

23 September 2026

American director Charles Burnett to visit Eye for film programme **Everyday Blues**

Nationwide release for restored version of *Killer of Sheep*

This autumn, Eye Filmmuseum presents a programme dedicated to legendary American filmmaker Charles Burnett, a pioneer of the Black independent cinema movement of the '70s and '80s known as L.A. Rebellion. Three of his films have now been digitally restored, including his debut *Killer of Sheep* (1977). This seldom-screened film ranks among the most significant portraits of the everyday lives of Black Americans. Eye will release the film in cinemas throughout the Netherlands. Charles Burnett will be coming over from Los Angeles to attend the opening evening on 27 November, as well as the Artist Talk on 29 November.

Everyday Blues – The Films of Charles Burnett, 27 November – 16 December 2026, Eye Filmmuseum, IJpromenade 1, Amsterdam, eyefilm.nl/burnett

Charles Burnett was a prominent face in the '70s and '80s of L.A. Rebellion – a group of independent African-American, Caribbean and African film- and video-makers at the UCLA's film department in Los Angeles. His masterpiece *Killer of Sheep* (1977) was everything a Blaxploitation film wasn't: a realistic portrait of life in a disadvantaged Black neighbourhood, without an emphasis on drugs and violence. He chose to make loose, open-ended films about local residents' everyday struggles, characterised by an emotional register and atmosphere reminiscent of the blues.

His highly regarded films are accessible and feel authentic. In spite of this, however, opportunities to share his films with a wide audience remained limited. *Killer of Sheep* screened mainly on 16mm on the film club and university circuit. Lack of budget meant it wasn't possible to get the film distributed – nevertheless, these 'underground' screenings made a name for Burnett, also in Europe.

Shelved for years

To Sleep with Anger (1990), a family drama with melancholy humour and a touch of sinister, folkloric magic, likewise received hardly any promotion from the distributor, in spite of glowing reviews. Distributor Harvey Weinstein ensured that *The Glass Shield* (1994), a realistic portrayal of racism and corruption within a sheriff's department in Los Angeles, languished on a shelf for a year. For many years, Burnett's *The Annihilation of Fish* (1999) – a tender romantic comedy – hardly received a screening, before re-emerging as a lost jewel of American independent cinema.

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Burnett's films have hardly been seen in the Netherlands – until now. Recently digitally restored, *Killer of Sheep* and several of his other films are currently touring festivals and other venues with great success. In 1990, *Killer of Sheep* was one of the first films to be granted the designation 'National Treasure' by the Library of Congress, but an (analogue) restoration was not carried out until 2007. In 2017, Burnett received an honorary Oscar for his oeuvre "for its portrayal of the African-American experience". Burnett himself said: "In actual fact I make films about America."

Nationwide release for *Killer of Sheep*

Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* (1977), a sketch of the life of a family in Watts, was seen as the ultimate underground film, with a soundtrack featuring country blues, spirituals, early jazz and the '70s funk and soul of Earth, Wind & Fire. Eye is reissuing *Killer of Sheep* in cinemas in a new, 4K-restored version from 26 November. The film, and several of Burnett's other works can also be seen on the Eye Film Player.

Charles Burnett will be coming over from Los Angeles to attend the opening on 27 November, featuring the Dutch première of the 4K-restored version of *My Brother's Wedding*, and an Artist Talk on 29 November moderated by Maya Cade (Milestone Films, Black Film Archive).

Filmprogramme

In its cinemas, Eye will be screening – alongside *Killer of Sheep* (1977) – *My Brother's Wedding* (1983/2008) and *The Annihilation of Fish* (1999), both digitally restored, as well as *To Sleep with Anger* (1990) and *The Glass Shield* (1994). Also screening are Burnett's short films *Several Friends* (1969), *The Horse* (1973), *When It Rains* (1995) and *Quiet as Kept* (2007), as well as the TV production *The Final Insult* (1997) and *Bless Their Little Hearts* (Billy Woodberry, 1984, screenplay and camera by Charles Burnett).

In addition, Eye is screening films by makers frequently cited by Burnett as influences on his work, such as *Nightmail* (Basil Wright, who taught Burnett at UCLA, 1936), *Ladri di biciclette* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948), *Pather Panchali* (Satyajit Ray, 1955), *Nothing But a Man* (Michael Roemer, 1964), and works by Jean Renoir. This sidebar programming also includes films by makers inspired by Burnett, such as *12 Years a Slave* (Steve McQueen, 2013), *Moonlight* (Barry Jenkins, 2016) and works by Ava DuVernay and Sean Baker.

During the same period, an L.A. Rebellion programme is also showing in Amsterdam's 'cult cinema' LAB111.

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Note for the press, not for publication

For more information or images, please contact:

Rachel Voorbij
Press & PR Manager Eye Filmmuseum

<mailto:pers@eyefilm.nl>