



## BLACK RODEO: A HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN WESTERN

# Nope

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Directed by: Jordan Peele

©: Universal Studios

Production Company: Monkeypaw

Presented by: Universal Pictures

In association with: Dentsu Inc.

Executive Producers: Robert Graf, Win Rosenfeld

Produced by: Ian Cooper, Jordan Peele

Unit Production Manager: Robert Graf

Production Supervisor: Kate Kelly

Production Co-ordinator: Daniel Fisch

Financial Controller: Rachel E. Prentiss

Location Manager: Justin Duncan

1st Assistant Directors: Liz Tan,

Thomas Patrick Smith

2nd Assistant Director: Elaine Wood

Script Supervisor: Kerry Lyn McKissick

Casting by: Carmen Cuba

Casting Associate: Judith Sunga

Written by: Jordan Peele

Director of Photography: Hoyte van Hoytema

A Camera Operator: Hoyte van Hoytema

Still Photographer: Glen Wilson

Visual Effects Supervisor: Guillaume Rocheron

Visual Effects Producer: Mike Chambers

Visual Effects by: MPC, NBCUniversal Studiopost,

Screen Scene Limited

Editor: Nicholas Monsour

Production Designer: Ruth De Jong

Production Designer (Additional Photography):

Cara Brower

Art Director: Samantha Englander

Assistant Art Director: Jake Cavallo

Set Designers: Jim Hewitt, Martha Johnston

Set Designer (Additional Photography): Tammy Lee

Set Decorator: Gene Serdena

Set Decorator (Additional Photography):

Melissa Levander

Concept Artist: Parker Jackson

MAD Magazine Cover: Richard Williams

Illustrator: Joanna Bush

Property Master: Michael Glynn

Costumes Designed by: Alex Bovaird

Costume Supervisor: Leslie Sungail

Make-up Department Head:

Tym Shutchai Buacharern

Hair Department Head: Carla J. Farmer

Main & End Titles Designed and Produced by:

Filmgraph

Colour and Finish by: Company 3

Music by: Michael Abels

Conductor: Anthony Parnter

Recording & Mix Engineer: John Rodd

Score Recordist: Kevin Globberman

Sound Designer: Johnnie Burn

Production Sound Mixer: José Antonio García

Re-recording Mixer: Johnnie Burn

Supervising Sound Editor: Johnnie Burn

Dialogue Editor: Alexander Bellizia

Sound Effects Editors: Brendan Feeney,

Max Behrens

Stunt Co-ordinator: Mark Vanselow

Cast:

Daniel Kaluuya (*Otis Haywood Jr, 'OJ'*)

Keke Palmer (*Emerald Haywood, 'Em'*)

Steven Yuen (*Ricky Park, 'Jupe'*)

Michael Wincott (*Antlers Holst*)

Brandon Perea (*Angel Torres*)

Wrenn Schmidt (*Amber Park*)

Barbie Ferreira (*Nessie*)

Terry Notary (*Gordy*)

Devon Graye (*Ryder Muybridge*)

Donna Mills (*Bonnie Clayton*)

In the wake of the success of *Get Out* and *Us*, both of which disrupted and redefined the horror genre in singular ways, Jordan Peele was eager to expand his cinematic canvas, embrace a challenge unlike any in his filmmaking career so far and tackle the granddaddy of genre movies: the summer event film. 'Nope is of a bigger scope than any story I've ever tried to tell,' Peele says. 'And from a filmmaking perspective, the process has been an adventure unto itself. Every single department has taken huge risks and committed full tilt. I tried to write a script for a movie that I didn't know how to pull off. And then I assembled a team to help me pull it off.'

As he began to explore options, one particular subgenre of summer event films felt particularly ripe for reinvention. 'I had this idea of making the Great American UFO movie – a flying saucer horror film,' Peele says. 'And not only a flying saucer horror film, but really, the quintessential one. It's a difficult genre and hard to pull off because it's got this huge canvas that you have to take into account – the sky. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* is a huge influence of mine in its scope and in its vision, but more than anything, in Steven Spielberg's ability to make us feel like we're in the presence of something from another world. That immersive experience was something I desperately wanted to chase as well. Within that genre, though, we often apply all these wonderful qualities to some advanced alien civilization. But what if the truth is a lot simpler and darker than we even could ever imagine?'

As with all Jordan Peele films, whatever you think *Nope* is going to be as you enter the theatre, you're in for more than a few surprises. 'The reason that we're so withholding in our trailers and in our advertising materials is that we all secretly know that the most fun to be had is coming into something with less information,' producer Ian Cooper says. 'Jordan designs movies that are the maximal fun if you're not quite sure what you're getting into.'

You'll definitely never look at the sky the same way again. 'Obviously, this is a horror movie, but it has a science-fictional conceit,' Cooper says. 'It was really important for us to feel the balance and ensure that it felt more horror than science fiction. Early on, Jordan was saying, "I'm hopeful that people will look at clouds after this movie the way they looked at the surface of the ocean in *Jaws*." Even during filming, when we would have real clouds in the sky, you could imagine how unnerving it would be to have that phobia.'

As with all Peele films, *Nope* delves into deeper themes and ideas as it thrills, terrifies and entertains. The film is both a spectacle itself, and an examination of how spectacle shapes our culture and our ideas of ourselves. When the film's central characters encounter this unexplained phenomenon in the skies around Haywood Ranch, each of them, for different reasons and different ways, is drawn to the pursuit of documenting this anomaly. 'The DNA of the movie has this big question about the human addiction to spectacle,' Peele says. 'And what happens when money becomes involved is that there's this massive exploitation of what should be pure and what should be natural.'

The film's initial title, in fact, made the theme explicit. 'The title that Jordan was originally thinking of was *Little Green Men*, so even from the earliest conversations, there was an intertwining between the idea of the quest for fame and fortune, and the quest for documenting existence of life beyond Earth,' Cooper says. 'The double entendre of *Little Green Men* was a way in which you could talk about dollar bills as well as talk about aliens and the unknown.'

*Nope* is also an exploration and critique of filmmaking and film industry itself. 'I set out to design something that criticised what we do as much as it honours it,' Peele says. It reveals the lives of the skilled, behind-the-scenes artists

Osgood Perkins (*Fynn Bachman*)  
Eddie Jemison (*Buster*)  
Keith David (*Otis Haywood Sr*)  
Jacob Kim (*young Ricky Park*, '*Jupe*')  
Sophia Coto (*Mary Jo Elliott*)  
Jennifer Laflaur  
(*Phyllis Mayberry/Margaret Houston*)  
Andrew Patrick Ralston  
(*Tom Brogan/Brett Houston*)  
Lincoln Lambert (*Kolton Park*)  
Pierce Kang (*Phoenix Park*)  
Roman Gross (*Max Park*)  
Alex Hyde-White (*Grizz*)  
Hetty Chang (*herself*)  
Liza Treyger (*commercial make-up artist*)  
Ryan W. Garcia (*Sheriff Reyes*)  
Courtney Stephens (*Mrs Dolan*)  
Caden J. Lovgren (*Jupiter's Claim horse wrangler*)  
Malcolm Jae O'Shea (*Jupiter's Claim outlaw*)  
USA-Japan 2022  
130 mins  
Digital 4K

The screening on Tue 18 Mar will be introduced by Dr Clive Chijioko Nwonka, Associate Professor in Film, Culture and Society at University College London (UCL)

Find Mia Mask's book *Black Rodeo: A History of the African American Western* in the BFI Shop

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(known as 'below-the-line' crew in industry parlance) – the animal wranglers, cinematographers, technology experts – who create the indelible images we see on screen but who are never seen themselves. And it shines a light on the realities of discarded actors, particularly child actors, who are abandoned by the industry once they cease to be adorable bankable assets. '*Nope* is a movie about the quest both to be seen and – to use that Millennial expression – "Pics or it never happened", ' Cooper says. 'It's also an unpacking of the existential crisis of being a below-the-line person in the dichotomy in Hollywood – basically being visible or not visible – yet both integral and complicit in creating the spectacle on screen.'

That idea is encapsulated in a famous series of 16 sequential photographs depicting a Black jockey on a horse. Created by Eadweard Muybridge in 1887, the loop of cards, known as Animal Locomotion, Plate 626, is one of the earliest examples of chronophotography, an early method to photographically record the passing of time, and it created the foundation for what would become motion pictures and the bedrock of the entire film industry. These photographs are in the permanent collection at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The name of the horse and the name of its owner are recorded. The name of the Black jockey, however, is not, and is lost to history. 'Ian Cooper was the one who gave me the book on Eadweard Muybridge,' Peele says. 'And that was really the "in" to uncover some of the commentary, the exploration of the media, of Hollywood and the film industry itself – and the exploitation that is kind of inherent in this industry and always has been.'

The symbolism of those images is hard to shake. 'Jordan was drawn to the idea that the original movie star – the actor, stuntman and animal wrangler – is rolled up all in one into the Eadweard Muybridge Jockey; an unknown Black man in profile riding in perpetuity,' Cooper says.

In the film, siblings OJ and Emerald Haywood are the descendants and inheritors of that legacy on both a literal and metaphorical level. 'In its core, this movie is about a brother and sister, and about their ability to go from a place of not connecting to a place of understanding each other and acknowledging that they have always sort of seen each other,' Peele says. 'The film is about spectacle and our addiction to spectacle, and the fact that we're being drawn to it. But it's also about our inner need to be seen, to be recognised for who we are and what we are.'

And, in the personalities, OJ and Emerald reflect the duality of the industry and within Peele himself. OJ prefers the peace and solitude of anonymity and derives pleasure from his work. Emerald seeks the attention and the light. 'In many ways, OJ and Emerald represent two different sides of my personality,' Peele says. 'On one hand, I like my privacy. The idea of a bunch of people turning to look at me all at once is terrifying to me, as it is to most people. At the same time, I went into this career that puts me right in front of everybody. So, this crazy juxtaposition in my life is kind of what these characters are about.'

It's also worth noting that *Nope*, just by its existence, is a kind of commentary on the anonymity of that Black jockey in 1887 and the increasingly visibility of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour both in front of and behind the camera. 'This movie's not about race per se, although race does interact with this idea of spectacle-isation and exploitation,' Peele says. 'But the movie, in itself, is meant to be a film that couldn't be made five years ago, in that it's an original piece of content, starring people of colour, directed by a person of colour, with a big budget and some crazy shit in it. That movie's not supposed to be made. So, in the soul of the film, just by existing, we have some obligation to acknowledge all the people who haven't been allowed to take a bow, all the people who haven't been allowed an opportunity to succeed or fail. I think that's what the movie is about.'

Production notes

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Programme notes and credits compiled by Sight and Sound and the BFI Documentation Unit

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