



S.O.U.L. FEST 2021: UK PREMIERE

Ailey

+ pre-recorded Q&A with director Jamila Wignot

The multi-hyphenate dancer, choreographer, director Alvin Ailey gets the documentary treatment from director Jamila Wignot. Premiering at S.O.U.L Film Fest, the film chronicles Ailey's rise while exploring the challenges he had to face performing in a segregated America.

Alvin Ailey was a trailblazing pioneer who found salvation through dance. *Ailey* traces the full contours of this brilliant and enigmatic man whose search for the truth in movement resulted in enduring choreography that centres on the Black American experience with grace, strength, and unparalleled beauty. Told through Ailey's own words and featuring evocative archival footage and interviews with those who intimately knew him, director Jamila Wignot weaves together a resonant biography of an elusive visionary.

Director's Statement

Nothing prepares you for the experience of Ailey – the emotional, spiritual, aural, and visual overwhelm the senses. As a filmmaker, I am drawn to stories about artists like Alvin Ailey – innovators who tenaciously follow their own voice and in doing redefined their chosen forms. Ailey's dances – celebrations of African American beauty and history – did more than move bodies; they opened minds. His dances were revolutionary social statements that staked a claim as powerful in his own time as in ours: Black life is central to the American story and deserves a central place in American art and on the world stage. A working class, gay, Black man, he rose to prominence in a society that made every effort to exclude him. He transformed the world of dance and made space for those of us on the margins – space for Black artists like Rennie Harris and me.

I am inspired by subjective documentary portraits like Tom Volf's *Maria by Callas* and Raoul Peck's *I Am Not Your Negro*, and by the poetic cinematic approaches of films such as Barry Jenkins' *Moonlight* and Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven*. My aim was to blend these influences into a sensorial, poetic documentary portrait.

Jamila Wignot, Press Notes

Jamila Wignot is a documentary filmmaker based in New York. Her directing work includes two episodes of the Peabody, Emmy and NAACP award-winning series *The African-Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* (PBS), hosted by Henry Louis Gates and chronicling the 500-year history of African Americans; *Town Hall* (co-directed with Sierra Pettingill), a feature-length co-production with ITVS following Tea Party activists determined to unseat Barack Obama; and, for PBS's American Experience series, the Peabody Award-winning *Triangle Fire* and Emmy-nominated *Walt Whitman*. Jamila's producing credits include W. Kamau Bell's *Bring the Pain* (A&E); Sundance award-winning director Musa Syeed's narrative feature *A Stray* (SXSW); *Street Fighting Men*, following the Black Detroiters fighting for the city they love; and *The Rehnquist Revolution*, the fourth episode of WNET's series *The Supreme Court*, which was an IDA Best Limited Series winner.

Our Bodies Back

Our Bodies Back stages the work of acclaimed American poet and performance artist Jessica Care Moore in a breathtaking new dance film from Breakin' Convention Artistic Director and Sadler's Wells Associate Artist Jonzi D.

AILEY

Director: Jamila Wignot

Executive Producers: Stephen Ives, Amanda Pollak, Michael Kantor, Emily Blavatnik, Judy Kinberg, Sally Jo Fifer, Tony Hsiegh, Roberto Grande, Mimi Pham, Bryn Mooser, Kathryn Everett, Jenny Raskim, GERALYN WHITE DREYFOUS, Regina K. Scully

Producer: Lauren DeFilippo

Associate Producer: Matt Gottesfeld

Production Associates: Bernard Ellouk, Amanda Lalezarian, Lillie Fleshler

Archival Producer: Rebecca Kent

Director of Photography: Naiti Gámez

Editor: Annukka Lilja

Assistant Editor/Post Production Supervisor: William Bentley

Additional Assistant Editors: Cory Smith, Ally Southwood-Smith

Graphics: John Vondracek, String Theory Ny

Composer: Daniel Bernard Roumain

Additional Original Score: Sultana Isham, Minna Choi, Darrin Ross

Researcher: Saoirse Hahn

With

Robert Battle

Rennie Harris

Darrin Ross

Don Martin

Mary Barnett

Linda Kent

George Faison

Judith Jamison

Bill Hammond

Sylvia Waters

Hope Clark

Sarita Allen

Masazumi Chaya

Bill T. Jones

USA 2021

82 mins

OUR BODIES BACK

Director: Jonzi D.

UK 2020

5 mins

IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

S.O.U.L. Fest 2021

Fri 20-Sun 22 Aug

BFI & Radio Times Television Festival presents:

TV Preview: Vigil + Q&A with cast and creatives

Mon 23 Aug 18:10

UK Premiere: I've Been Trying to Tell You

+ Q&A with Alasdair McLellan and Bob Stanley

Fri 3 Sep 18:30, 21:00

Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI

Mon 6 Sep 18:00

Black to Front + Q&A with special guests TBA

Tue 7 Sep 18:00

Doctor Who: The Evil of the Daleks (animated)

Sun 12 Sep 12:00

Preview: Sweetheart + Q&A with director Marley Morrison

Mon 13 Sep 17:50

Prime Suspect: 30th Anniversary (First Series Complete Screening)

Sun 19 Sep 14:00

Lynda La Plante in Conversation

Sun 19 Sep 18:45

60th Anniversary: Whistle Down the Wind +

actor Hayley Mills in Conversation

Sun 3 Oct 12:00



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