



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
CANNES CLASSICS
2021 OFFICIAL SELECTION

Sky e Quoiat Films
present

OSCAR MICHEAUX

THE SUPERHERO OF BLACK FILMMAKING

A film by
Francesco Zippel

Produced by
Sky, Quoiat Films

USA, 1920. While *The Birth of a Nation*, the "racist" masterpiece by D. W. Griffith, still echoes in the country, in Illinois a man distributes a film with an equally symbolic title: *Within Our Gates*. His name is Oscar Micheaux and his intent is to powerfully respond to Griffith's work. The idea of reacting to such a praised blockbuster is heroic in itself, but there is a further element that makes *Within Our Gates* as sensational as it is extraordinarily brave. In an era of unassailable segregation and with the uncontrollable rise of the Ku Klux Klan, an African-American director, Micheaux, challenges the racist pillars of 1920s America. He is the first to offer his people a different vision of American society and to show the condition in which millions of women and men, victims of the darkest and most ferocious racial discrimination, deserve to live. As he had already done with his autobiographical novels, Micheaux uses cinema and theaters throughout the United States to spread his message and to structure what would then become the African-American film industry. A human, artistic and entrepreneurial miracle conceived by a man, gifted with unparalleled intuition and a surprising ability to overcome obstacles.

Oscar Micheaux - The Superhero of Black Filmmaking, the new film by Francesco Zippel (Friedkin Uncut), produced by Sky and Quoiat, and selected in the Cannes Classics section of the Cannes Film Festival, reconstructs the extraordinary story of Oscar Micheaux. Only four photographs and around ten of his 40+ films have survived to this day, but the time has come to rediscover Micheaux's uniqueness. To do so, the film ventures into the places of his life, from rural Illinois to the vibrant Chicago of the early

1900s, from the plains of South Dakota to the Harlem of jazz. To give voice to the incredible challenges Micheaux had to face, scholars and heirs of his cinema, such as John Singleton and Kevin Willmott, and icons of African-American culture and popular music like Chuck D, legendary singer of Public Enemy.

Director's notes

Being selected at Cannes Classics, the most prestigious section of film documentaries in the world, is an extraordinary satisfaction. Stories like Micheaux's can inspire everyone, and the fact that Oscar receives a tribute in Cannes on the seventy anniversary of his death is a source of great pride for all of us who have worked enthusiastically on this film. We are all convinced that the courage and genius shown by Micheaux in every fold of his existence can be a model for each of us. His story is unknown to most people, and my hope is that with this film it will be known and appreciated by as many people as possible. The restoration of his 1930s noir *Murder in Harlem*, made by George Eastman Museum and Cineteca di Bologna in collaboration with The Film Foundation, Quoiat Films and Sky, constitutes a further homage to what, for me, is the first and "true" superhero of American cinema. (Francesco Zippel)

Credits

Written and directed by	Francesco Zippel
With (in order of appearance)	Gian Luca Farinelli, Chuck D, Amma Asante, Kwame Kwei-Armah, Jacqueline Stewart, Morgan Freeman, Stace England, Patrick McGilligan, Kevin Willmott, Richard Peña, Michele Prettyman, Nicole London, John Singleton, Haskell Wexler, Melvin Van Peebles
Editor	Michele Castelli
Director of Photography	Carlo Alberto Orecchia
Camera Operator	Chris Low
Sound Recordist	Jeff Peet
Sound Designer and Mixer	Rino D'Anna
Illustrator	Williams Obrou Zouzouo per Wariboko Agency
Music Consultants	Alessandro Franconetti, Maurizio D'Aniello for Evoke The Spectrum
Scientific Consultant	Patrick McGilligan
Executive Producers for Sky	Dino Vannini, Gaia Pasetto, Margherita Principe Mariaromana Casiraghi, Laura Chiara Cavaletto
Executive Producer for Sky Arts	Benedetta Pinelli

Produced by

Roberto Pisoni for **Sky**
Federica Paniccia, Francesco Zippel for **Quoiat**

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