

ENW II

SPECIAL
FORMATION
ISSUE

FEB 2023

BLACK
*HOLLY—
—WOOD*

ENVII

www.envimedia.co
@envimediaco

Editor In Chief
AZADEH VALANEJAD

Deputy Editor
DAVONNA GILPIN

Chief Creative Officer
MAL PETERSON

**Art Director
Community Relations**
LARASATI

Web Developer
ÉLISE FU

Creative Director
NIAMH MURPHY

Managing Editor
ARQUALA DAVIS

DEPARTMENT EDITORS

Fashion & Beauty MAY PERALTA
Action HEATHER NGO
Advertising AURORA (DAWN) ROSE CARPIO
Features DANNI PEREZ
Formation ELLIE FORTE
Lifestyle SUMAIYA
Translations RIN APAEZ

MANAGING TEAM

Senior Managing Editor ALEXANDRA ARAN
Junior Managing Editors NAEMA BEGUM,
FATHIMA BEGUM, SARA CONWAY,
KHADIJA HAQUE, T. AQUILA PUTRI,
JULIANA SANTOS, MEGAN YEO

SOCIAL

Social Media Editor JEZELLE EDORA
Social Media Managers LEANNA SARFATI,
MIA CHANG, SAM LELCHUK, CHERLLINE
OUCH, STEPHANIE LE

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Relations Director TATYANA HERNANDEZ
PR Coordinator MARVIN EUNICE

VIDEO

Supervising Producer VERONICA ESPINAL
Producers FAITH RODRIQUEZ,
MARINA QUINONEZ, JANNAT BEGUM,
JANE RIVAS

GRAPHICS

Graphics Team Lead JENESSA EDORA
Graphic Designers REBECA GOMES, ALEX, CAROLYNE (CHI) CHANG, ANDREEA,
ASTRID NAKIRI, XANA ANGELO, JENNY,
KAIA MORRISON-BURKS, RADIYA AHETO

CONTRIBUTORS & WRITERS

SARAH BATHKE, MAFE MORALES, MAFE RAMOS, CHANEL WILSON, CRISTA BARDALES,
CHYENNE TATUM, MENDY, JOYCE CHAI, MCKENZIE GOODING, COURTNEY BROWN-DOUGLAS,
ELLIE R., LEIGH, MERLYN MALDONADO, FRANCINE, ALLY DE LEON, SOPHIE HARRISON, TERESA
NICOLE, HAJIN YOU, VALENTINA, VANYA, KAYAN TAM, KAREN YI, ELENA, SHANNON LEFTWICH,
ALICE QIN, JENNA, ELLA OKUNMWENDIA, MAYA WHITNEY, DE'ANDRA JOHNSON, EEMAAN. RJ
FRANKLIN

Translators LUCÍA MEDRANO, JASMINE NAHTA, ANABEL ZALDIVAR, AMANE, NESA,
CARISSA ALFIORA, SOPHIE-MARIE LUDWIG

We are a source
culture, news, &
fandom spaces

TABLE OF CONTENTS

e for *Black* lifestyle in s & beyond.

WHAT WE TALKIN' BOUT:
Black Characters in Fantasy
Film & Television

06

The MCU Is So Black Right
Now — Here's Why

12

Making Waves: Top Black Actors
to Watch in 2023

18

INTERVIEW:
Fighting Stereotypes
with Jenny Lyric

28

Get The Look: Modern
Hollywood Glamor

36

Behind the Lens

40

PHOTO COURTESY OF WARNER MEDIA/DISNEY



WHAT WE TALKIN' BOUT

Black Characters in Fantasy Film & Television

BY DAVONNA GILPIN

“She’s brown like me”

10-year-old Mayas exclaimed after watching *The Little Mermaid* live-action trailer, touching the hearts of hundreds of thousands across the world. Set for release in May 2023, the musical fantasy features upcoming Black actress Halle Bailey of Chloe X Halle fame, playing the main character, Ariel.

What We Talkin' Bout is EnVi's op-ed series that tackles serious social and cultural topics in an up-close and personal way.

Each WWTB goes beyond just opinions to provide in-depth breakdowns of relevant issues that matter to us most.

As Hollywood aims to be more diverse and inclusive in front of and behind the camera, it has ushered in a wave of opportunities for Black actors. At the same time, there's been a revival of the sci-fi and fantasy genres within movies and television, with the increase of cosmic-level Marvel movies and the return of the *Avatar* franchise. It was only a matter of time before these two movements would cross paths, with Black actors taking on fantastical roles more and more.

However, not everyone appreciates this advancement of diversity in Hollywood. There has been an immense backlash against movies and TV shows that have cast Black actors in what would be considered traditionally “white roles.” Especially when it comes to the IPs that are being remade, rebooted, and given sequels to give “new looks at familiar worlds.”

NOT PART OF OUR WORLD

When the news of Bailey's casting as Ariel was announced in the summer of 2019, the internet erupted. Once all the unfunny jokes about mistaking her for another Black actress and Academy Award Winner — Halle Berry — died down, racists and anti-Black people came out in droves on social media platforms like Twitter and YouTube to air their grievances.

Many argued that their criticism had nothing to do with Bailey's race itself. It was just the fact that Disney would change the red-headed, blue-eyed, and pale-skinned character that's so near and dear to them. But Ariel is a mermaid, a mythological fish creature of lore that isn't assigned a race, so what should it matter if she's played by a Black woman in a live-action remake? Moreso, the original fairytale written by Hans Christian Andersen in 1937 never actually specified a race or place of origin for Ariel.

The criticism flared up again when Disney Studios released the enchanting teaser trailer for the movie. It shows Bailey in full Ariel costuming, dyed red locs, CGI iridescent tail, and all. The camera follows Ariel from behind as she swims through the water. As the score comes to the swell, you can finally see Bailey's face as she sings the movie's signature song, "Part of Your World." Within days of release, the video had accumulated 2 million dislikes on YouTube and a slew of negative and overtly racist comments targeted toward Bailey.

The director had to clarify that there was "no agenda" when deciding on the cast for the movie and that the casting call was open to all races and ethnicities. "We just were looking for the best actor for the role, period. The end. We saw everybody and every ethnicity," Rob Marshall explained. "[Bailey's] voice is something that is so signature and so ethereal..." and he knew once they heard her sing that she was right for the role.



ELFS & DRAGONS, & BLACK PEOPLE?...OH MY!

This discourse isn't limited to *The Little Mermaid*. HBO's *House of the Dragon* (2022), a prequel of sorts to *Game of Thrones* (2011), has seen similar criticism. The show, based on George R.R. Martin's book *Fire & Blood*, takes place in a fantasy world where dragons and shapeshifters exist. This made-up setting is also home to the House of Velaryons, who are portrayed by Black actors.

House of the Dragon provides another fictional setting where viewers could suspend their belief to enjoy the story that included mythology and creatures proven to not exist, but they draw the line at Black people appearing on the screen. The fans of this show made such a roar that basically forced the show creators to give an explanation on why they would make such beloved characters Black.



Since *Game of Thrones* featured an almost entirely white cast — for which it received criticism albeit minimal in comparison to this — showrunner Ryan Condal wanted a show that was more of the times, more relatable to now. Though he emphasized in a panel with TheGrill 2022, that making this family Black wasn't "just to tick off a box" of diversity, it added to the stakes of the plot.

"We have an incredibly diverse audience that's not only across America but in multiple countries that speak all sorts of different languages, that represent all the colors under the sun," Condal said. "And it was really important to see some of that reflected up on the screen. This is a fantasy world. I think if this was a

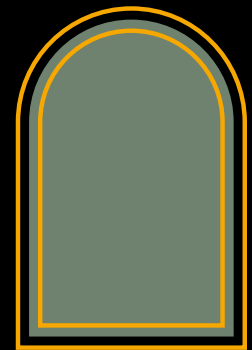
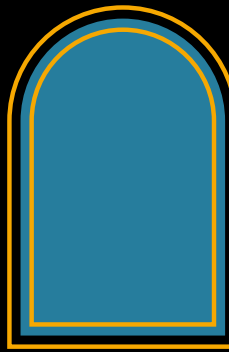
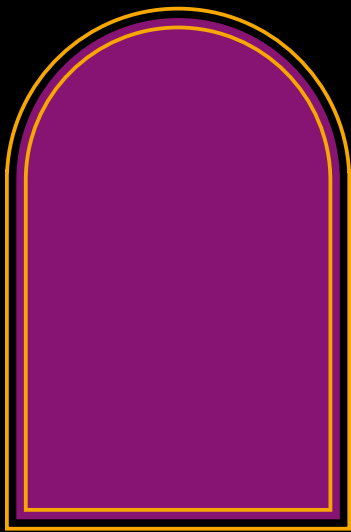
historical fiction piece, it'd be a more nuanced discussion." It's worth noting that even with historical-based fiction, the conversation still leaned incredibly racist, anti-Black, and lacked nuance, see: Broadway musical *Hamilton* (2016) and Netflix series *Bridgerton* (2020). Additionally, Amazon Prime Video's *Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* (2022) has followed a similar path. The show is a spin-off of the popular *Lord of the Rings* movie franchise based on J.R.R. Tolkien's high fantasy novels.

A tale as old as time at this point, viewers were appalled to see Black elves and a Black dwarf in the series in prominent and even background roles. It went against everything they were used to

seeing from the *Lord of the Rings* world of Middle Earth, which until that point was predominantly white.

South African and Iranian actress Sophia Nomvete acts as Princess Disa in the series. She took the brunt of backlash as the first Black dwarf in the fantasy world. "Some of the things [the cast] have experienced blew my mind. It is violent, it is harassment, it is aggressive, it is racist...", she told *ABC News*.

Amazon stood up for its show, cast, and fans in the face of review bombing, threats, and more. They released a lengthy statement condemning the racism and harassment and emphasized that "J.R.R. Tolkien created a world which, by definition, is multicultural."



WHY REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Leavar Burton, beloved actor and host, weighed in about the issue on *ABC News Live*. Burton, who was part of the legendary *Star Trek* sci-fi franchise, mentioned that seeing the show's original iteration in the 1960s was a major inspiration for him growing up. At that time, *Star Trek* made history by casting Nichelle Nichols in a lead role. The show also had her kiss her white male co-star, William Shatner, which became the first interracial kiss on US television.

"I was constantly looking for validation on TV... it was rare to see Black people." Burton went on to specify that he doesn't remember vitriol of this level towards him when he starred in *Star Trek*. But he believes what we're seeing now is only because people realize how important diversity really is in these spaces.

"To those who are privileged, equality seems like punishment," Burton concluded.

Why can't Black people have a place in fantasy without it being seen as inauthentic? The definition of the word fantasy is broken down as "a creation of the imaginative faculty whether expressed or merely conceived: such as imaginative fiction featuring especially strange settings and grotesque characters." If it is strictly imagination-based, then how can a made-up character's race be considered right or wrong? Even more so, how does that justify hurling racial epithets at the actors who are simply doing their job and making history in roles they could have only dreamed of?

Professor Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, author of *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination From Harry Potter to the Hunger Games* told *Vulture* in a 2022 interview that most white, western viewers have been ingrained to "see the world as white-and-heroic and dark-and-savage." She went on to elaborate, "That was how they were taught, but we do have an obligation as a society to begin to unlearn those lessons."

Not accepting the diversification in fictional fantasy roles limits people of color/children of color from seeing themselves. It also minimizes the Black experience in cinema to just biopics and movies about race and slavery. As important as those stories are and as resilient as Black people can be, more than anything, we want to be seen as fully fleshed-out people (or aliens, or mythical beings!) and ideas on screen. We want to be those who can be anything, from boring and mundane school teachers, to mermaids who yearn for a life out of the sea, to aliens that guard the realms of the galaxy. The sentiment that Black people aren't allowed to be these types of characters is dangerous.

As Thomas put it best, "...seeing people with darker skin is what interrupts the [non-Black viewers] fantastic dream. That must constantly be pushed back against, because if we're erased in the imagination then it is easier to erase us in the real world."

BLACK



ACTRESS LETITIA WRIGHT - RED CARPET HOLLYWOOD BY RON RAFFETY/CC BY

The MCU Is So *Black* Right Now — Here's Why

BY CHYENNE TATUM

Marvel fans are undoubtedly on a high with all the upcoming content coming their way. After the announcements made at 2022's San Diego Comic-Con (SDCC) and Disney's D23 Expo, the anticipation for what's to come in the MCU—Marvel Cinematic Universe—has everyone at the edge of their seat.

While many of Marvel Studios' announcements included characters of various backgrounds and ethnicities, it isn't hard to notice how undeniably Black these subsequent few "phases" are as we make our way through what is now dubbed as the Multiverse Saga of the MCU. In celebration of these upcoming wins for Black creatives in the industry, here are all the Black-led projects—so far—you can look forward to in this new cinematic universe.

BLACK PANTHER: WAKANDA FOREVER

Arguably, the most anticipated movie from the MCU in recent years came from director Ryan Coogler and the cast of *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*. Given the unfortunate death of actor (and Black Panther himself) Chadwick

Boseman in 2020, fans waited with bated breath to see how the studio would tackle his character and the overall story of Wakanda moving forward.

Thankfully, the sequel did not disappoint, grossing over 800 million dollars in box office sales to date, delivering a gut-wrenching, relatable story about grief, acceptance, and believing in yourself. Making cinema history again, the movie secured five Academy Award nominations, still the only MCU movie to do so in major categories. Including Best Supporting Actress for Angela Basset's powerful portrayal of Queen Ramonda and one for Rihanna, Tems, and Ryan Coogler for Best Original Song. The blockbuster also delivered the first look at Dominique Thorne's debut as Riri Williams (Ironheart) and Michaela Coel as Dora Milajae warrior, Aneka.

While we won't spoil who took on the Black Panther mantle after T'Challa, the film was able to successfully invoke a raw emotion so powerful and yet so painful—all while honoring Boseman and T'Challa's memory as beloved heroes both in and outside of Wakanda.

For those who missed it in theaters, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* hits Disney+ on February 1, 2023.

NIA DACOSTA DIRECTS THE MARVELS (JULY 28, 2023)

Following the debut of 2019's *Captain Marvel* and the movie heroine's appearance in *Avengers: Endgame*, Brie Larson returns as one of the three titular characters in the upcoming sequel. Starring alongside Larson as a "Marvel" is Teyonah Parris and Iman Vellani reprising their roles as Monica Rambeau and Kamala Khan, respectively.

While Monica made her adult debut in *WandaVision* over a year ago, fans have yet to see a continuation of her storyline and journey as a budding superhero. Sporting a natural twist-out and determined attitude, Monica resonated with many Black women who had watched her blossom from the comfort of their homes, and it's refreshing to know there's still so much more to come in her next appearance.

It's also important to note *The Marvels* is directed by Nia DaCosta, making history as the first Black woman (and youngest filmmaker) to direct a Marvel film. She's previously seen success directing *Little Woods* and *Candyman* and can soon add superhero blockbuster to that list.

SECRET INVASION (SUMMER 2023)

Samuel L. Jackson is no stranger to these action-packed adventures. His portrayal as Nick Fury has become just as important as the franchise itself—he is the glue to everything Avengers and beyond. Now he'll star in a new series on Disney+ series, *Secret Invasion*, a six-episode sci-fi thriller.

The last time we saw Fury (or a version of Fury) was in 2019's *Spider-Man: Far From Home*. After the major post-credit twist, it turns out he's been up to a lot more than what he led everyone to believe. In *Secret Invasion*, we'll learn what he and Agent Hill have been up to, as well as the Skrulls' invasion of Earth.

In a nutshell, the MCU's Nick Fury is everything we wish we could be—bold, daring, fearless, and most of all, dangerous. But we've also come to love his sense of humor and the softer side he rarely shows.



IRONHEART (FALL 2023)

After the events of *Wakanda Forever* this fall, actress Dominique Thorne will star in her first Disney+ series, *Ironheart*. In the comics, Riri Williams is a 15-year-old engineering student who builds her own version of an Iron Man suit and later goes on to work with Tony Stark himself.

Since Robert Downey Jr.'s Iron Man has passed on from the superhero universe, an appearance is less than likely. However, an appearance from Rhodey (War Machine) could very much be in the works, especially since Don Cheadle is set to reprise the role in his own Disney+ series soon.

What's equally exciting about this series is that we'll get to see a young Black character directed by two Black women—Sam Bailey and Angela Barnes. Back in 2020, Captain America star Anthony Mackie criticized Marvel for the lack of diversity in their production crews during his time on set thus far. Since then, we've seen more Black creatives highlighted behind the scenes in directing, writing, hair, and makeup, but there's always room for even more.

BLADE (2024)

For the first time in nearly 20 years, cult-favorite vampire hunter Blade is making his cinematic return. At San Diego Comic-Con 2019, Marvel announced actor Mahershala Ali would play the titular character.

Many fans credit the first *Blade* trilogy, led by actor Wesley Snipes, for kickstarting the comic book movie phenomenon we know today. Without *Blade*, so many of the more recent superhero movies would not exist, let alone in this capacity.

Ali marked his first portrayal of the character in the post-credit scene of *Eternals*, where he speaks off-screen to Kit Harrington's Dane Whitman a.k.a. the Black Knight. Fans are eager and enthusiastic to see another vampire renaissance in the MCU—and even happier to see a Black man at the center of it all.

CAPTAIN AMERICA: NEW WORLD ORDER (MAY 3, 2024)

Following the finale of *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* (TFAWS), Anthony Mackie's Sam Wilson has officially grad-

uated from Falcon to Captain America. During the show's 2021 run, Mackie and Winter Soldier actor Sebastian Stan underwent an emotional and intense transformation and realization of their characters. While Bucky was successfully cleansed of his Winter Soldier programming, Sam finally accepted his rightful place as the new symbol of hope for America—regardless of historically racial tensions in the country.

While it was reported early on that Anthony Mackie signed a new contract with Marvel, the timeframe of his first solo movie had been up in the air until now. With an official release date and a new subtitle (mirroring the title of episode one in TFAWS), fans can expect to see Sam in all his red, white, blue, and Black glory in May 2024.

The plot so far is unknown, but with the release of the *Thunderbolts* film happening only two months after, it's safe to assume we'll see Sam and at least a few Thunderbolts characters cross paths in more ways than one—U.S. Agent John Walker, anyone?

THE KANG MULTIVERSE (2023-2025)

Some attentive fans would know that most of Phase Four has been leading up to a full-blown Kang the Conqueror domination. Starting with season one of *Loki*, we were introduced to Jonathan Majors as He Who Remains a.k.a. the first Kang variant.

Everything about this portrayal of He Who Remains—from his mannerisms to his inflections—was incredibly captivating and entertaining. It's not hard to see why Marvel's keeping him around and setting him up as the "big bad" of the Multiverse Saga. His next appearance is confirmed to be in *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*, where he'll play a second and more comic-accurate version of Kang the Conqueror.

But that's not all. He's expected to appear in season two of *Loki* (currently filming), and the next two Avengers movies, appropriately titled *Avengers: The Kang Dynasty* and *Avengers: Secret Wars*. Although most comic aficionados know Kang as a blue-skinned supervillain, it speaks volumes that Marvel would rather forgo the blue and have Majors depict the character as his true self, Brown-skinned and all. In a world where film studios have been criticized for casting Black actors in "white/non-Black" sanctioned roles, this is yet another step in the right direction.



BLACKPANTHERCASTSDCC2017 BY [NEHRAMS2020/CC BY](#)

THE FUTURE'S LOOKING BLACK

Compared to where the MCU was in Phases One, Two, and even Three, there's definitely been a great increase in diversity and representation across the board. And while it isn't anywhere near perfect, it's still so important the Black community continues to feel uplifted on and offscreen—and Marvel is finally getting it.

Because when we win, so does everyone else.

Making V Top Black to Watch

Waves: Black Actors in 2023

BY DE'ANDRA JOHNSON

Following the (ongoing) COVID-19 pandemic, more and more moviegoers are returning to theaters to watch new (and pushed back) films released last year. From Marvel hits like *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* (2022) and A24's *X* (2022) and *Bodies Bodies Bodies* (2022), Black stars such as Angela Bassett, Kid Cudi, and Amadla Stenberg stood out on the big screen in 2022, and 2023 is no exception. Check out *EnVi Formation's* list of the ten Black actors who will be making waves in the film and TV industry in 2023.

Waves Making

DOMINIQUE THORNE

Following her standout performance as Ironheart in Marvel's *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, all eyes have been on the 25-year-old Brooklyn native. Thorne first took an interest in acting during middle school where she participated in a few plays. This influenced her decision to apply and attend a high school specifically for performance arts. Although she had a passion for the arts, once it came time to apply for college, she decided to apply to both performance arts and academic schools but ultimately decided to attend Cornell University to study immigration legislation. Though she focused on studying academics in college, her love for acting remained.

She continued to pursue her love for acting by performing and starring in multiple plays at Cornell. However, a big acting opportunity would completely steer her to seriously pursue a career in acting. After making her film debut in the Academy Award winning film *If Beale Street Could Talk* (2018) as the snooty and sassy sister of Alonzo "Fonny" Hunt, this experience gave her the push to put more of an effort into her acting career. Her efforts would soon pay off. After graduating from Cornell in May 2019, she went to star in another award-winning film, *Judas and the Black Messiah* (2021). With a slew of critically-acclaimed films already under her belt and now being a part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, there's no denying that Dominique Thorne will soon be a household name.

You can next see Thorne star as the titular character in Marvel's *Ironheart* series premiering this fall on Disney+.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DOMINIQUE THORNE'S INSTAGRAM

Waves

HALLE BAILEY

No stranger to the entertainment industry, Halle Bailey is one half of the talented sister R&B duo *Chloe x Halle*. Born in Georgia, Bailey began acting at the age of three. She starred in minor roles for films such as *The Fighting Temptations* (2003) alongside Beyoncé (her first but not last time crossing paths with the Queen herself), *Last Holiday* (2006), *Joyful Noise* (2021), and the television show *Tyler Perry's House of Payne* (2007).

While dabbling in acting, she and her sister, Chloe, practiced learning musical instruments, singing, and songwriting. At the age of 11, Halle and her sister began posting song covers on YouTube. Their covers soon gained traction and went viral multiple times. Their cover of Beyoncé's songs, including *Pretty Hurts*, particularly gained the attention of many celebrities such as Ellen DeGeneres and even Beyoncé herself! Queen Bey was so impressed by the talented sisters that she signed them to her record label, Parkwood Entertainment. Soon after, the duo moved to Los Angeles, where their careers continued to grow.

While the sisters began to officially establish themselves as musicians under the name *Chloe x Halle* after moving to Los Angeles and being mentored by Beyoncé, they also continued to work in the acting world. The sisters played twin sisters Jazz and Sky on Freeform's *Grown-ish* (2018), a spin-off of the hit ABC show *black-ish* (2014) that follows the life of the family's eldest daughter, Zoey, through college and young adulthood. The sisters wrote the theme song for the show as well. However, after playing alongside her sister on the show for four seasons and releasing the Grammy-nominated album *Ungodly Hour* as *Chloe x Halle*, Halle is continuing her acting career solo. In 2019, it was announced that she landed the role of a lifetime as Ariel in the live action version of the Disney classic *The Little Mermaid*. Though she received some (racist) backlash



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HALLE BAILEY'S INSTAGRAM

upon the casting announcement, she has also received an abundance of love and support from fans and actors alike. Besides, with an angelic voice like Bailey's, there's no denying that she's perfect for this role!

In addition to the release of *The Little Mermaid* on May 26 this year, Bailey can also be seen in the upcoming musical adaptation of Alice Walker's classic novel *The Color Purple*. The film is set to release on December 20.

JONATHAN MAJORS

This year, you won't be able to escape the name Jonathan Majors — and for good reason! California-born and Texas-raised, Majors spent his early years living on a military base due to his father's occupation. However, after his father's sudden disappearance and realization of being in a working class family and not getting the same opportunities as others, his life began to change. He began to rebel and faced some major obstacles during his adolescent years, including being bullied, being suspended from school, and living in his car for a year. However, he credits theater as his safe space growing up and the reason why he was able to overcome those obstacles.

This passion for theater led him to attend and receive his BFA from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. He later went on to get his MFA from the Yale School of Drama, which boasts an impressive alumni roster of award winning actors including Angela Bassett, Lupita Nyong'o, Winston Duke, and Brian Tyree Henry. During his final year at Yale, he went on to be cast in the ABC miniseries *When We Rise* (2017). Since then, he's gone on to work consistently in Hollywood.

His role as Montgomery Allen in *The Last Black Man in San Francisco* (2019), which received multiple film critics nominations and awards, is often noted as Majors's breakout role. His other notable works include HBO's *Lovecraft County* (2020) and Spike Lee's *Da 5 Bloods* (2020). Now, he is also a part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, playing the next central villain, Kang the Conqueror.

In 2023, there will be no shortage of Jonathan Majors on your screens. His film *Magazine Dreams*, the story of the struggles of an amateur bodybuilder, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival on January 20. Marvel's *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* premieres in theaters February 17 and *Creed III* (also starring Michael B. Jordan) premieres March 3.

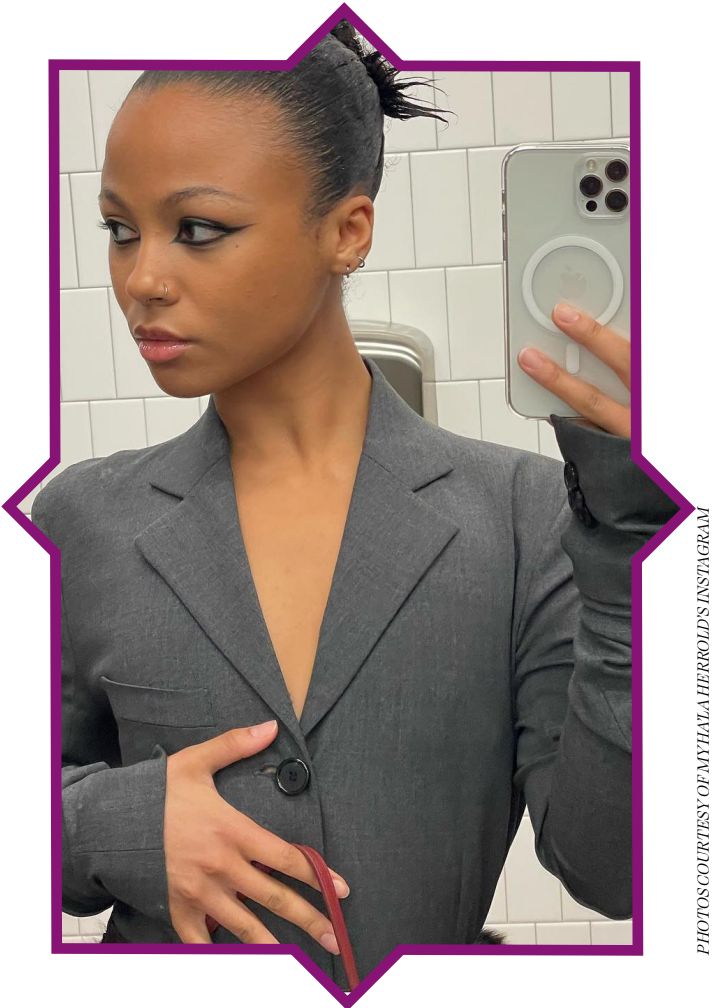


JONATHAN MAJORS ON COLLIDERVERIDIO, SEPTEMBER 2018 BY [COLLIDERVERIDIO/CC BY](#)

Making Waves

MYHA'LA HERROLD

Star of the U.K. show *Industry* (2020) on HBO, San Jose native Myha'la Herrold has been making a splash on both the big and small screens this past year. From an early age, Herrold always knew she wanted to do musical theater. "I was like, I wanna sing, I wanna be on stage. That's what I'm gonna do," she said in an interview with SSENSE. She went on to study acting and live theater at the prestigious Carnegie Mellon University School of Drama. Prior to graduating in 2018, she participated in shows for multiple theater touring productions, including *The Book of Mormon*. After graduating from college, she had plans to continue in the theater world. However, everything changed once she auditioned for *Industry*.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MYHA'LA HERROLD'S INSTAGRAM

After auditioning and successfully receiving the starring role in *Industry*, Herrold decided that screen acting was more her speed. Now 26, the young actress is charging her way through the industry (no pun intended). Her performance as Jordan in the Gen-Z horror flick *Bodies Bodies Bodies* (2021) alongside Amandla Stenberg showcased Herrold's acting chops on the big screen. From dramatic and terrifying scenes to perfectly timed comedic banter, Herrold was a major standout in the film. With the success of *Industry* (which has been renewed for a third season on HBO) and *Bodies Bodies Bodies*, we will surely be seeing a lot more of Herrold in the future.

You can next catch Herrold in the Netflix film *Leave the World Behind* alongside Julia Roberts and Mahershala Ali later this year and *Dumb Money* starring Nicke Offerman and Paul Dano.

making waves



PHOTOS COURTESY OF O'SHEA JACKSON'S INSTAGRAM

O'SHEA JACKSON JR.

Son of hip-hop legend and multi-hyphenated actor Ice Cube, O'Shea Jackson Jr. will prove once again this year that he is indeed a multifaceted star who continues to rise. Born in Los Angeles, Jackson got involved in music before he started acting. He featured on two of his father's songs in 2010 and then released his own mixtape under the moniker OMG in 2012. Jackson went on to study screenwriting at the University of Southern California, where he developed his love for cinema.

Jackson first gained prominence playing none other than his father in the critically acclaimed N.W.A. biopic, *Straight Outta Compton* (2015). Soon afterwards, he went on to star opposite Aubrey Plaza in the indie dramady *Ingrid Goes West* (2017), *Just Mercy* (2019) with Jamie Foxx and Michael B. Jordan, and most recently in the Star Wars limited series *Obi-wan Kenobi* (2022) on Disney+.

Jackson can next be seen in Elizabeth Banks' upcoming black comedy *Cocaine Bear* in theaters on February 24. He will also be starring alongside Camila Mendes and Bad Bunny in *American Soles* and Gerard Butler in *Den of Thieves 2: Pantera*, both of which are currently in pre-production.

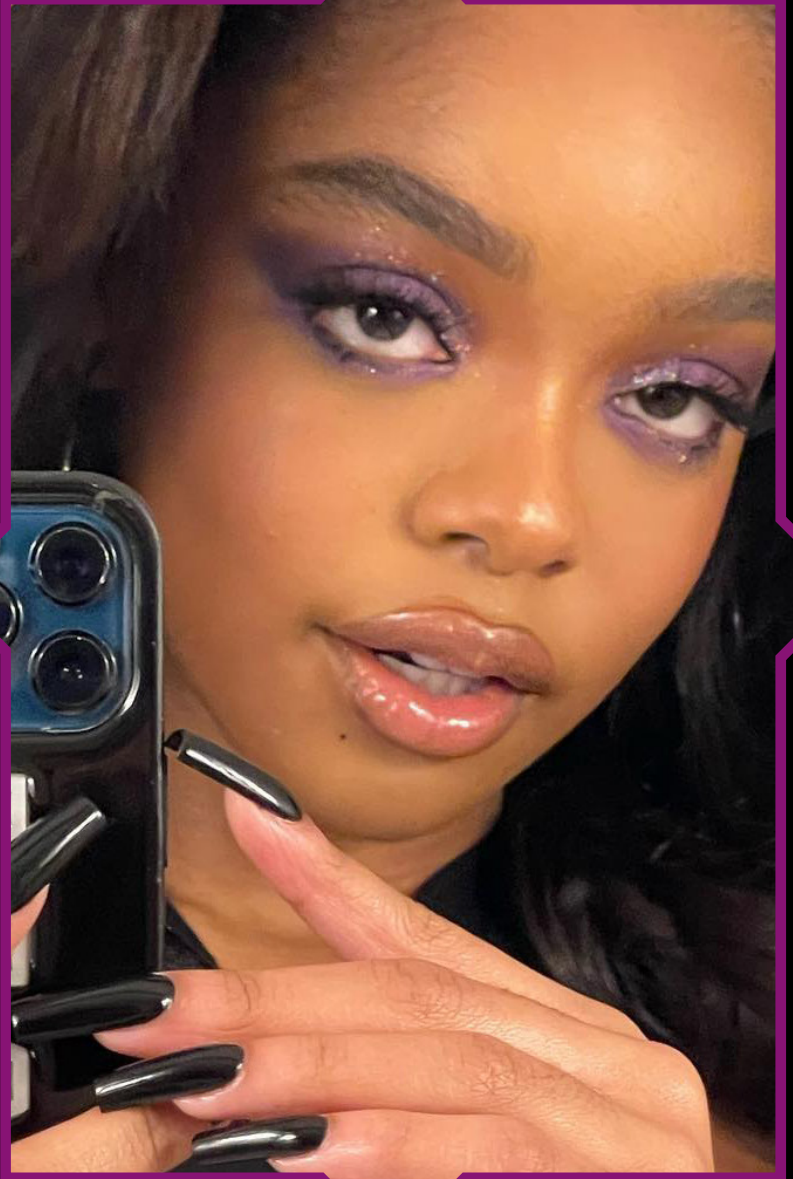
making waves

MARSAI MARTIN

Child prodigy Caila Marsai Martin got her first big acting break in 2013 at only nine years old. She left her hometown in North Texas with her family and moved to Los Angeles after getting casted in the ABC sitcom *black-ish*. Eight seasons, nine years, and multiple award nominations later, Marsai is a red carpet darling, a philanthropist, and an entrepreneur. At the age of 14, she started her own production company—Genius Productions—and became the youngest person to ever executive produce a major studio film. In addition to producing 2019's *Little*, Martin also starred in the film alongside the accomplished Regina King and Issa Rae.

Outside of *black-ish*, Martin also found time to give back to her community. She teamed up with organizations like DoSomething and Color of Change to bring awareness to many issues: diversity in writing rooms, bullying, financial literacy, and women's wellness. Even though she has just turned 18 and finished school, she also found time to do an impressive run of voice acting roles on everything from *The Mr. Peabody & Sherman Show* (2015) to *Paw Patrol* (2013) and *The Proud Family: Louder & Prouder* (2022). In her most recent role, she starred opposite Omari Hardwick and Kelly Rowland in Nickelodeon's *Fantasy Football* (2022).

Martin has hinted at upcoming projects in previous interviews and on social media, with her production company being attached to multiple big name projects in the making.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARSAI MARTIN'S INSTAGRAM

BRANDON GILPIN

“SHOWTIME!” is the popular catchphrase of rising actor Brandon “Showtime Brando” Gilpin. The 23 year-old has only been acting for a few years but already has a slew of credits on his resume. Born and raised in Amityville, New York, Gilpin is known for having always been an entertainer. He started as an athlete, playing basketball and running track and occasionally making music locally. It wasn’t until his first year at the historic HBCU Morehouse University that he got bitten by the acting bug. Working his way up, Gilpin started as a production intern on the BET college series, *The Quad* (2018). Most recognized for his role in STARZ’s *P-Valley* (2020) as the mouthy teen DJ Neva Scared, he can also be found on shows like *Grown-ish*, *Blue Bloods* (2010) and *Queer as Folk* (2020). In 2021, Gilpin made his big screen debut in the Aretha Franklin biopic *Respect* (2021), starring Jennifer Hudson and Marlon Wayans.

With a slew of upcoming projects in the works for the likes of Hulu and a season 3 of *P-Valley* announced, you can expect to see Gilpin on screens throughout 2023.



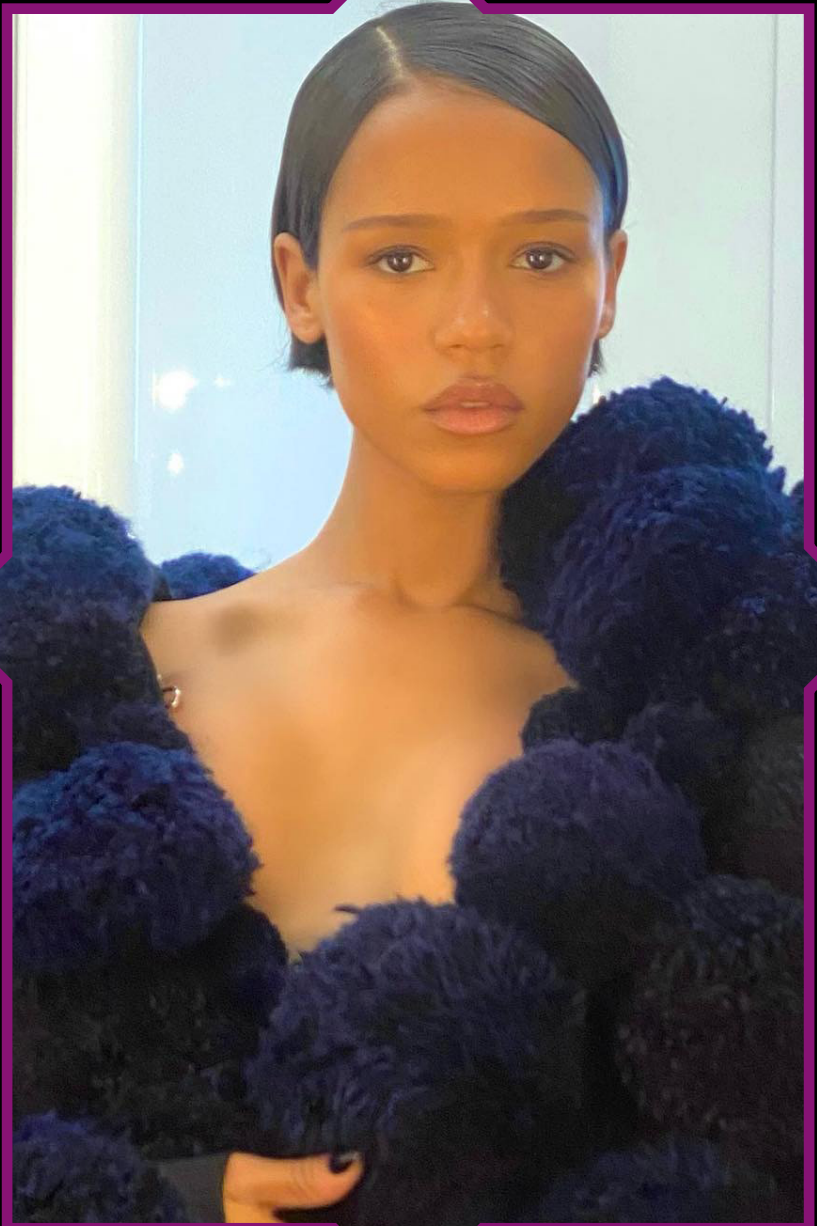
PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRANDON GILPIN'S INSTAGRAM

TAYLOR RUSSELL

28-year-old Canadian actress Taylor Russell didn't take her first acting class until she was 18. After switching from ballet to paint, she finally found her stride in acting. In the ten years since that first acting class, Russell has made a name for herself and racked up an impressive resume. She started off with smaller roles, guesting on the CW and Disney XD shows in addition to a starring role on the Lifetime tv movie *The Unauthorized Saved By The Bell Story* (2014).

However, it wasn't until *Lost In Space* (2018) that Russell had her big break. The Netflix series and her performance in it were both met with critical acclaim. The show and its cast were nominated for Emmys, Saturn awards, and more during its three year run. Russell herself was nominated for Best Supporting Actress in a Streaming Presentation in 2019. From there, it was full steam ahead for her with back-to-back roles in indie films. She starred in lead roles for the *Escape Room* (2019) movie series, *Waves* (2019), *Words On Bathroom Walls* (2020), and *Dr. Bird's Advice for Sad Poets* (2021).

Carving a new lane for herself, Russell also made best dressed lists from multiple red carpet and award show appearances. Similar to her peer, Zendaya, Russell's looks became the talk of social media, raising her star profile as people wondered what she would show up in next. Most recently, Russell starred opposite Hollywood leading man Timothee Chalamet in *Bones and All* (2022), a cannibalistic romance based on the fiction novel of the same name.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TAYLOR RUSSELL'S INSTAGRAM





BY ELLA OKUNMWENDIA

Fighting Stereotypes with *Jenny Lyric*

“My music is very encompassing of everything that I like. I just kind of write what I’m feeling at the time,” Jenny Lyric told *EnVi* in a chat via email. The pop and R&B singer initially caught the attention of the K-pop community with her covers. Since then, she has evolved into a professional singer with a couple of singles to her credit and an upcoming EP. Lyric, who sings in English and Korean, has been on a mission to break conventions and forge her own path in the music industry. *EnVi* explores Jenny Lyric’s musical career in honor of Black History Month, highlighting her accomplishments and showcasing her grit as a Black woman in the music industry.

RAISED BY BLACK PIONEERS

"Around about three years old I got a recording microphone toy and ever since then, I've been singing," Lyric said about her musical childhood. Thanks to her uncle's vinyl collection, the St. Louis, Missouri-native grew up listening to legendary Black singers such as Stevie Wonder, Lauryn Hill, Erykah Badu, and Aretha Franklin.

Jenny Lyric had a more personal encounter with music in 2001. "The big turning point for me was 2001 when I got my first CD, Alicia Keys' *Songs in A Minor*. That's when I knew I wanted to actually pursue music seriously," she said. To the rest of the world, the 16-track album was a Grammy-winning album with hit singles "Fallin'" and "A Woman's Worth," but Jenny Lyric saw it as her starting point. Years after the album's release, the youngster would join her high school choir. She also became part of an acoustic band called Breathless Imperfection in her bid to pursue a music career.

Following in the footsteps of her idol, Alicia Keys, Lyric was inseparable from her keyboard. To her, it was a constant accompaniment as she performed in college. Jenny's love for Alicia Keys did not end with her playing the keyboard. In selecting her stage name, she opted for Jenny, a short form of her first name, Jennifer. Her second name, Lyric, was a nod to her role model who chose "Keys" for its similarity to piano keys, one of her favorite instruments.

DIVING INTO THE HALLYU WAVE

Jenny Lyric, like every other K-pop fan, had a set of songs that drew her into the K-pop world. "Wonder Girls' 'NO-BODY' and SHINee's 'Amigo' were my first K-pop songs back in 2009." A casual listener of fourth-generation K-pop groups like BLACKSWAN and STAYC,

Lyric admitted, "I am still a heavy second-generation stan! But I will say, NCT NEVER misses." Drawn by its catchy music and diverse video concepts, Lyric embarked on a journey to record her rendition of her favorite K-pop songs and uploaded them on YouTube. "I think the one person who inspired me to start doing K-pop covers on YouTube was Puma Shock," she said, referring to one of the first Black women to post K-pop covers on YouTube. Detailing her sentiment at the time, Jenny Lyric said, "I was like, 'Yo! If she can do this, I can do this too.'"

An admirable trait of Jenny Lyric is her dauntlessness. While navigating the music industry, a major rule Lyric has lived by is "don't listen to what people have to say if it is not positive; don't listen to it because people will talk you out of things before you even set it up." Sticking to her belief, and refusing to be dissuaded by anyone, Lyric hopped on Facebook to declare her intention of forming a K-pop girl group. Her call was answered by other Black women who joined forces to create K-pop's first Black girl group, Coco Avenue. The ladies, who began as a sextet before promoting as a quintet, shared soulful covers of popular K-pop songs. They also had the opportunity to perform at major cultural events such as the Global Hallyu Forum in 2013. There, they performed a medley of K-pop hits, including Min Hae Kyung's "Mini Skirt," ITYM's "HOT," CL's "The Baddest Female," and 2PM's "ADTOY," among others.

Coco Avenue progressed as a duo in 2014 with members Jenny Lyric and Jenna Rose. The pair recorded a sultry cover of Jay Park's "You Know," 4Minute's "Crazy," and a rendition of GD and Taeyang's "Good Boy," which they renamed "Good Girl." When asked about what she thought was Coco Avenue's biggest achievement, Jenny Lyric responded: "Really just existing. We were that group that was doing things that inspired other Black women to pursue the same careers without worrying about what people would say."

We
grew
was
thin

*were that
up that
doing
gs that*



*inspired
other Black
women
to pursue
the same
careers...*



“...There were so many people of different ethnicities just giving us such a warm welcome. And that kind of validated us.”

As a duo, Coco Avenue went beyond covering songs to performing at events and recording original songs in Korean. The ladies graced the stage at shows such as KTown Night Market, Korean Festival LA 2015, HiTeen Korea Pageant, KCON 2016, and Kpop Con Miami. In 2015, they won the American K-pop Festival Performance, which saw them embark on what would be their first trip to South Korea. A big deal for both Lyric and Rose, their trip to South Korea presented an opportunity to network and perform live. “We performed at a club called In2Deep [in Hongdae], and the reception we got was amazing. There were so many people of different ethnicities just giving us such a warm welcome. And that kind of validated us.” Aside from the networking, Lyric and Rose made it a point to have a good time and enjoy Korean cuisine.



In 2016, they released their first original song titled “TTMU,” an EDM track with Korean and English versions. The following year, Coco Avenue dropped a Korean R&B track titled “Eottae.” The song was well received by fans of the duo, who cited its similarities with Jay Park’s “You Know.” Jenny Lyric described Eottae as her favorite song she had ever written. “There have been so many different versions of that song that I’ve recorded simply because I have such a soft spot for it being the first song I’ve written in Korean,” she explained.

Shortly after the release of “Eottae,” Coco Avenue announced their disbandment, with Jenna Rose and Jenny Lyric focusing on solo projects. Among the many things they wished to do together before their disbandment was working with the Korean record label AOMG. “That was just such a big deal to us and a big dream for us. And to

just have a beat where at the beginning it’s like, ‘I need a Cha Cha beat.’ That was, uh, still my goal.”

A NEW ERA

Jenny Lyric began her solo journey by opening for South Korean rappers Reddy and G2 at the K Hip Hop Festival in Los Angeles. Before making her solo debut in 2018, she briefly joined Nuna Gang, a female quartet which described itself as a “Hallyu Supergroup,” incorporating elements of K-pop into their music style.

Lyric made her solo debut with an English remake of “**홀져보기** (Closer),” a ‘90s hit by Young Turks Club, produced by the legendary K-pop producer Shin Insoo. The song was released under Warner Music Korea and 1theK, one of K-pop’s biggest channels on YouTube. Lyric

was not the only one excited about her new journey. “My fans were super super supportive when ‘Closer’ came out. People were hitting me up about it, like, ‘Yooo, your video is here [ltheK].’ I was like, ‘Is it!?’”

After releasing “Closer,” Lyric put releasing original music on hold and kept her fans entertained with occasional covers. She thrilled fans with a cover of Chloe X Halle’s “80/20,” Beenzino’s “Bougie On and On,” and a couple of Sinead Harnett songs, just to mention a few.

In 2021, Jenny Lyric made a return with the acoustic version of “Eottae.” Prior to that, she collaborated with her ex-husband AJK on “View,” a song about Black and Asian solidarity. Reflecting on her evolution as an artist, Lyric said: “I feel like the biggest change for me has been with my confidence. I loved being in groups, but I realized that I was also using others as a crutch when it came to making music or live performances. I was always second-guessing my ideas and decisions. These days, I’m finding a lot more confidence in myself and my creativity.”

She ended 2021 with “Homies,” a song she recorded during the pandemic. Lyric describes “Homies” as a song that “rebooted her inspiration.” The pop song stresses the importance of friends and family and was dedicated to Lyric’s loved ones. “So one of my biggest supporters is actually my friend, Messie. She’s actually my manager now and she’s amazing. She supports me in one of the biggest ways when it comes to my music, especially. And also, when it just comes to me emotionally breaking down, she’s always there for me,” she explained. Continuing her shoutout, Lyric said, “I got my friends Sierra and Nami (former members of Nuna Gang) also always having my back. My family is always there hyping me up whenever I’m feeling down. You know, I can just pick up the phone and just call. So I’m just so thankful to all these people.”

BACK WITH NO TURNING BACK

In June 2022, after six months of silence, Jenny Lyric made her comeback at the KTown Night Market. Held in Los Angeles, the energetic performer thrilled the crowd with a cover of 2NE1’s “Come Back Home” and introduced them to her previously released singles “Closer” and “Eottae.” For Lyric, performing at the Minzy-headlined event meant a lot, both as a second-generation K-pop fan and as an artist. An excited Jenny Lyric exclaimed, “Minzy

was performing the same night. That was a freaking HUGE deal to me. What! I’m on the same stage as a 2NE1 member! It was a big deal. It was great. I’m still on a high from it.” Her performance was also made memorable by the audience, as she “noticed people starting to come up to the stage.” Jenny, unable to hide her excitement even through email, told *EnVi*: “Oh my God, people are connecting with me; people are connecting with my music,” she said. I was able to give that energy back. It was just such an amazing, amazing, amazing night!”

With the world paying attention to her, Jenny Lyric dropped her first single of the year, titled “Love on the Dance Floor.” The uptempo, danceable song was the first song she released under her label, Local High, and featured both English and Korean lyrics. “Love on the Dance Floor” also provided Lyric with the opportunity to demonstrate her dancing abilities through the dance challenges she introduced.

Her love for audience interactions and stage performances led Jenny Lyric to make an appearance at the Kplay Fest, which she described as “100 degrees.” Jenny described her favorite moment from the performance as “the crowd was great, and my amazing team of dancers and hype man killed the set! The best part of performing is getting a crowd that connects with me.”

Having given fans a glimpse of her life through her music, Jenny Lyric got intimate and vulnerable with her next release, “My Own.” Speaking on the inspiration behind the SoundCloud-exclusive song, Lyric said, “I’m currently going through a divorce, and I realized I have so much music I have written while suffering emotionally during the marriage.” For the 31-year-old, writing her feelings in a song has always been healing for her. “I hope that the music I wrote during those days can help in someone else’s healing journey just like ‘Good As Hell’ [by Lizzo] helped me.”

Still on a music release spree, Jenny Lyric ended the year with her first-ever Christmas song, “Love and Cheer.” Breaking down the song-making process to *EnVi*, Lyric recalled, “I was super nervous writing the track since holiday music is not my forte. I reached out to two amazing artists and songwriters, Chantel Nichole and Sierra Glazebrook, and we created something amazing together.”

After releasing three singles in 2022, Jenny Lyric is set to drop more Korean singles and work on her debut EP in 2023. “I’m also hoping to work on a lot more collaborations within the community as well,” she added.



LEGACY

Since her days at Coco Avenue, Jenny Lyric has been on a mission to combat stereotyping in the K-pop music scene. “I make music for the people who were called weird for liking K-pop back in the early 2000s,” she explained. “My music is evolving, maturing, and becoming extremely personal as I grow.” Detailing her journey, she told *EnVi*,

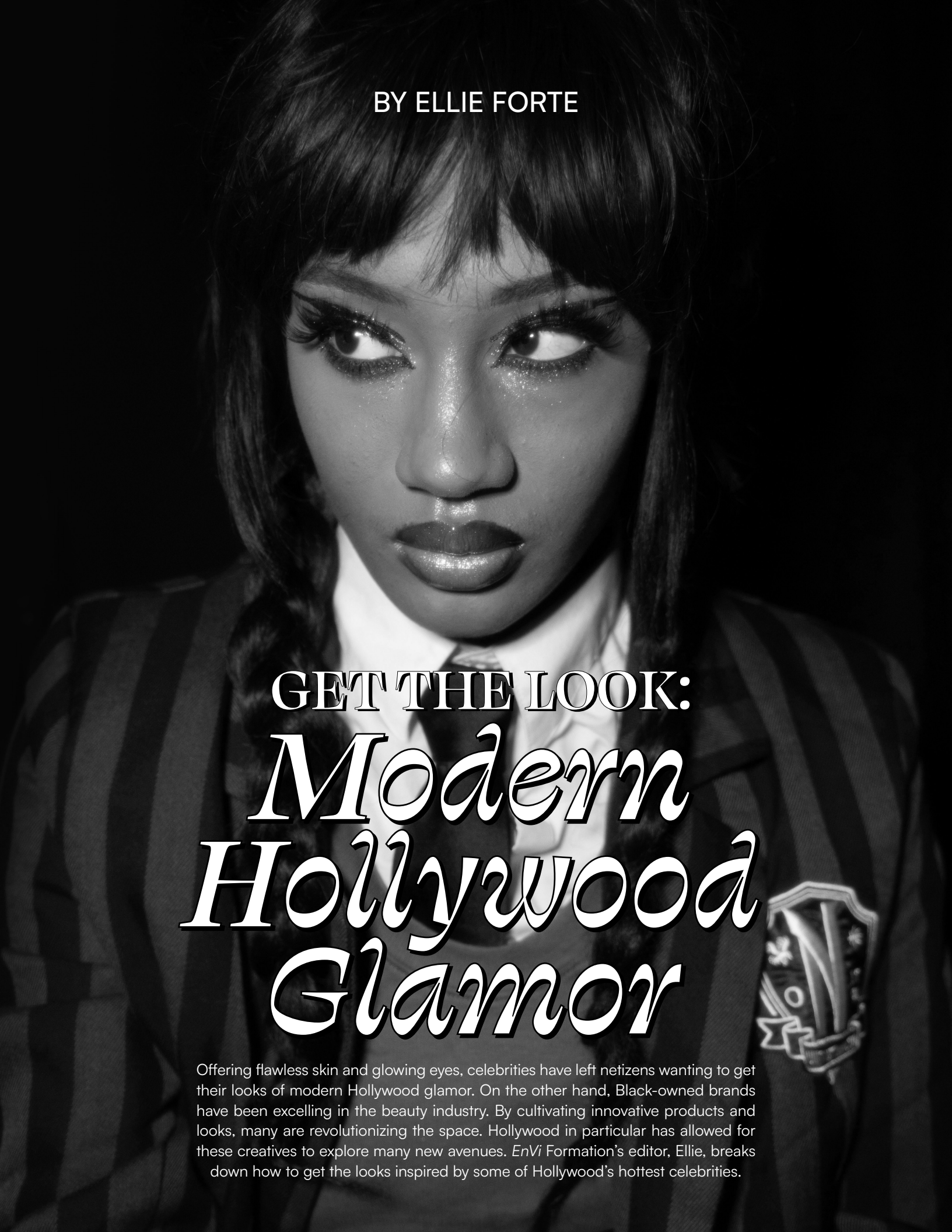
“I realize that I’ve kind of just been moving on autopilot. It’s hard to be passed up on when it comes to opportunities, but I am enjoying creating a lane for myself.” Having taken a liking to a music industry heavily influenced by Black culture, Jenny Lyric admitted to hating her exclusion from performance opportunities based on her race and not her work. Beaming with enthusiasm, she said, “I do feel like things are slowly shifting as K-pop becomes more global.”

She equally shared the lessons she has learned in the past decade since she started doing music. Her mantra since her K-pop

cover days, Lyric revealed, is “I’m still learning how to block out any hate and just go with my first thought, go with what I’m feeling because that’s what’s most important. That’s how you make those connections with people based on you, not on what someone else wants you to be doing or thinks you should be doing.”

Jenny Lyric ended her chat with *EnVi* by discussing her ideal collaborations aside from producer Cha Cha Malone. “I’m really looking forward to collaborating with artists like JUNNY, who I got to chat with a bit last summer backstage at his show at the LA Korean Festival. It was my first time hearing his music, and I was in awe of his pen and his live vocals! DEAN is also and will forever be a dream collaboration for me.”

In her bid to make a name for herself in a stereotyped industry and be an icon of motivation to Black women, Jenny Lyric vowed to make “self-improvement a habit.”



BY ELLIE FORTE

GET THE LOOK:
*Modern
Hollywood
Glamor*

Offering flawless skin and glowing eyes, celebrities have left netizens wanting to get their looks of modern Hollywood glamor. On the other hand, Black-owned brands have been excelling in the beauty industry. By cultivating innovative products and looks, many are revolutionizing the space. Hollywood in particular has allowed for these creatives to explore many new avenues. *EnVi* Formation's editor, Ellie, breaks down how to get the looks inspired by some of Hollywood's hottest celebrities.



HOLLYWOOD-INSPIRED LOOKS

Hollywood has been responsible for some of social media's most coveted looks. Shows like HBO's *Euphoria* and Freeform's *Grown-ish* are just a few of the shows that inspire the viral makeup trends.

I'll Dance, Dance, Dance

Netflix's 2022 hit series *Wednesday* became a global phenomenon upon release. From Jenna Ortega's riveting performance as Wednesday to her iconic dance, the show was inescapable on social media. It takes on the classic Addams family most know and love, but with a modern spin. Encompassing the gothic elements of Wednesday Addams, I wanted to create a look that paid homage to her sharp tongue and quick wit. This look uses tight linework and utilizes silver chomes. Because Wednesday Addams is "allergic to color," it made sense to focus on black and silver for the look.

Products Used:

Claropsyche Real Fantasy Palette

Danessa Myricks Beauty Lightwork IV Transcendence Palette

NYX Retractable Eyeliner in Black

Lilly Lashes using style Miami Flare

Gold and Red

Using Pat McGrath, this look meshes gothic glamor with gold. Gold throughout Hollywood has signified prestige and success. Analyzing the trophies of The Oscars and The Golden Globes, this look accentuates features due to a cohesive color story. The highlight of the look is the incorporation of sparkling shadow with large glitter particulates. By utilizing this, it allows for high luminosity in low light. To complement the gold, I wanted to incorporate a passionate yet dark red ombre lip. To achieve this, I lined my lips with a black lip pencil and filled in color with a matte lipstick. It was important to blend the color of the lips before adding any gloss.

Products Used:

Mothership VI: Midnight Sun Palette

Danessa Myricks Beauty Lightwork IV Transcendence Palette

NYX Retractable Eyeliner in Black

NYX Cosmetics Line Loud Vegan Longwear Lip Liner

NYX Cosmetics Lip Lingerie XXL Matte Liquid Lipstick

Fenty Beauty Gloss Bomb in shade Fuchsia Flex





Crying Out Loud

As seen on: Zendaya

Inspired by Zendaya's *Euphoria* glitter tear look, this makeup look takes a darker turn. After the release of the hit show, glitter makeup trends (as seen on the cast) grew in popularity. The looks on *Euphoria* are designed by Doniella Davy who used makeup to push the story of the show further. In her captions, she gives fans a first look into her thought process behind her work.

With that in mind, the look I created aimed to give

new meaning to the glitter tears trend. Utilizing curved lines is key with this look. To make it appear like tear tracks, it was important to complement the thick glitter of the tears with a finer metallic eyeshadow.

Products Used:

Pat McGrath Mothership I: Sublime

Touch of Glam Beauty Dragon Holo Eyeshadow

Urban Decay Heavy Metal Glitter Gel

Danessa Myricks Beauty Infinite Chrome Flakes

Bella Beaute Bar Euphoric Holo Eyeshadow

HOLLYWOOD BLACK BEAUTY FAVES

Black owned brands are taking over beauty, here are some of Hollywood's most coveted brands.



Danessa Myricks Beauty

Brand owner, makeup artist, and photographer Danessa Myricks has seen immense success during the pandemic. Her namesake brand is known for products like the Yummy Skin Blurring Balm Powder and Infinite chrome flakes. Because of her accessible releases, the brand has fostered a strong relationship with the beauty community. The impact of Danessa Myricks Beauty is evident. Celebrities like Jada Pinkett Smith and Sheryll Lee Ralph sport her products on red carpets. Due to the brand's variety of products, she can reach beauty lovers who want light makeup and those who prefer more intense looks.

EnVi's Pick: Yummy Skin Serum Foundation



Pat McGrath

Finding success in the beauty and fashion space due to her world class talent, Pat McGrath is a staple for Hollywood's finest. With years of elbow grease in the industry, she has been crowned the "Mother" of modern makeup. Since her 2015 launch of Pat McGrath Labs, she has become a billion dollar name. In 2022, she famously designed the makeup for Zoë Kravitz in Matt Reeves' *The Batman*. Upon release, the looks she designed for the actress went viral on social media. From the first release of her Mothership I: Sublime Palette to her current Mothership X: Moonlit Seduction palette, she has offered cohesive color stories. Pat McGrath appeals to the beauty fans who want luxury and quality wrapped in one.

EnVi's Pick: Moonlit Seduction Eye Duo



Fenty Beauty

Since its 2017 launch, Fenty Beauty is one of the key players in the makeup industry. Revolutionizing the space with its inclusive 40 shade foundation drop, it is now a favorite for many celebrities today. Since launch, the brand has offered cult favorites like the Gloss Bomb Universal Lip Luminizer and Eaze Drop'Lit All-Over Glow Enhancer.

The brand also took their line to virtual space in 2021 when they collaborated with Riot Games. Curating looks for the studio's Netflix show *Arcane*, characters like Mel Medarda went viral for her intricate makeup.

EnVi's Pick: Diamond Bomb All-Over Diamond Veil

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHERYLL LEE RALPH'S INSTAGRAM

PHOTOS COURTESY OF QUINTA BRUNSON'S INSTAGRAM



Behind the

BY ELLIE FORTE

For a long time, Hollywood has shut out Black creatives (both in front and behind the lens). In the 135 years since the release of the first motion picture *Roundhay Garden Scene* (1888), Black creatives are still fighting an uphill battle for diversity. And though many of the early motion pictures were documentaries, films have become more complex over the years.

This development came with its own issues, as racism was sewn into the fabric of American Film. Hollywood's first successful feature film was the incredibly racist and anti-Black film *Birth of a Nation* (1915). Blackface, caricatures, and grotesque imagery would be utilized in productions years to come after its release. Many of the roles for Black people in the late 19th and early 20th were derogatory roles. Shelved into films as enslaved people, the Black actor or film maker was left with non-existent autonomy.

Pioneers like William D. Foster, the first Black producer of the century, would produce work that sought to change the narrative surrounding Black people in film. Following in his footsteps, Black filmmakers would go on to make major advancements in the industry.



the Lens

THE STATE OF HOLLYWOOD AND PHOTO

While Hollywood is certainly seeing an increase of Black directors and writers, there is still work to be done. The film and video production industry is still largely white. #OscarsSoWhite is one of the many examples of the industry's shortcomings in diversity. The hashtag was created in response to the 2015 Academy Awards which saw all 20 Acting nominations handed to all white actors. It happened again in 2016, forcing Hollywood to look inward at the ways in which it has consciously and subconsciously kept Black talent out.

Years later at another prominent awards ceremony, The Golden Globes would be called out for its lack of diversity. Additionally, the LA Times reported that the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, who represents

the Golden Globes, did not have a single Black person in its organization. Despite the major advancements that Black actors and directors are making, there are large gaps in the racial demographics of below the line crew.

Live tapings are also one of many instances in which Black people are disregarded in film. Some shows can have a Black cast, black production assistants, and Black audience members. Despite this, camera crews are often all white. In response to the lack of diversity in production behind the camera, over 100 filmmakers launched Change the Lens. It pledges to make sure that the representation of black filmmakers (In film and music) "is reflective of the greater population."

CURRENT BLACK CREATIVES IN THE INDUSTRY

Despite the many barriers that present themselves in Hollywood, Black creatives are finding their second homes. Rising through the ranks of tv and film, people like Brandy Reed and Alexander Hammond play instrumental roles in their productions.



Brandy Reed - Production Coordinator

Brandy Reed is a Los Angeles based production coordinator known for working on shows like *K.C. Undercover* (2015), *A.N.T. Farm* (2011) and *Girl Meets World* (2014). As a Black woman, Reed brings a new perspective to the productions that she works on. Her eye for detail and knowledge has given her the tools to succeed in her work. She found her start in high school when a teacher suggested for her to try Media Arts in college as she had a “great eye for things.”

During her collegiate career, Reed was able to get experience in radio, production, sports and film under her belt. “After college it was definitely like a lot of rejection... My friend’s dad was a producer and I like, cold emailed him one day ... and he was like come in tomorrow I need an assistant” she told *EnVi* over Zoom. That show ended up being the hit Disney Channel show *A.N.T. Farm* starring China Anne McClain. She was able to rise through the ranks and became an assistant production coordinator after her time as a PA.

Working through different sets, she made sure to connect with her peers. Reed reminisced about past shows she worked on, noting that her first rodeo as a production coordinator was on *K.C. Undercover*. She also mentioned that it was her favorite production. “I felt like I learned so much about the industry... the crew members were great on that show as well ... learning more about television I think I really grew a lot.”



Alexander Hammond - Casting and Talent Relations

Currently working in Casting and Talent Relations at Revolt TV, Alexander Hammond was destined for the entertainment industry. “I feel like I was kind of born for it,” shared Hammond in a call with *EnVi*. Getting his degree in English writing, he recalls his early career landing him outside the industry. After college, he started as an intern for a public affairs communication and lobbying firm.

Knowing that he wasn’t happy, Renada Shepard brought him on as a showrunner’s assistant for a project that she was working on. Shepard is an Afro-Latina showrunner and writer. Speaking of his time working with Sheppard, Hammond said, “I was a showrunner’s assistant and I said to myself ... I never want to be a PA.” From there, the show he was working on was pulled by Freeform and he had to eventually work as a production assistant.

Being a PA on shows like Disney’s *Raven’s Home*, (2017) and Nickelodeon’s *That Girl Lay Lay*, (2021) was an eye opener for Hammond. On the side, he was also doing gigs for unscripted television as a PA. There, he was able to earn his stripes on various sets and with creatives at all levels. Learning the nuances of the different facets of film and TV made him “so grateful.” It was from there that he solidified what he wanted to do within the industry. His asset was his “can-do” attitude as he dipped into both scripted and unscripted TV. Catching the radar of his superiors, he was brought into his role at Revolt.



FOR THE FUTURE

As it stands, the Hollywood film industry intends to diversify. Despite the many hurdles that exist, it is moving towards a more inclusive direction. In 2022, UCLA released its annual Hollywood Diversity Report, which highlighted the current state of minorities in film. The report found that in 2021, “nine of the top 10 theatrical films for Black moviegoers (ranked by the group’s share of opening weekend, domestic box office) featured casts that were over 30 percent minority.” The evidence reveals that there is a strong correlation between the inclusion of Black talent and performance amongst community members.

