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AVA DuVERNAY'S CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED DRAMA SERIES "QUEEN SUGAR" ANNOUNCES START OF SEASON SIX PRODUCTION WITH CAST ADDITIONS TO INCLUDE TAMMY TOWNSEND, PAULA JAI PARKER, MARQUIS RODRIGUEZ AND MCKINLEY FREEMAN

Series Continues All-Female Directorial Line-Up with Additions of Bertha Bay-Sa Pan, Carmen Marrón, Cierra Glaude, Keisha Rae Witherspoon, Marie Jamora, Stephanie Turner, Shari Carpenter and Shaz Bennett; Upping Lisa France to Producing Director

"Queen Sugar" Continues to Close Inclusion Gap in Hollywood Hiring First-Time Female Television Directors Throughout Six Seasons



Actors (l-r) Paula Jai Parker; Tammy Townsend; Marquis Rodriguez; McKinley Freeman



Directors (l-r): Bertha Bay-Sa Pan, Keisha Rae Witherspoon, Marie Jamora, Shari L. Carpenter and Stephanie Turner

Downloadable link to all images [HERE](#)

LOS ANGELES – Critically acclaimed drama series “[Queen Sugar](#),” from creator and executive producer Ava DuVernay, has announced the addition of several cast members, including Tammy Townsend as series regular, with Paula Jai Parker, Marquis Rodriguez and McKinley Freeman joining as recurring guest stars in season six, currently in production in New Orleans, set to air this fall on OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network.

In continuing the creative vision DuVernay established in season one of hiring an entirely female directorial team, the season six directorial lineup is handpicked by DuVernay and includes four returning directors with five directors making their television debut. The “Queen Sugar” season six directorial line-up includes: Bertha Bay-Sa Pan, Carmen Marrón, Cierra Glaude, Keisha Rae Witherspoon, Marie

Jamora, Shari Carpenter, Shaz Bennett and Stephanie Turner, with Lisa France upped to serve as producing director. This marks 42 female filmmakers the series has hired through six seasons, 39 of whom are first-time television directors.

The following are the new casting announcements for season six:

Tammy Townsend (“K.C. Undercover”) portrays Billie, the daughter of beloved Bordelon family friend Prosper Denton (Henry G. Sanders), who returns to St. Josephine for the first time in 20 years to care for her ailing father. Townsend joins the cast as a series regular.

Paula Jai Parker (“The Wayans Bros.”) portrays Celine, a single mother whom Aunt Violet takes under her wing as Celine works to establish a life in St. Josephine with her 10-year-old son, Gabriel. Parker joins as a recurring guest star.

Marquis Rodriguez (“When They See Us”) portrays Isaiah, a college student wise beyond his years who befriends Micah West. Rodriguez joins as a recurring guest star.

McKinley Freeman (“Titans”) portrays Dominic, a cultural anthropologist who captures the attention of Nova Bordelon. Freeman joins as a recurring guest star.

About the directors of “Queen Sugar:”

- **Lisa France** is upped from directing “Queen Sugar” in season five to serve as producing director for season six. France directed her first feature film, “Anne B. Real,” in 2003, which won more than 30 film festival awards and nominations, including two Independent Spirit Award nominations (Debut Performance and the John Cassavetes Award). She then filmed “Love and Suicide” in Cuba before its theatrical release through AMC Select, and “The Unseen,” which sold to Netflix, Starz and Encore. Her award-winning short film debut “Love in Tow” starred Zach Braff and Quentin Crisp. Her first documentary, “Roll with Me,” which also garnered numerous awards, debuted at The Woodstock Film Festival and was a 2018 Slamdance Official Selection. The film was later acquired and distributed by DuVernay’s ARRAY Releasing. “Queen Sugar” marked France’s television directorial debut in 2021.
- **Bertha Bay-Sa Pan’s** feature film debut “Face” premiered at Sundance Film Festival and received the Grand Jury Award for Best Director at the Urbanworld Film Festival, the Audience Award at the GenArt Film Festival, the Critics Award for Best Director at CineVegas, and was nominated for Gotham Award’s Breakthrough Director. “Face” was selected as a New York Times Critic’s Pick during its U.S. theatrical release. Pan’s second feature “Almost Perfect” was selected as the Centerpiece Film at the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival and won the HBO Emerging Filmmaker Award. “Queen Sugar” marks Pan’s television directorial debut.
- **Carmen Marrón** is a self-taught writer, director and producer whose debut feature “Go For It!” was bought and distributed by Lionsgate. Her feature film “End Game” was exhibited by AMC and premiered on HBO in 2016, with Indiewire’s LatinoBuzz naming Marrón “one of the five Latina directors at the helm of breaking films.” Marrón is a member of Film Independent and NALIP. “Queen Sugar” marked Marrón’s television directorial debut in 2019.
- **Cierra Glaude** made her directorial debut in 2017 at Urbanworld Film Festival with her short “Last Looks,” starring Rutina Wesley (“Queen Sugar”), which was featured on Issa Rae’s YouTube Channel as a part of the #ShortFilmSunday lineup. In 2019, she was selected by Lena Waithe for the AT&T Hello Lab Filmmaker Mentorship Program, where she directed a short film titled “Spilt Milk,” featuring Dascha Polanco (“Orange Is the New Black”) and Zuri Adele (“Good Trouble”). Hailing from Mobile, Alabama, Glaude received her start in the industry with an opportunity to work alongside Ava DuVernay on feature film “Selma” in 2014, making the decision to leave The University of Alabama a year early to pursue her passion in film. She then worked various crew positions on the sets of “Girls Trip,” “Twenties” and “A Wrinkle in Time.” After serving various production roles on DuVernay’s “Queen

Sugar” over multiple seasons, Glaude was tapped by the show’s creator to direct three episodes of season five, marking her television directorial debut in 2021.

- **Keisha Rae Witherspoon** is a Miami-born documentary and narrative filmmaker named one of Filmmaker Magazine’s “25 New Faces of Independent Film 2020” and is co-founder of Third Horizon Film Festival, an annual celebration of Caribbean cinema which was named one of the “25 Coolest Film Festivals in the World” by MovieMaker Magazine in 2019. Her most recent short film “T” premiered at BlackStar Film Festival, where it won the audience award for Favorite Narrative Short. It went on to screen at Sundance Film Festival and Berlinale 2020, where it won the Golden Bear for Best Short Film. “Queen Sugar” marks Witherspoon’s television directorial debut.
- **Marie Jamora** is a writer-director born and raised in Manila, Philippines. Jamora’s first feature “What Isn’t There” premiered at the Slamdance Film Festival in 2013 and in 2017, Jamora won the Grand Jury Award for “Best Short Film” at Urbanworld Film Festival with “Flip The Record.” “Queen Sugar” marks Jamora’s television directorial debut.
- **Shari L. Carpenter** is an award-winning writer/director whose recent projects include the made-for-TV movie “Three’s Complicated,” starring Shanola Hampton and Tyler Lepley, the #WhyWeCount Census 2020 Campaign and a PSA for Proctor and Gamble’s ‘My Black is Beautiful’ campaign. Carpenter served as script supervisor to Spike Lee prior to writing and directing her award-winning short film “Since Lisa” (winner at the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame and Black American Cinema Society Awards). Her feature directorial debut, “Kali’s Vibe,” garnered Jury, Audience and Vision awards at various festivals. “Queen Sugar” marks Carpenter’s television directorial debut.
- **Shaz Bennett’s** debut feature film “Alaska is a Drag” recently launched on Netflix, released by Ava DuVernay’s ARRAY Releasing. Bennett made her directorial television debut on “Queen Sugar” in 2018, going on to direct “Billions,” and “Bosch.” Bennett is also an accomplished writer and producer, writing on “Bosch,” “The Glades” and “UnREAL,” producing “The Faith Diaries” and serving as co-executive producer on “Queen Sugar” as both a writer and director for season six.
- **Stephanie Turner** is an accomplished actress. Her first feature film “Justine,” in which Turner led as well as wrote, produced and directed, premiered on Netflix in 2020. “Queen Sugar” marks Turner’s television directorial debut.

“Queen Sugar” is currently airing every Tuesday night at 8 p.m. ET on OWN and is available on the WatchOWN app. The first four seasons are available to stream exclusively on Hulu.

“Queen Sugar” was recently recognized by the Television Academy Honors for its powerful portrayal of an African-American family in the Deep South that sheds light on complex issues and challenges facing our society. Gracing the cover of Emmy Magazine’s March 19 issue, the series has additionally been awarded the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Drama Series, and for three consecutive years was named Best TV Show Drama by the African-American Film Critics Association (AAFCA) and nominated as Television Show of the Year by the American Black Film Festival (ABFF). “Queen Sugar” currently ranks #1 in its time period across broadcast and cable with African-American W18+, Households and total viewers.

Interviews and episode screeners are available upon request.

About “Queen Sugar”

From award-winning filmmaker Ava DuVernay, the contemporary drama series “Queen Sugar” features the Bordelon family who are fighting to save their family farm to preserve their father’s legacy while navigating their own personal journeys. Currently airing season five, the beloved Bordelon family and their community face multiple upheavals throughout 2020, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protest movement that swept the country. Viewers see the joy around the pain, and humanity’s ability to persevere and find light in the darkest of times.

In season five, Nova (Rutina Wesley) launches her new website to support the community while moving out of the Ninth Ward and settling into her romantic relationship with Calvin (Greg Vaughn) as stay-at-home orders are put in place. Ralph Angel (Kofi Siriboe) proposes to Darla (Bianca Lawson) as they work to manage parenthood and virtual learning for son Blue (Ethan Hutchison) despite constant threats to his land and home. Charley (Dawn-Lyen Gardner) uses her role as a local Council Member to try and protect the community as the pandemic spreads, while coming to terms with the decisions her son Micah (Nicholas Ashe) makes as he navigates his freshman year at Xavier University and uses his voice to raise awareness for social justice. The expansive cast also includes Tina Lifford as the siblings' free-spirited Aunt Violet, who manages her pie shop while navigating the closures facing small businesses; Omar J. Dorsey as Violet's husband Hollywood Desonier, who wants to create a safe space for Black men to come together and talk about their emotional challenges as he faces the loss of his mother; and Henry G. Sanders as Prosper Denton, a farmer and longtime friend of the late Bordelon family patriarch, Ernest. Recurring guest star Timon Kyle Durrett portrays Charley's estranged husband and pro basketball player Davis West.

"Queen Sugar" is produced for OWN by ARRAY Filmworks and Harpo Films in association with Warner Bros. Television. The season five executive producers are Ava DuVernay, Oprah Winfrey, Paul Giamatti and Anthony Sparks. The series is based on the book by Natalie Baszile.

About OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network

OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network is the first and only network named for, and inspired by, a single iconic leader. Oprah Winfrey's heart and creative instincts inform the brand and the magnetism of the channel. OWN is a leading destination for premium scripted and unscripted programming from today's most innovative storytellers. OWN connects with its audience wherever they are, inspiring conversation among a global community of like-minded viewers on social media and beyond. Launched on January 1, 2011, OWN is a joint venture between Harpo, Inc. and Discovery, Inc. The venture also includes the award-winning digital platform Oprah.com. Access OWN anytime, anywhere on WatchOWN.tv, and on discovery+ across mobile devices and connected TVs. For more information, please visit www.oprah.com/own and <https://press.discovery.com/us/own/>.

About Warner Bros. Television

One of the entertainment industry's most-respected providers of original primetime programming since its founding in 1955, Warner Bros. Television produces original scripted drama and comedy series for multiple platforms. As of April 2021, Warner Bros. Television is producing more than 70 scripted series for on-demand/streaming services, premium/pay and basic cable channels, and the five broadcast networks.

About ARRAY

Founded in 2011 by filmmaker Ava DuVernay, ARRAY is a multi-platform arts and social impact collective dedicated to narrative change. The organization catalyzes its work through a quartet of mission-driven entities: the film distribution arm ARRAY Releasing, the content company ARRAY Filmworks, the programming and production hub ARRAY Creative Campus and the non-profit group ARRAY Alliance. www.arraynow.com

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