessible, yet, deeply immersed in his character and mindful of the space that Francis occupied. "He calibrates his physicality and is very focused - he can be vulnerable or fierce, always carrying the emotional weight of the character. His "We're just dreaming" speech, the foil to the hopefulness of the earlier diner scene, is devastating," said Di Rienzo.

"This is an extraordinary character," observed Pierre about his character. "He's a very special young man. He has ambition, plans and drive and he's certainly emotionally intelligent. Something I share with Francis is his protective nature of his loved ones. The relationship he has with Jelly is also very special. Francis is a young man who is understanding his sexuality. He and Jelly are very much on the same page with so many things. It's a deeply loving relationship, a deeply respectful relationship, and they elevate one another. It's like life at home. Everybody's doing the best they can. There's highs and there's lows like in all families, but what never leaves is the love and the respect that they have for one another."

The respect Pierre extends to his character carried through to his director: "Clement is an exceptional director. He leads with love. He leads with kindness and understanding, and he listens. These are the qualities that you dream of when you embark on a project. So, it's nothing short of a joy to be part of this project with him leading it."

Marsha Stephanie Blake/Ruth

When it comes to the New York actor Marsha Stephanie Blake, an entire book can be written about the way she breathed life and a resolute complexity into the character of the mother, Ruth, and how she wrapped her arms around the cast and the crew of *Brother*.

To begin with, it's one thing to say an actor is a chameleon, but Blake has raised that to a very different level by completely disappearing into each of her roles. It was her transformative work as Rosemary, the mentally ill sister who retains her humanity in the film, *Luce*, (the producers didn't even realize it was

Blake at first) that convinced them, “We saw *Luce*, we discovered she was of Jamaican origin, we realized she had a solid career on Broadway and went to bat for her,” said D’Oliveira.

The lifeline similarities between Blake and Virgo were more striking. “I understand Marsha Stephanie Blake. I know her. By that I mean that she born in Jamaica. She left Jamaica when she was 10. I was born in Jamaica. I left Jamaica when I was 11. She went to New York; she was raised by a mom. She was on a track to be a doctor but fell in love with acting. I know her; I know that kind of immigrant expectation. I didn't have to translate a lot with her. I would just present the scenario in the film, and I knew exactly that she'd get it. I didn't have to explain what the scene is or what the mom is feeling because she knows it. You know, I'm really proud of all the performances in this film.”

When Blake read the script, her first thought was, “Is it possible that something that's so right for me actually came to me? What are the chances? When I spoke to Clement, he was so chill and I was like, okay, go talk to whoever you need to talk to because I'm in. The boys, too, we all feel the same. We can't believe we actually get to do this for real. It's crazy. It's such a gift.”

“I recognized Ruth because she reminded me of my mom. She reminded me of all my aunts. They did the exact same kind of work in New York. They lived in similar situations. They had the same fears that Ruth has, that same feeling of ‘I just need you to be better than I was. I don't need you to cook. I don't need you to clean. I need you to stay in school and focus and either get out of this neighborhood or just one step better than this’. This isn't unique to Caribbean people. What's really wonderful about this film, about this book, is that it's about the immigrant experience.”

Blake's instinct was to frame Ruth's journey in love because she saw it everywhere in the story: between the mother and her sons, between the two brothers, between Michael and Aisha, Francis and Jelly, even glimpses of it between Ruth and the father of her children. “Love balanced the fear Ruth felt which is part and parcel of every mother's experience. Her story is that of a single mom trying to raise her two sons, how much love she has for them and how that love is frightening. Actually, it's scary. That love makes every time they leave the house frightening, every interaction. Every time she realizes they're getting older, it's scary.” An outsider might say Ruth was doing a pretty good job of raising two young men alone, up to a certain point, Blake observed. “But she thinks she's inadequate. The arguments she gets into with Francis is about her feeling that she's going to let him down.”

Kiana Madeira/Aisha

The surprise casting on *Brother* was Kiana Madeira as Aisha. “She is a revelation for us,” said D’Oliveira. “She wasn't fully on our radar, but the depth and subtlety of her audition blew us away. Until Kiana came along, we'd not seen anyone with the sympathetic, but worldly-wise emotional essence that Aisha needed. This is a character who lost her mother at a very young age and had cared for herself and her father ever since. And seeing her play the two ages of the character, going from 17 to age 27 effortlessly, it's quite lovely to watch her work.”

While her cast members have Jamaican backgrounds, Madeira is of Portuguese/Irish/First Nations/Black descent. She grew up in Mississauga, Ontario and working consistently as a child actor and through her late teens, she earned her stripes on series television and Netflix projects.

Aisha is the only young woman in the story, Madeira explained. “Growing up, she watched the brothers learning about themselves. Francis would wear his emotions on his sleeve and unfortunately in the society that we lived in then and continue to live in, that's socially unacceptable, especially for people of color. Francis was dealing with so much inside and unable to express it in a way that's safe. She and Michael connected from the first moment, but after Francis is killed, Michael shuts down, shuts her out. That breakup hurt. Seeing that happen to Francis and then dealing with the breakup with Michael gives her the courage to make crazy changes in her life.”

Aisha is smart and uses that as leverage to leave the community to study abroad. It is the imminent death of her father that brings her back home after a decade away, yet once back, she realizes the community is a community that is stuck. "When Aisha comes back into Michael's life, she's like in a world that went dark for 10 years," said Virgo. "She's going through her own healing, and she pushes Michael to confront his own pain and to confront his own healing. By the end of the movie, with help from her and Jelly, they form a new family with Ruth. Michael goes from not being able to feel and connect to being healed and to have connection again."

"Michael specifically and Ruth weren't granted the privileges that Aisha had, to travel and gain more perspective," noted Madeira. "They haven't dealt with the loss of Francis. They aren't comfortable remembering what happened and addressing it. She just sees this beautiful community who's still mourning and actually doesn't have the tools that are necessary to mourn. It's sad, but she has a lot of patience and a lot of perspective to share."

"Doing this movie, there are so many moments where it doesn't feel like we're acting. Most of my scenes are with Lamar, and we have such a beautiful chemistry. Every time we finish a scene, I'm like, wow, it just felt so grounded and so special. When you have to be emotional in a scene, actors will listen to music or think of something to make it personal. But with Lamar, we don't have to think of anything other than what was happening in the scene. We could just breathe and look at one another and be grounded in the circumstances. That's enough to get there emotionally every time. That to me is a dream as an actor. My favorite thing about being an artist is evoking emotions in people. And this is the perfect film to do that. It's heartfelt, it's truthful, and it's important representation. My heart feels very full."

Lovell Adams-Grey/Jelly

"Jelly's gift of music brings love and life because Jelly is a master storyteller. He's taken it upon himself to be the community storyteller," said Lovell Adams-Grey, the actor who portrays the DJ. "Through his music, he bridges the gap between the Caribbean, America and Canada. Jelly is re-collecting our history. He's preserving it, and he's spreading it out. When it comes to Francis, his best friend, they bond over the music and they're going to make some music together. Francis is going to be Jelly's producer, but the relationship goes so far beyond just the neighbourhood."

"There's something about Lovell that's magnetic and alluring," pointed out D'Oliveira. He's done a lot of American television in the last few years and had worked with Virgo on the series, *Rogue*, several years before so when it came time to cast the part of the charismatic DJ, Adams-Grey delivered. "Lovell has done an amazing job of learning the skill of turntabling because that was definitely a requirement of the role. He threw himself 200% into the character."

While Aisha found her way out of the community through her studies, the music was the ticket out for both Jelly and Francis. "In '91, Jelly finds himself in a world that is changing. The Canadian hip hop scene was starting to boom and develop, starting to move to the forefront and you are seeing violence surge at the same time. Francis, Michael, Jelly, Aisha, they are part of an emergence of young kids of immigrant parents who may not have a lot of direction, so the streets teach the kids when mom's away all day working. Scarborough in '91 is Scarlem, Scarberia. It's not a place you want to be at. But when you find your tribe, when you find your community, you can really build something. You connect on levels different than just possessions; it goes to cultural things, cultural roots. It truly is a melting pot of spices and sounds."

The Music

Music is critical in storytelling. It's the thing that gives our characters hope. There weren't a lot of options if you were young, black and gifted and didn't finish high school. It's their ticket to liberation.

It is the character of Jelly, the DJ, who serves as the synergist, the focal point, the source and the blend of the global sounds from Jamaica, West Africa, early jazz and classical. “Jelly’s music is there when these guys are hanging out at Desiree’s, the barbershop, or going to parties,” said D’Oliveira. “It captures a spirit of the early 90s that I remember in Toronto where things could explode because of who was deejaying on any particular night. That is very much what we’re paying homage to here”.

Local music supervisor, Jody Colero, collaborated with the team to find the source tracks that could tell the story of this family and community – a collection that feels timeless and justifies the characters’ demand for “Volume!”.

Tying this all together is the work of composer, Todor Kobakov, who followed Virgo’s directive of wanting to feel the music rather than to hear it. “Understanding that, what I wanted to do with this score was to integrate the music into the fabric of the story and have sounds and textures that effortlessly blended. I incorporated different singers from Toronto and Montreal and organic instruments and horns that refer to the culture’s history, juxtaposing it with a string quartet. The sound design is combined as a cohesive score to support this story almost like a hip hop producer makes beats by taking little chunks from all these little performances and blending them together. I’m an immigrant myself, moving here when I was 16, growing up with a single mom. In many ways I have been able to relate to that struggle of life.”

* * *

“The intergenerational immigrant story, the experience of people who are considered ‘other’, is not a new one in cinema,” Virgo pointed out. “When I hear this expression, I think of *The Godfather* trilogy. The story of the first generation sacrificing and working for that second generation, and the tensions that could happen, that interests me. Can you have too many? I don’t think so. There’s always a different angle, a different gaze on that story.”

“I believe that the world of storytelling is changing. What’s at the center, what stories occupy the center is changing. A few years ago, the immigrant story wouldn’t have been at the center, but audiences are interested in going beyond what we’ve seen over the last 50 years and are curious about different perspectives. I’m looking forward to seeing all the different takes on these stories. And I’m hoping that *Brother* adds to that.”

More than an earnest platitude, telling of the immigrant story, the creation of the source material, the adaptation to film, the multi-year process of development to fruition, this is an active affirmation. “It says that my story, my experiences, and where I’m from is worthy of being told,” said Virgo. And in the telling of it, the ‘other’ becomes recognizable and in turn, the other becomes us.

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LAMAR JOHNSON (Michael)

Lamar Johnson, a Toronto International Film Festival Rising Star, is currently shooting *The Last Of Us* for HBO, starring Pedro Pascal. Lamar also recently wrapped filming on indie features, *Brother* and *Manodrome*. Lamar can also be seen in Showtime's series, *Your Honor* starring Bryan Cranston. Previously, Lamar could be seen in Brett Haley's Netflix feature, *All The Bright Places*. Lamar is known for his role in Fox 2000's *The Hate U Give* based on the New York Times best-selling novel of the same name opposite Amandla Stenberg, and A24 and HBO's *Native Son* alongside Nick Robinson, Ashton Sanders, and Bill Camp.

Lamar made his feature debut in *Kings*, directed by Oscar nominated director Deniz Gamze Ergüven opposite Halle Berry. Prior to *Kings*, Lamar was a Series regular on the BAFTA winning BBC/CBC series *The Next Step*. He is also a world class dancer, who has toured and performed at some of the most iconic venues around the world including the Apollo Theatre in NYC.

AARON PIERRE (Francis)

Aaron Pierre most recently starred in the critically acclaimed limited series *The Underground Railroad*, written and directed by Academy Award-winner filmmaker, Barry Jenkins (*Moonlight/If Beale Street Could Talk*), and in M Night Shyamalan's film *Old*. Aaron was featured in Screen International's Stars of Tomorrow 2021, ahead of his upcoming roles in new Marvel reboot, *Blade*, opposite Mahershala Ali; Barry Jenkins' prequel to *The Lion King*, in which he will voice 'Mufasa'; Garth Davis' *Foe*, opposite Saoirse Ronan and Paul Mescal; and Jeremy Saulnier's *Rebel Ridge*. In 2019, Aaron received rave reviews for his lead role in the Theatre Royal Stratford East's production of August Wilson's play KING HEDLEY II, opposite Sir Lenny Henry. On stage, he previously took the role of 'Cassio' in OTHELLO, at the Globe Theatre in London, starring opposite Mark Rylance and Andre Holland. His further TV credits include *Krypton* (SyFy/E4), *The A Word* (BBC/SundanceTV), *Prime Suspect 1973* (ITV), and the epic fantasy drama *Britannia* (Sky), created by Jez Butterworth (*Spectre*). While training at LAMDA, Aaron has performed in productions of OF MICE AND MEN, CORIOLANUS, PLATONOV, THE VIRTUOSO, LIFT OFF, AGAMEMNON and WOMEN BEWARE.

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Trinkets breakout star Kiana Madeira has proved time and time again that from comedy to drama, she can do it all. Madeira led the cast in Netflix's hit horror film trilogy *Fear Street*. Based on the beloved horror fiction book series from R.L. Stine, the trilogy will make history as being the first set of films to be released back-to-back to back in a condensed window of time. The connected trilogy: *Fear Street: 1994*, *Fear Street: 1978*, and *Fear Street: 1666* follows three separate timelines that all take place in Shadyside, Ohio. Madeira stars as 'Deena', a high school student, who is willing to go to great lengths to protect the people she loves by hunting down clues to uncover events that have haunted her town for generations.

In addition to *Fear Street*, Madeira will be seen starring in the next two films in the "After" franchise, *After We Fell* and *After Ever Happy*. Madeira joins the box-office hit as 'Nora', a pastry chef in New York City who befriends Tessa (Josephine Langford). *After We Fell* hit theaters in September 2021. On the television front, Madeira is perhaps best known for her role as 'Moe Truax' in Netflix's coming-of-age drama series *Trinkets*. The series follows a grieving teen as she finds an unexpected connection with two classmates at her new high school after they all land in the same Shoplifters Anonymous group. Madeira's fierce and academically talented Moe befriends Elodie (Brianna Hildebrand) and Tabitha (Quintessa Swindell) while attending Shoplifters Anonymous. The final season of *Trinkets* premiered worldwide on August 25, 2020.

Born in Toronto and raised in the suburbs of Mississauga, Madeira had her sights set on one thing as a child; to act alongside Danny Zuko in the hit 1978 movie *Grease*. She quickly faced the reality that John Travolta was no longer in his twenties. Although that part of her dream was unrealistic, her desire to star on the screen never faltered. With the support of two young parents, she began auditioning at the age of ten and got her first break in a series of local educational films that same year. Since then, Madeira went on to star in Family Channel's sitcom series *Really Me*, YTV's *The Macdonald Hall* film trilogy, and multiple Disney Channel Original Movies including *Harriet the Spy: Blog Wars*, *Bad Hair Day*, and *The Swap*. Additional credits include Facebook Watch's *Sacred Lies*, CW's *The Flash* and the 2019 thriller *She Never Died*.

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companies Rhombus Media and Whizbang Films before co-founding Hawkeye Pictures with Aeschylus Poulos (*Inescapable*). Since its inception Hawkeye's productions have been selected at renowned international festivals including Cannes, TIFF, SXSW, Locarno, Busan and Hot Docs.

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A TIFF Talent Lab alumna, Sonya currently shapes Hawkeye's slate of features, documentaries and series.

GUY GODFREE (Cinematographer)

Guy Godfree is an award-winning cinematographer whose work has screened at festivals around the world, receiving acclaim and numerous awards along the way. Notable credits include the multiple Canadian Screen Award-winning film MAUDIE, for which Guy was awarded Best Feature at the Canadian Society of Cinematographers Awards. The film, directed by Aisling Walsh, and starring Ethan Hawke and Sally Hawkins, premiered at Telluride, TIFF and Berlinale. Other recent work includes the Focus Features neo-Western LET HIM GO, starring Kevin Costner and Diane Lane (also a CSC award winner); director Bretten Hannam's coming of age drama WILDHOOD (TIFF 2021); and director Nyla Innuksuk's debut feature SLASH/BACK (SXSW 2022). His most recent episodic work can be seen on the Netflix limited series MAID and an upcoming limited series for Crave/APTN from creators Jennifer Podemski and Hannah Moscovitch with executive producer Jeremy Podeswa.

An alum of the American Film Institute in Los Angeles, Guy is originally from the maritime province of Nova Scotia, Canada and currently splits his time between New York City and Toronto.

KYE MEECHAN (Editor)

Kye Meechan is an editor whose career in film began in the early 2000s in Vancouver, Canada. His work has appeared on such outlets as Netflix, AMC, BBC America and the Sundance Channel, screened at film festivals around the world and been recognized with awards from the Canadian Cinema Editors, the Directors Guild of Canada and the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television. Some notable credits include: the acclaimed mini-series *The Book Of Negroes* (dir. Clement Virgo, 2015) which debuted to record-breaking numbers on the CBC in Canada and BET in the USA, garnering numerous awards and nominations along the way; the inaugural season of the popular comedy series *Kim's Convenience* (feat. Simu Liu, 2016) for which he received the 2017 Canadian Screen Award for Best Editing in a Comedy Program; and the ground-breaking second season of AMC's horror anthology series *The Terror* (exec. producer Ridley Scott, 2019), heralded as a radical step forward for Asian representation on screen.

JASON CLARKE (Production Designer)

Jason Clarke is a multiple award winner Production Designer and Art Director based in Toronto. With a career spanning over 20 years Jason has had the opportunity to work in both TV and Feature Films, from low budget indie productions to multi million-dollar studio features, he has acquired a vast knowledge and skillset to make intelligent, creative decisions that he brings to each project.

Career highlights include, David Gordon Green's feature film *Snow Angels*, HBO/Michael Suscy's *Grey Gardens* (which won the American Art Director's Guild for Excellence in Production Design; Jason was the series Graphic Designer). CBC/Clement Virgo's miniseries *The Book of Negroes*, (which awarded Jason with both The Director's Guild of Canada and The Canadian Screen Awards for Best Production Design). Mark O'Brien's feature film *The Righteous* (which awarded Jason a Director's Guild of Canada Best Production Design Nomination). In recent years Art Directing Jodie Foster's *Black Mirror* Episode, *Ark*

Angel. Neil Jordan's feature, *Greta*. Lone Scherfig's, *The Kindness of Strangers*, and Viggo Mortensen's feature film directorial debut, *Falling*. The most recent Production Design Projects include Mark O'Brien's feature film directorial debut, *The Righteous* and Clement Virgo's feature film *Brother*.

TODOR KOBAKOV (Composer)

Todor is an award-winning composer. His credits include *Born To Be Blue*, the Chet Baker biopic starring Ethan Hawke, *Backstabbing For Beginners* (Ben Kingsley) the hit series *Bitten*, *Ransom* (eOne/Global/CBS), for which he just received a CSA nomination, and *Cardinal* (eOne/CTV), for which he was awarded a CSA for Best Original Music, Fiction for the past two seasons.

He recently finished composing for Dakota Fanning's new film *Sweetness in the Belly*, which premiered at TIFF 2019, the new series *Most Dangerous Game* (Quibi) with Liam Hemsworth and Christoph Waltz as well as *Trickster* (CBC).

Todor is also renowned in the indie and pop music scenes working with Metric, Stars, Feist, Sarah Slean, and more.

HANNA PULEY (Costume Designer)

Hanna Puley is a Canadian Screen Award nominated costume and production designer. Based in Toronto she has a background in Anthropology and theatre. She has collaborated on music videos, short films, commercials, theatre productions, and feature films. Selected credits include *Octavio is Dead* (dir. Sook Yin Lee), *Hello Stranger* (dir. April Mullen), *Nirvana the Band the Show* (dir. Matt Johnson), *9 Films About Technology* (dir. Peter Huang), and *The Swearing Jar* (dir. Lindsay MacKay).

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Sonya is a film, television and documentary producer. She was a co-creator along with Susan Coyne and Martha Burns of HBO Canada's *Little Films about Big Moments*. Her director/writer debut, *The Translator* (TIFF 2009), played domestic and international film festivals. Sonya worked at award-winning production companies Rhombus Media and Whizbang Films before co-founding Hawkeye Pictures with Aeschylus Poulos (*Inescapable*). Since its inception Hawkeye's productions have been selected at renowned international festivals including Cannes, TIFF, SXSW, Locarno, Busan and Hot Docs.

Most recently Sonya was a producer on Sheila Pye's *The Young Arsonists* and Clement Virgo's *Brother* – both films are set to world premiere at TIFF 2022. She is currently in pre-production on the feature *The Players*, written and directed by TIFF and Reykjavik Talent Lab alumna Sarah Galea-Davis. She is also producing the four-part international series *Who Owns the World*; and executive producing the Alexandra Billings starrer *Queen Tut*. Upcoming productions include a partnership with Wildling Pictures on Sook-Yin Lee's *Paying For it*, from the best-selling novel by Chester Brown.

A TIFF Talent Lab alumna, Sonya currently shapes Hawkeye's slate of features, documentaries and series.

GUY GODFREE (Cinematographer)

Guy Godfree is an award-winning cinematographer whose work has screened at festivals around the world, receiving acclaim and numerous awards along the way. Notable credits include the multiple Canadian Screen Award-winning film MAUDIE, for which Guy was awarded Best Feature at the Canadian Society of Cinematographers Awards. The film, directed by Aisling Walsh, and starring Ethan Hawke and Sally Hawkins, premiered at Telluride, TIFF and Berlinale. Other recent work includes the Focus Features neo-Western LET HIM GO, starring Kevin Costner and Diane Lane (also a CSC award winner); director Bretten Hannam's coming of age drama WILDHOOD (TIFF 2021); and director Nyla Innuksuk's debut feature SLASH/BACK (SXSW 2022). His most recent episodic work can be seen on the Netflix limited series MAID and an upcoming limited series for Crave/APTN from creators Jennifer Podemski and Hannah Moscovitch with executive producer Jeremy Podeswa.

An alum of the American Film Institute in Los Angeles, Guy is originally from the maritime province of Nova Scotia, Canada and currently splits his time between New York City and Toronto.

KYE MEECHAN (Editor)

Kye Meechan is an editor whose career in film began in the early 2000s in Vancouver, Canada. His work has appeared on such outlets as Netflix, AMC, BBC America and the Sundance Channel, screened at film festivals around the world and been recognized with awards from the Canadian Cinema Editors, the Directors Guild of Canada and the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television. Some notable credits include: the acclaimed mini-series *The Book Of Negroes* (dir. Clement Virgo, 2015) which debuted to record-breaking numbers on the CBC in Canada and BET in the USA, garnering numerous awards and nominations along the way; the inaugural season of the popular comedy series *Kim's Convenience* (feat. Simu Liu, 2016) for which he received the 2017 Canadian Screen Award for Best Editing in a Comedy Program; and the ground-breaking second season of AMC's horror anthology series *The Terror* (exec. producer Ridley Scott, 2019), heralded as a radical step forward for Asian representation on screen.

JASON CLARKE (Production Designer)

Jason Clarke is a multiple award winner Production Designer and Art Director based in Toronto. With a career spanning over 20 years Jason has had the opportunity to work in both TV and Feature Films, from low budget indie productions to multi million-dollar studio features, he has acquired a vast knowledge and skillset to make intelligent, creative decisions that he brings to each project.

Career highlights include, David Gordon Green's feature film *Snow Angels*, HBO/Michael Susic's *Grey Gardens* (which won the American Art Director's Guild for Excellence in Production Design; Jason was the series Graphic Designer). CBC/Clement Virgo's miniseries *The Book of Negroes*, (which awarded Jason with both The Director's Guild of Canada and The Canadian Screen Awards for Best Production Design). Mark O'Brien's feature film *The Righteous* (which awarded Jason a Director's Guild of Canada Best Production Design Nomination). In recent years Art Directing Jodie Foster's *Black Mirror* Episode, *Ark Angel*. Neil Jordan's feature, *Greta*. Lone Scherfig's, *The Kindness of Strangers*, and Viggo Mortensen's feature film directorial debut, *Falling*. The most recent Production Design Projects include Mark O'Brien's feature film directorial debut, *The Righteous* and Clement Virgo's feature film *Brother*.

TODOR KOBAKOV (Composer) Todor is an award-winning composer. His credits include *Born To Be Blue*, the Chet Baker biopic starring Ethan Hawke, *Backstabbing For Beginners* (Ben Kingsley) the hit series *Bitten*, *Ransom* (eOne/Global/CBS), for which he just received a CSA nomination, and *Cardinal* (eOne/CTV), for which he was awarded a CSA for Best Original Music, Fiction for the past two seasons.

He recently finished composing for Dakota Fanning's new film *Sweetness in the Belly*, which premiered at TIFF 2019, the new series *Most Dangerous Game* (Quibi) with Liam Hemsworth and Christoph Waltz as well as *Trickster* (CBC).

Todor is also renowned in the indie and pop music scenes working with Metric, Stars, Feist, Sarah Slean, and more.

HANNA PULEY (Costume Designer)

Hanna Puley is a Canadian Screen Award nominated costume and production designer. Based in Toronto she has a background in Anthropology and theatre. She has collaborated on music videos, short films,

commercials, theatre productions, and feature films. Selected credits include *Octavio is Dead* (dir. Sook Yin Lee), *Hello Stranger* (dir. April Mullen), *Nirvana the Band the Show* (dir. Matt Johnson), *9 Films About Technology* (dir. Peter Huang), and *The Swearing Jar* (dir. Lindsay MacKay).