

**September 30, 2022**

**From the Vermont International Film Festival, Burlington, VT**

**Press Release**

**Charles Burnett at the 2022 Vermont International Film Festival**

The Vermont International Film Festival is celebrating its 37<sup>th</sup> year. The 2022 edition will take place from Friday, Oct 21 through Sunday, October 30 at Main Street Landing Performing Arts Center in Burlington with a satellite venue at The Savoy Theater in Montpelier.

The 2020 Vermont International Film Festival is proud to host its guest of honor, Charles Burnett, who will be attending the festival with two of his classic films: *To Sleep With Anger* and *Killer of Sheep*. Mr. Burnett is the recipient of the VTIFF Award for Outstanding Contribution to American Cinema.

Charles Burnett is a writer-director whose work has received extensive honors. Born in Vicksburg, Mississippi, his family soon moved to the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. Burnett studied creative writing at UCLA before entering the University's graduate film program. His thesis project, *Killer of Sheep* (1977), won accolades at film festivals and a critical devotion; in 1990, it was among the first titles named to the Library of Congress' National Film Registry.

European financing allowed Burnett to shoot his second feature, *My Brother's Wedding* (1983), but a rushed debut prevented the filmmaker from completing his final cut until 2007.

In 1988, Burnett was awarded the prestigious John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur ("genius grant") Fellowship and shortly thereafter Burnett became the first African American recipient of the National Society of Film Critics' best screenplay award, for *To Sleep with Anger* (1990).

Burnett has been awarded grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts and the J. P. Getty Foundation. In 2011, the Museum of Modern Art showcased his work with a month-long retrospective.

*Killer of Sheep* (1977):

More than a landmark in independent filmmaking, *Killer of Sheep* is one of the finest films ever made about finding meaning in the hardships of everyday living. Set in the Watts area of Los Angeles—a predominantly Black neighborhood still showing the scars of the 1965 racial justice riots—Charles Burnett's episodic first feature centers on a sleep-deprived slaughterhouse worker (Henry G. Sanders) and his proudly resilient wife (Kaycee Moore), whose marriage wavers under the burden of financial strain. With gentle humor and a discerning documentary eye, Burnett finds poetry in the rhythms of workaday life—the sensuous comfort of a warm cup of coffee; the transient thrill of a new car engine; the melancholy joy of slow dancing to a Dinah Washington ballad. Made for less than \$10,000, Burnett's UCLA thesis film interweaves street

scenes of childhood play that serve as a Greek chorus questioning what it means to be an adult in a world where children grow up fast.

*To Sleep with Anger* (1990)

VTIFF's spotlight on the films of independent trailblazer Charles Burnett continues with *To Sleep with Anger*, a potent comedic drama about a middle-class African-American household in South Central Los Angeles facing a generational clash between the traditional rural values of the family's Southern-born elders and the next generation's urban mindset. Precipitating the conflict is Harry (played by Danny Glover in a towering performance), a friend of questionable repute from back home who shows up on their doorstep unannounced and quickly upends the fragile family dynamic. Burnett, who was born in Mississippi but grew up in Los Angeles, mixes realism with a healthy dose of Southern folklore, leading to a satisfyingly cathartic conclusion.

**For high res stills go to [VTIFF.ORG/PRESS](http://VTIFF.ORG/PRESS)**

