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## ACCLAIMED CANADIAN WRITER-PRODUCER-DIRECTOR ALISON DUKE RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS 2024 DON HAIG AWARD AT HOT DOCS

**Toronto, ON** – Hot Docs is proud to honour Canadian writer-producer-director **Alison Duke** with the prestigious **Don Haig Award** at the 2024 Festival, on now until May 5. Duke is the producer behind *A Mother Apart* (D: Laurie Townshend), an emotional, sweeping tale of healing and forgiveness, in which powerhouse Jamaican American poet and LGBTQ+ activist Staceyann Chin embarks on an international journey to re-imagine the art of mothering—having been abandoned by her own mother as a young child.

The Don Haig Award is presented to an outstanding Canadian independent producer with a feature-length film at the Festival, with the recipient being selected by a jury of independent filmmakers. The Award recognizes creative vision and entrepreneurship, as reflected in the recipient’s body of work, as well as a track record of mentoring emerging Canadian filmmakers. Duke will be presented with a \$5,000 cash prize, courtesy of the Don Haig Foundation.

“I am humbled and honoured to receive this award, and I am grateful to Hot Docs for this recognition. When my partner, Ngardy Conteh George, and I joined forces to found Oya Media Group in 2018, we did so to bring an authentic perspective to screen-based platforms through socially relevant, life-changing stories that amplify Black experiences. We are deeply connected and inspired by our community, and we recognize that our stories must be told as we strive for the highest calibre of quality and professionalism,” shared **Alison Duke**. “I want to thank our co-production partner, the NFB, for their attentive support in the production and release of our film *A Mother Apart*, directed by Laurie Townshend and produced by Justine Pimlott, Ngardy Conteh George and me. This beautiful film had its world premiere at Hot Docs on Friday, April 26, and features the powerful spoken word poet Staceyann Chin, who navigates parenting her daughter Zuri while she searches for her mother, who abandoned her in childhood. If you haven't seen it, I hope you can all catch it in theatres or on the documentary Channel later this year.”

Alison Duke, Co-founder of OYA Media Group, is a multifaceted Canadian Screen Award-winning talent; an accomplished writer/producer/director with a two-decade track record in storytelling. Her first feature doc, *Raising Kane: A Rapumentary* gained acclaim at the Urbanworld Film Festival in NYC, winning the HBO award for best documentary and setting the stage for her career.

She then collaborated as a producer on numerous feature documentaries, including Andrew Nisker’s *Garbage: The Revolution Starts at Home*, Dany Chiasson’s *My Joan of Arc* and Thomas Allen’s *Through a Lens Darkly: Black Photography and the Emergence of a People*, and helmed several powerful social justice films across various genres including stories about Canadian women living with HIV.

In 2017, she brought together five black female directors to direct documentaries for the *Akua Benjamin Legacy Project*. This five-part educational series told the story of Black Canadian social justice warriors such as Dudley Laws, Charles Roach, Marlene Green, Gwen and Lenny Johnson, and Rosie Douglas.

Alison produced and co-wrote *Mr. Jane and Finch*, the CBC POV television doc directed by Ngardy Conteh George about activist Winston LaRose, winning two 2020 Canadian Screen Awards - The Donald Brittain Award for best social-political documentary and best documentary writing. *Mr. Jane and Finch* was the impetus that inspired her to establish the juggernaut production company OYA Media Group with Ngardy Conteh George. The same year Alison directed *Cool Black North*, a 2-hour television doc special for City TV, which went on to screen in over a dozen US film festivals.

Alison made her dramatic debut with the powerful short film *Promise Me*, which screened at over 30 festivals and earned numerous awards, including two Golden Sheafs for best direction and best scripted for fiction at the 2021 Yorkton Film Festival. In 2021, Alison became the first Black woman to direct a Heritage Minute for Historica Canada on Chloe Cooley.

Alison exec produced Blue Ant Media's 3-part docu-series *Evil by Design: Surviving Nygard* for CBC Docs, which earned her a Canadian Screen Award Nomination for Best History Documentary or Series in 2023. Her doc series *Black Community Mixtapes*, which she produced and directed with Ngardy Conteh-George, has been nominated for several Canadian Screen Awards, including best writing & direction for Alison. She recently wrapped a doc series on music industry injustices for Idris Elba's Green Door Pictures. Alison is a co-producer for *A Mother Apart* with Ngardy Conteh George and Justine Pilmott (NFB), which was selected for the 2024 Hot Docs Film Festival. She directed and co-produced *Bam Bam: The Story of Sister Nancy* for CRAVE, which is set to have its world premiere at Tribeca in June.

Since the beginning, Alison has been giving back to her community by providing on-set learning opportunities for up-and-coming talent. In 2018, she kickstarted the OYA Emerging Filmmakers program, an initiative to accelerate the careers of Black youth who are graduates of post-secondary film, video and digital media programs in the Canadian entertainment industry under the OYA Black Arts Coalition non-profit banner.

The award will be presented at the Hot Docs Awards presentation on Friday, May 3, at CSI Annex at 7:30 pm.

Past winners of the Don Haig Award include producers Bonnie Thompson (2023), Mila Aung-Thwin (2022), Lalita Krishna (2021), Bob Moore (2020), Peter Raymont (2019), Ina Fichman (2018), Daniel Cross (2017), Ed Barreveld (2016), Anne Pick (2015), Michael McNamara (2014), Merit Jensen Carr (2013), Mia Donovan (2012), Rama Rau (2011), Philip Lyall and Nimisha Mukerji (2010), Brett Gaylor (2009), Yung Chang (2008), Hubert Davis (2007), and Guylaine Dionne (2006).

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Hot Docs ([www.hotdocs.ca](http://www.hotdocs.ca)), North America's largest documentary festival, conference and market, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing and celebrating the art of documentary and to creating production opportunities for documentary filmmakers. Hot Docs will present its 31<sup>st</sup> annual edition from April 25 to May 5, 2024, in cinemas across Toronto. Hot Docs will also mount a dynamic series of knowledge sessions, networking opportunities and market programs for documentary practitioners and industry delegates, including the renowned Hot Docs Forum and Hot Docs Deal Maker. Year-round, Hot Docs supports the Canadian and international industry with professional development programs and a multi-million-dollar film fund portfolio, and fosters education through documentaries with its popular free program Docs For Schools. Hot Docs owns and programs the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, a century-old landmark located in Toronto's Annex neighbourhood and the world's first and largest documentary cinema.

Tickets and ticket packages can be purchased and/or redeemed online at [www.hotdocs.ca](http://www.hotdocs.ca) or in person at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema Box Office, located at 506 Bloor Street West (hours vary daily in accordance with cinema screenings). Single tickets are \$20 to regular Festival screenings and \$23 to Special Presentations screenings (\$18-\$20 members). Special events vary in price. A Festival 12-Pack is \$209 and a Festival 20-Pack is \$299. Hot Docs offers free tickets for all screenings before 5:00 p.m. to seniors and students with valid photo I.D., available online the day of the screening, subject to availability. Free screenings for students courtesy of CBC and CBC Gem.

Hot Docs is proud to include Scotia Wealth Management as its Presenting Platinum Partner; Rogers as its Founding Partner; CBC as its Signature Partner; Netflix as its Presenting Partner; and Telefilm Canada, the Government of Ontario, and the Canada Media Fund as its Major Supporters.

**FILM STILLS AVAILABLE**

Media Download Site: <https://downloads.hotdocs.ca/downloads>

Password: media2024

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