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Press Materials: [http://pbs.org/pressroom](http://www.pbs.org/pressroom) or [http://thirteen.org/pressroom](http://www.thirteen.org/pressroom)

*American Masters* websites: [http://pbs.org/americanmasters,](http://pbs.org/americanmasters) [http://facebook.com/americanmasters](http://www.facebook.com/americanmasters), [@PBSAmerMasters](http://twitter.com/pbsamermasters), <http://youtube.com/AmericanMastersPBS>, <http://instagram.com/pbsamericanmasters> #AmericanMastersPBS

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***How It Feels To Be Free*, New *American Masters* Documentary About Trailblazing Black Female Entertainers Lena Horne, Abbey Lincoln, Diahann Carroll, Nina Simone, Cicely Tyson and Pam Grier, Premieres January 18 on PBS**

*Executive produced by 15-Time Grammy Winner Alicia Keys*

*and produced by Yap Films*

***American Masters****:* ***How It Feels To Be Free*** tells the inspiring story of how six iconic African American female entertainers – Lena Horne, Abbey Lincoln, Nina Simone, Diahann Carroll, Cicely Tyson and Pam Grier – challenged an entertainment industry deeply complicit in perpetuating racist stereotypes, and transformed themselves and their audiences in the process. The film, premiering nationwide Monday, January 18, 2021 at 9 p.m. on PBS (check local listings) and early 2021 on *documentary* Channel in Canada, features interviews and archival performances with all six women, as well as original conversations with contemporary artists influenced by them, including Alicia Keys, an executive producer on the project, Halle Berry, Lena Waithe, Meagan Good, LaTanya Richardson Jackson, Samuel L. Jackson and other luminaries, as well as family members, including Horne’s daughter Gail Lumet Buckley.

Based on the book “How It Feels To Be Free: Black Women Entertainers and the Civil Rights Movement” by Ruth Feldstein, the film tells the story of how these six pioneering women broke through in an entertainment industry hell-bent on keeping them out and situates their activism as precursors to contemporary movements like #TimesUp, #OscarsSoWhite and #BlackLivesMatter. Award-winning director Yoruba Richen (*The Green Book: Guide to Freedom*, *POV: Promised Land*, *Independent Lens: The New Black*) examines the impact these trailblazing entertainers had on reshaping the narrative of Black female identity in Hollywood through their art and political activism while advocating for social change. The film highlights how each woman — singer, dancer and actress Lena Horne; jazz vocalist, songwriter and actress Abbey Lincoln; Tony-winning actress, singer and model Diahann Carroll; jazz, blues and folk singer Nina Simone; actress and model Cicely Tyson; and actress Pam Grier — harnessed their celebrity to advance the civil rights movement.

“These revolutionary Black women embody stories of courage, resilience and heroism. They fought for representation and economic, social and political equality through their artistry and activism,” said Michael Kantor, ***American Masters*** series executive producer. “We are proud to share the stories of how each left an indelible mark on our culture and inspired a new generation.”

Director Yoruba Richen said, “At this unprecedented time of racial reckoning and as Hollywood is reassessing its role in perpetuating racist stereotypes, now is the perfect moment to tell the stories of these path-breaking women who have inspired generations of Black female superstars—like Keys, Halle Berry, Issa Rae, Ava DuVernay and Lena Waithe—who continue to push boundaries and reshape how African American women are seen onscreen.”

Executive producer Alicia Keys added, “I am proud to be a part of such a meaningful, important project. Art is the most powerful medium on the planet, and I continue to be inspired by and learn from these powerful, brave and stereotype-shattering women who leveraged their success as artists to fearlessly stand up against racism, sexism, exclusion and harassment. I honor their courage by celebrating their stories and continuing the work they started.”

Harry Gamsu, Vice President of Non-Scripted Content Acquisitions, Fremantle, said, “Throughout the course of history, the stories of Black women have been consistently overlooked and ignored. Now we are witnessing incredible stories like these being told by Black women, and we are honored to be a partner in helping bring these voices to a global audience.”

Launched in 1986 on PBS, ***American Masters*** set the standard for documentary film profiles, accruing widespread critical acclaim and earning 28 Emmy Awards — including 10 for Outstanding Non-Fiction Series and five for Outstanding Non-Fiction Special — 14 Peabodys, an Oscar, three Grammys, two Producers Guild Awards and many other honors. To further explore the lives and works of masters past and present, the [***American Masters*** website](http://pbs.org/americanmasters) offers streaming video of select films, outtakes, filmmaker interviews, the American Masters Podcast, educational resources and more. The series is a production of THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC for WNET.

***American Masters: How It Feels To Be Free*** is produced by Yap Films in association with American Masters Pictures, ITVS, Chicken & Egg Pictures and *documentary* Channel in Canada. Michael Kantor, Alicia Keys, Lacey Schwartz Delgado, Mehret Mandefro, Elliott Halpern and Elizabeth Trojian are executive producers. Yoruba Richen is director. Michael Kantor is executive producer of ***American Masters****.* Fremantle holds global distribution rights (ex-US and Canada) to the documentary.

Investment support for ***American Masters: How It Feels To Be Free*** is provided by Rogers Cable Network Fund. Produced with the participation of Ontario Creates - Ontario Film and Television Tax Credit and Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit. Production support provided by Black Public Media.

Support for ***American Masters*** is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, AARP, Rosalind P. Walter, Judith and Burton Resnick, Lillian Goldman Programming Endowment, Cheryl and Philip Milstein Family Foundation, Vital Projects Fund, The Blanche & Irving Laurie Foundation, Seton J. Melvin, The Philip and Janice Levin Foundation, Ellen and James S. Marcus, The André and Elizabeth Kertész Foundation, and public television viewers.

**About Fremantle**  
Fremantle is one of the largest and most successful creators, producers and distributors of scripted and unscripted content in the world. From *Got Talent* to *My Brilliant Friend*, *Family Feud* to *The Young Pope*, *Idols* to *American Gods*, *The Price is Righ*t to *Neighbours* and *The X Factor* to *Deutschland 83* – we are behind the world’s most-loved and most-watched shows. We have an outstanding international network of production teams, companies and labels in over 30 countries - our Fremantle family includes UFA (Germany), Wildside (Italy), Abot Hameiri (Israel), Miso Film (Denmark, Sweden and Norway), Blue Circle (Netherlands), Original Productions (USA) and Easy Tiger (Australia) to name a few. We produce in excess of 12,000 hours of original programming, roll out more than 70 formats and air 400 programmes a year worldwide. We also distribute over 20,000 hours of content in more than 200 territories. As a world leader in digital and branded entertainment, we have more than 370 million subscribers across 1,500 social channels and over 100 billion views across all platforms - and are the creator of Facebook’s most viewed video of all time, [The Sacred Riana](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=367214273701582). For more information, visit [www.fremantle.com](http://www.fremantle.com/), or follow us @[FremantleHQ](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__l.workplace.com_l.php-3Fu-3Dhttps-253A-252F-252Ftwitter.com-252Ffremantlehq-253Flang-253Den-26h-3DAT12ANdkQ8E6T7Yii7z5zrLjrtRHUfJ96CuUqiEJCDdPyurOixJCPrEvw10tp2rC23BOIj44DtC82NWZYjk9-2DuERVBJnQD8UZck2ZjYAYY28MSy5bVCn9pCAmAk5BlurpFplrooorTFCt6q24-2DTno2n-5FrRpKn8Wlk7X20MI&d=DwMGaQ&c=BxKcMbETFwSktsL116c0CLzwOlCGdYKnl0_kgHBnEac&r=pftdvJpvVLAr1XwM_7Vc5Sxzxt__GABjs8JZmiY00ug&m=U32jHO5fCfLRBJNHgsTGNkC00FCLQ93o_Cc4_P7VtpI&s=X-ZbIdAaxBUXyctYl19-KQdt2_ykmfwQVf6rbZ5a9IE&e=) and visit our [LinkedIn](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__l.workplace.com_l.php-3Fu-3Dhttps-253A-252F-252Fwww.linkedin.com-252Fcompany-252Ffremantle-26h-3DAT3EB6hVRTcJn9hu7n6Kl6vqzshrJmHS4WnN-5F9Qy2lf5zoiqYcpVy6m4jrpVUMiU18hGA2re3ZQVj8zt0SBMLSSpPgAQTkV7mtXC3fZXVsZHk3yw3RGC1qKj0LmylGHeQ-2DKZjAB4b3bkELrYx5pAIlDn3l13W6jw5gnJQ-2Ds&d=DwMGaQ&c=BxKcMbETFwSktsL116c0CLzwOlCGdYKnl0_kgHBnEac&r=pftdvJpvVLAr1XwM_7Vc5Sxzxt__GABjs8JZmiY00ug&m=U32jHO5fCfLRBJNHgsTGNkC00FCLQ93o_Cc4_P7VtpI&s=CNUvdx4tIAc8Nr4uQw-03oaxOxkRyVCBKsARQ9U44Zk&e=) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/FremantleHQ/) pages.

**About Yap Films**

Yap films is an award-winning documentary film and factual series production company based in Toronto. Under the direction of Company President and Emmy Award-winning producer/director Elliott Halpern and award-winning producer, writer, director and Chief Creative Officer Elizabeth Trojian, yap specializes in producing factual specials and series in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Recently, we have produced feature-length documentaries for Netflix, History, Discovery, Smithsonian, BBC, CBC and other international broadcasters. These include: 2020 Canadian Screen Award (CSA) winner for Best Science/Nature documentary *A Day in the Life of Earth* for CBC, 2019 CSA winner for Best History Documentary/Series *Ice Bridge* for CBC, 2020 CSA nominated *D-Day in 14 Stories* for History, 2017 CSA nominated *Loretta Lynn: Still a Mountain Girl* for PBS/American Masters*, The Genetic Revolution* for CBC, Smithsonian Channel, France 5, UKTV and SBS (2019*), Unabomber: In His Own Words* for Netflix and Reelz(2020), and most recently *Translating Beauty* for OutTV (2020). To learn more about us please visit [www.yapfilms.com](http://www.yapfilms.com), or visit our [Twitter](https://twitter.com/yapfilms) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/yapfilms/) profiles.

**About WNET**WNET is America’s flagship PBS station: parent company of New York’s [THIRTEEN](http://thirteen.org/) and [WLIW21](http://wliw.org/) and operator of [NJTV](http://www.njtvonline.org/), the statewide public media network in New Jersey. Through its new [ALL ARTS](http://allarts.org/) multi-platform initiative, its broadcast channels, three cable services (THIRTEEN PBS KIDS, Create and World) and online streaming sites, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each month. WNET produces and presents a wide range of acclaimed PBS series, including ***Nature***, ***Great Performances***, ***American Masters***, ***PBS NewsHour Weekend***, and the nightly interview program ***Amanpour and Company***. In addition, WNET produces numerous documentaries, children’s programs, and local news and cultural offerings, as well as multi-platform initiatives addressing poverty and climate. Through THIRTEEN Passport and WLIW Passport, station members can stream new and archival THIRTEEN, WLIW and PBS programming anytime, anywhere.

**About PBS**  
[PBS](http://www.pbs.org/), with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 120 million people through television and 26 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS’ broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry’s most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. Decades of research confirms that PBS’s premier children’s media service, PBS KIDS, helps children build critical literacy, math and social-emotional skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality educational content on TV— including a 24/7 channel, online at [pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org/), via an array of mobile apps and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org/), one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, or by following [PBS on Twitter](https://twitter.com/pbs),  [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/pbs)  or through our [apps for mobile and connected devices](http://www.pbs.org/anywhere/home/). Specific program information and updates for press are available at  [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pressroom.pbs.org/) or by following [PBS Pressroom on Twitter](https://twitter.com/pbspressroom).

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