

DISNEY DAZZLES AT THIS YEAR'S ESSENCE FESTIVAL OF CULTURE IN NEW ORLEANS WITH DIRECTOR, STARS AND FOOTAGE FROM "HAUNTED MANSION," "STAR WARS: AHSOKA" AND "WISH"

Crowd Was Wowed by Haunted Mansion's Justin Simien, LaKeith Stanfield, Tiffany Haddish and Rosario Dawson, who also stars in Lucasfilm's Highly Anticipated Star Wars Series for Disney+ "Ahsoka," and a Special Look at "Wish" Featuring A Video Greeting from Ariana DeBose





TO VIEW

PHOTOS: <https://dam.gettyimages.com/thewaltdisneystudios/disneyatessencefestival>

BURBANK, Calif (July 5, 2023) – Disney, the major entertainment sponsor of this year’s Essence Festival of Culture in New Orleans, put on a dazzling show for the thousands of attendees this past weekend with the director and stars along with footage from “Haunted Mansion,” opening in theaters July 28, Lucasfilm’s new *Star Wars* series “Ahsoka,” debuting on Disney+ on August 23, and Walt Disney Animation Studios’ “Wish,” opening in theaters November 22.

On Friday, “Haunted Mansion” cast members LaKeith Stanfield, Tiffany Haddish, Jamie Lee Curtis, and Rosario Dawson and director Justin Simien kicked off their Festival weekend by attending a haunting and frightfully fun Influencer Brunch at the Grand Oaks Mansion at River

City Venues. There, they charmed the 100+ influencers in a Q&A moderated by ABC's Race and Culture executive producer Nzinga Blake, mixed and mingled and enjoyed the themed food, specialty drinks and live entertainment. Guests received special gift bags with mini posters, water bottles, fanny packs and Fandango movie tickets on behalf of "Haunted Mansion."

The film's ensemble cast also includes Owen Wilson, Danny DeVito, Chase W. Dillon and Daniel Levy, with Jared Leto as The Hatbox Ghost. Inspired by the classic theme park attraction, "Haunted Mansion" is about a woman and her son who enlist a motley crew of so-called spiritual experts to help rid their home of supernatural squatters. The film's producers are Dan Lin and Jonathan Eirich, with Nick Reynolds and Tom Peitzman serving as executive producers.

Friday evening on the mainstage at the Superdome, Simien, Stanfield, Haddish and Dawson took to the stage to greet the thousands of thrilled attendees, discuss "Haunted Mansion" and introduce the film's trailer, which caused major excitement when it was shown on the giant Caesars Superdome screens. The audience also appreciated a 30 second spot that highlighted new and upcoming movies and series from Disney, Pixar, Marvel Studios and Lucasfilm. The evening featured concert performances by headliner Lauryn Hill, along with Doug E. Fresh, Big Daddy Kane, EPMD, KRS-One, Slick Rick, Ari Lennox, Tobe Nwigwe, Jagged Edge and Guest DJ Clark Kent.

Saturday morning, the "Haunted Mansion" talent assembled on the Essence Stage at the Convention Center for a lively conversation, moderated by Angélique Roché, about the absolute blast they all had making the film, and screened a 30 second spot to the crowd's delight. They encouraged everyone to stick around for the "Disney Studios Showcase" at the Essence Film Festival later that afternoon, where one lucky attendee would receive four tickets to the world premiere of "Haunted Mansion."

At the dazzling "Studios Showcase," Simien, Stanfield, Haddish and Dawson, who's also the star of Lucasfilm's highly anticipated Disney+ *Star Wars* series "Ahsoka," entertained the audience of 1500 with a Q&A, moderated by Angélique Roché. In addition, everyone was treated to a four-minute sneak peek at "Haunted Mansion."

Attendees also got a sneak peek at the highly anticipated series "Ahsoka" during a Q&A with star Rosario Dawson where she shared her excitement around joining a galaxy far, far away as the fan favorite Jedi Knight and former padawan to Anakin Skywalker.

An exclusive clip from Walt Disney Animation Studios' "Wish," and a video greeting from one of the film's stars, Academy Award® winner Ariana DeBose, received enthusiastic responses from the attendees. Everyone received a "Wish" lithograph print featuring Ariana DeBose's character Asha, "Haunted Mansion" and "Ahsoka" mini posters and "Haunted Mansion" themed Fandango movie tickets, and one very appreciative and excited guest won the four "Haunted Mansion" world premiere tickets.

“Ahsoka,” starring Dawson in the title role, is set after the fall of the Empire and follows the former Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano as she investigates an emerging threat to a vulnerable galaxy. The series also stars Natasha Liu Bordizzo as Sabine Wren, Mary Elizabeth Winstead as Hera Syndulla, Ray Stevenson as Baylan Skoll, Ivanna Sakhno as Shin Hati, Diana Lee Inosanto as Morgan Elsbeth, David Tennant as Huyang, Lars Mikkelsen as Grand Admiral Thrawn, and Eman Esfandi appearing as Ezra Bridger.

“Ahsoka” is written by Dave Filoni, who is also an executive producer alongside Jon Favreau, Kathleen Kennedy, Colin Wilson, and Carrie Beck. Karen Gilchrist is co-executive producer. The series’ directors include Filoni, Steph Green, Peter Ramsey, Jennifer Getzinger, Geeta Vasant Patel and Rick Famuyiwa.

In Walt Disney Animation Studios’ “Wish,” Asha, a sharp-witted idealist, makes a wish so powerful that it is answered by a cosmic force—a little ball of boundless energy called Star. Together, Asha and Star confront a most formidable foe—the ruler of Rosas, King Magnifico—to save her community and prove that when the will of one courageous human connects with the magic of the stars, wondrous things can happen. Featuring the voices of Academy Award®-winning actor Ariana DeBose as Asha, Chris Pine as Magnifico, and Alan Tudyk as Asha’s favorite goat, Valentino, the film is helmed by Oscar®-winning director Chris Buck (“Frozen,” “Frozen 2”) and Fawn Veerasunthorn (“Raya and the Last Dragon”), produced by Peter Del Vecho (“Frozen,” “Frozen 2”) and co-produced by Juan Pablo Reyes (“Encanto”). Jennifer Lee (“Frozen,” “Frozen 2”) executive produces—Lee and Allison Moore (“Night Sky,” “Manhunt”) are writers on the project. With original songs by Grammy®-nominated singer/songwriter Julia Michaels and Grammy winning producer/songwriter/musician Benjamin Rice, plus score by composer Dave Metzger, “Wish” opens only in theaters on Nov. 22, 2023.

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