



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

‘HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT’ WINS BIG AT BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA’S PITCHBLACK AWARDS

Documentary about trailblazing Black LGBTQ+ artists and two games
are the big takers at the nation’s largest pitch competition for Black stories

NEW YORK (May 1, 2026) — Luchina Fisher’s *Hiding in Plain Sight*, a rousing exploration of the Black queer artists who have helped to shape every genre of popular music and culture, won the top prize of \$150,000 at the **ninth PitchBLACK Awards** on Thursday. The [Black Public Media](#) event, which also included the presentation of the 2026 BPM Trailblazer Award to filmmakers **Stanley Nelson** and **Marcia Smith**, culminated its PitchBLACK competition — the nation’s largest pitch competition for independent filmmakers and creative technologists who create Black content. Sponsored by **Netflix** and **Andscape**. PitchBLACK took place at The Apollo Stages at the Victoria in Harlem.

Hiding in Plain Sight, the first two-time PitchBLACK award winner (2023 and 2026), tells the unsung story of Black queer artists in music told through the personal stories of contemporary and historic figures who have shaped today’s sound and culture but rarely receive recognition of their full identities. The documentary brings to life the stories of Black queer performers like Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Little Richard, whose influence can be seen in mainstream artists like David Bowie, Prince, the Rolling Stones, Lady Gaga, Beyoncé and Harry Styles.

This year, five film projects and five immersive media projects competed at the PitchBLACK Forum, hosted by advertising futurist **Tameka Kee**.

Two projects came away with Immersive awards. *Squidpunk*, by **Naomi Urey** and **Georgiana Wright** — a high-energy, beat-'em-up video game about sisterhood and street fights in Y2K Japan — won the top prize of \$50,000. *Omnivores Rule*, by **Connor Wall** — a third-person biological simulation video game about a flying android learning ecological empathy on an alien planet — received \$25,000 in production funding.

BPM Executive Director **Leslie Fields-Cruz** presented the 2026 Trailblazer Award to Nelson and Smith, recognizing their acclaimed body of work and their enduring impact on documentary filmmaking, including their role in nurturing the next generation of filmmakers. The event featured an Artists’ Chat with the married duo, moderated by NPR host **Brittany Luse** (*It’s Been a Minute*).

“Good stories don’t just appear. As our trailblazers and pitchers have shown us, they take time,” said Fields-Cruz. “They take care. And yes ... they take resources. That’s why this moment is really about HOW we support the stories and the storytellers. Through our Black Stories Production Fund, we’re inviting the public — audiences, communities, people who believe in this work — to invest in them, and fuel the future of Black stories. To not just watch the stories, but to bring them into existence. Because the future of this field will not be built by institutions alone. It will be built by all of us.”

-more-

To further celebrate Nelson and Smith's remarkable accomplishments, BPM is presenting a special online retrospective of their films, running through Sunday, May 10. Films available for streaming include: *We Want the Funk!* (2025), *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* (2015), *Freedom Riders* (2010), *Jonestown: The Life and Death of People's Temple* (2007), *A Place of Our Own* (2004), *The Murder of Emmett Till* (2003), *Marcus Garvey: Look for Me in the Whirlwind* (2000), *The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords* (1999) and *Two Dollars and a Dream* (1989). Register for on-demand viewing [here](#).

Amirah Adem, a Los Angeles-based director and producer, was selected as the 2026 Nonso Christian Ugboke Digital Media Award recipient. Named after BPM's late director of digital initiatives, the award honors a talented under-30 creative technologist working in new media. Adem is a graduate of the University of Southern California (MFA) and Pomona College (BA) whose films center Black leads in untold stories. Her work has been student BAFTA longlisted, shown at the American Black Film Festival and supported by the Alfred P Sloan Foundation. Her debut short, "Convertible," premiered at the Director's Guild of America Theater and was shown at the Essence Festival of Culture.

Silent, by **Nile Price** — a cinematic musing on the psychic effects of our endlessly plugged-in world — was named the 2026 *AfroPoP Digital Shorts* Viewers' Choice winner. The film appears on BPM's [YouTube channel](#).

Founded in 1979, BPM funds quality film and immersive stories, develops media makers, and produces and distributes original content.

PitchBLACK was sponsored by Netflix and Andscape, with additional support from Sonder Foundation and PBS.

To support BPM's Black Stories Production Fund, visit blackpublicmedia.org. Follow the organization at @blackpublicmedia on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok.

ABOUT BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA

Black Public Media supports the development of visionary content creators and distributes stories about the global Black experience to inspire a more equitable and inclusive future. For nearly 50 years, we've invested more than \$18 million toward iconic documentaries and innovative immersive media projects. We help independent makers — especially those whose work might otherwise be overlooked — bring their stories to life and reach audiences.

BPM-supported projects have earned numerous awards, including five Anthem Awards, five Emmys, 10 Peabodys, 14 Emmy nominations and an Academy Award nomination. In 2025, the rescission of federal support for public media created a significant gap in BPM's annual budget. In response, BPM is expanding its community of supporters through the [1.8 Million Donors campaign](#) and launching the Black Stories Production Fund to ensure the continued production and distribution of these stories.

###

For interview and media inquiries, contact:
Cheryl L. Duncan
Cheryl Duncan & Company Inc.
cheryl@cdcprnews.com