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Virgin Islander's Sci-Fi Short Film Debuts at Prestigious Pan African Film Festival in Los Angeles

Cathy SitaRam's 'Gods of the Universe' wows audience with futuristic tale and visual splendor

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Scene from Gods of the Universe: Rise of the Star Child.

Gods of the Universe: Rise of the Star Child, a sci-fi short film directed by Virgin Islander Cathy SitaRam, premiered at the Oscar Qualifying Pan African Film Festival in Los Angeles, captivating audiences with its unique narrative and visual spectacle, according to a release issued Thursday.

The 23-minute film, described as an escapist, fantasy, science fiction drama, tells the story of two advanced DNA orphans selected by extraterrestrial beings to save Earth from a looming cosmic threat.

Filmed in San Fernando and Siparia, Trinidad and Tobago, the film features acclaimed actor, musician, and visual artist Nikolai Salcedo, alongside writer, producer, and director Cathy SitaRam, a St. Croix native with a background in entertainment journalism and production. The film also introduces young talents Zane Foster and Genesis Belgrove as the orphan children central to the story.

The production, noted for its heavy reliance on visual effects, showcases the work of Zimbabwe's Charles Mawungwa as the Visual Effects Supervisor, with contributions from Hayden Matheson of Trinidad and Tobago. The film's distinctive sci-fi glow and otherworldly style are credited to lead Editor and Director of Photography Jason Riley and Set Director Rebecca Foster.

The Pan African Film Festival, an Academy Award Qualifying festival that screens over 175 films showcasing filmmakers of African descent, hosted the film's debut, according to the release. Running from February 6-19, 2024, the festival is recognized as one of the largest and most prestigious of its kind worldwide.

Support for Gods of the Universe: Rise of the Star Child came in part from the Trinidad and Tobago government's Film TT. The V.I. Department of Tourism provided film clips.

According to the release, the film's premiere has generated positive viewer feedback, with comparisons to "Star Trek" and praises for its dream-like quality and visual effects mastery.