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THE MOTHER CAN'T REMEMBER, THE DAUGHTER CAN'T FORGET.

IN 2019, MICHAELA COEL DM'ED **DESMOND'S NOT HERE ANYMORE** SCREENWRITER TO "BE BRAVE" NOW HER FILM OPENS **HOLLYSHORTS** FILM FESTIVAL

Family secrets are meant to be kept, and normally they are. Over 30 years later, screenwriter Lindiwe Suttle Müller-Westernhagen is finally telling hers, thanks to Michaela Coel.

In 2019, Suttle Müller-Westernhagen sent a DM to Michaela Coel, Coel surprisingly replied. "Bravery rules. When we are all brave, our species has no limits," advised Coel. This was the push that Suttle Müller-Westernhagen needed to write **DESMOND'S NOT HERE ANYMORE**. The short screenplay went on to win the 2019 HollyShorts screenplay contest.

DESMOND'S NOT HERE ANYMORE brings to life the horrors of a mother that can't remember and a daughter that can't forget. A celebration of the unique, abiding mother-daughter bond, but ultimately it is about healing. The film opens the Academy-qualifying HollyShorts Film Festival today, September 23rd. This diversely global, mostly women-powered short film stars Emmy winner and Chicago Med veteran S. Epatha Merkerson alongside Gotham winner Yolonda Ross (The Chi). The second screening is on the 25th at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles.

The film was shot in Seattle, Washington and produced by German legend, Marius Müller-Westernhagen's Kunstflug Entertainment, HollyShorts' 88th Street Productions, Seattle Film Summit and Slager Fuj Creative Media.

Composer Ray Angry on the creative virtual experience:

Montsho's direction of the film aligned with my personal vision as a musician to always reflect cultural accuracy and relevance. Collaborating and creating music via virtual communication was definitely a new and fun experience. It was exciting to still be able to make something that would touch others even as we as humans are keeping our distance. I created most of the music while I was on the road with The Roots. The rest of the music was recorded in my home studio on my beautiful Steinway. It was a dope experience learning how to play my new keyboard called a ROLI while composing the film's score.

DESMOND'S NOT HERE ANYMORE follows a devoted daughter who is confronted with a painful family secret as she tries to care for her mother with dementia. It leans in on the personal horrors each character is dealing with: dark family history, toxic sexuality, and the terrors of remembering and forgetting.

Montsho hopes that **DESMOND'S NOT HERE ANYMORE** invites the viewer to walk hand in hand with each character as they work through their personal horrors in search of true healing.

South African director MMABATHO MONTSHO (2020 *Best Short Film - Worldwide Women's Film Festival*) led this global group of filmmakers from Seattle, Los Angeles, Johannesburg, Berlin, New York with 26 of the 37 crew being women. A powerhouse of creatives signed onto the project. Grammy-nominated musician RAY ANGRY from the ROOTS composed the score, multi-award winning German editor Claudia Wolscht, and Hungarian-born, Berlin-based cinematographer Agnesh Pakozdi. Pakozdi was the Best Cinematography winner at the 62nd Seminci Film Festival and a Top 3 Nominees for the Michael Ballhaus Cinematography Award in 2019.

S. Epatha Merkerson is repped by ICM and McGowan Rodriguez. Yolonda Ross repped by Wetzel Entertainment Group and Schreck Rose Dapello Adams Berlin & Dunham. Lindiwe Suttle Müller-Westernhagen was International Screenwriters' Association's Top 25 Screenwriters to Watch in 2020.

NOT DESMOND'S HERE ANYMORE

S. EPATHA MERKERSON & YOLONDA ROSS

DIRECTED BY MMABATHO MONTSHO
WRITTEN BY LINDIWE SUTTLE MÜLLER-WESTERNHAGEN
MUSIC COMPOSED BY RAY ANGRY



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