

MTV marks 40th anniversary with a new 'Moon Person' design

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 2, (AP) — MTV is marking its 40th anniversary with a relaunch of its iconic image of an astronaut on the moon, with an MTV flag planted nearby.

On Sunday, the media network unveiled a large scale "Moon Person" during a ceremony at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. The new design was inspired by a Moon Person image created this year by Kehinde Wiley, who painted the portrait of former President Barack Obama for the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery. In an interview this week with The Associated Press, MTV Entertainment President and CEO Chris McCarthy said that the image of space travel fit well with the spirit of its young audience.

"This is our third generation that we're reinventing for. Gen Z is by far one of the most interesting, incredibly creative and optimistic generations," he said. "And so we thought, 'Let's go back to the origins and do it with NASA, but really do it about the next frontier, which represents generation Z and really represents a beautiful moon person that Kehinde built and where we're going to be heading next.'"

NASA footage of the historic Apollo 11 landing in 1969, with the MTV flag added to the mix, were the first images to appear on MTV back on August 1, 1981, and the first video was the Buggles' "Video Killed the Radio Star." MTV vastly expanded the power of visual images in the music industry and has since broadly ex-

panded its reach, broadcasting worldwide and adding such influential channels and programs as VH1, Comedy Central and the early reality show "The Real World."

After fans, reviewers, music industry leaders and such artists as David Bowie criticized the channel for airing videos of virtually only white performers in its first years, MTV began playing more Michael Jackson and other Black artists who proved highly popular. The hip-hop program "Yo! MTV Raps," which debuted in the US in 1988, was lauded for highlighting a subculture which eventually became mass culture.

Diverse

"I would be lying if I didn't say that we made mistakes along the way. One of the bigger mistakes in the early years was not playing enough diverse music," McCarthy said. "So we certainly have had our bumps in the road and made some mistakes. But the nice thing that I've always learned at MTV is we have no problem owning our mistakes, quickly correcting them and trying to do the right thing and always follow where the audience is going."

MTV now has a vast presence on social media, with more than 700 million followers of MTV Entertainment.

"We launched as a video channel on what was the new medium of the time in 1981, which, hard to believe, that was cable," McCarthy said. "I think the fun and interesting thing about MTV ... is to constantly have to blow yourself up and forget everything

you knew in order for us to recreate a brand new entity for each generation."

Also:

DETROIT: The "Queen of Soul's" handprints are to be unveiled outside the Detroit Historical Society Museum in advance of the release of a new film on **Aretha Franklin's** life and career.

Sunday's unveiling on Legends Plaza will coincide with the opening of a new, temporary museum exhibit on Franklin, who died in 2018.

Franklin cast her handprints in concrete for installation on the plaza in 2017 at the Detroit Music Hall's celebration of the dedication of Aretha Franklin Way in the city, the historical society said.

They last were seen as part of the museum's commemorative exhibit following Franklin's death and are being placed on permanent display in conjunction with the upcoming release of "Respect," a new film on the life and career of the legendary singer, songwriter and global cultural icon.

Franklin died Aug. 16, 2018 of pancreatic cancer at age 76 in her Detroit home.

Franklin song, including "Think," "I Say a Little Prayer" and "Respect," are considered classics.

The new museum exhibition opens at 1 p.m. Sunday to the public. It will feature costumes from "Respect," along with other artifacts.

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This file image provided by Disney shows, from left, Jack Whitehall, Emily Blunt and Dwayne Johnson in a scene from 'Jungle Cruise.' The Disney film exceeded expectations by pulling in more than \$34.1 million over the weekend in the US. (AP)

Film

Ailey and Jones' stories bigger than their dance

Twin docus spotlight dance legends

By Lindsey Bahr

Alvin Ailey and Bill T. Jones may have a generation between them, but the two influential choreographers crossed paths at a few pivotal moments. Ailey was the one who commissioned Jones' first work, "Fever Swap," in 1983. A few years later in 1989, at the height of the AIDS epidemic, Jones, then famous in his own right, would create one of his most notable works and a response to the crisis: "D-Man in the Waters." It was also the year Ailey died at age 58 of complications from the disease.

So it's a fateful coincidence that this summer both men are getting the spotlight in two terrific documentaries: "Ailey," opening nationwide on Aug. 6, and "Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters," which is currently in theaters.

"Ailey" director Jamila Wignot said the project found her in 2017. She'd been a fan of Ailey influential modern dance work and his company, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, but realized she didn't know much about him beyond that. It may have been intentional on his part: Despite his fame, Ailey was a private person.

The documentary is partially framed around a new staging of a classic Ailey dance from choreographer Rennie Harris, who, like Wignot, is trying to figure out "what made Mr. Ailey Mr. Ailey." Thankfully, Wignot made a pivotal discovery that helped inch closer to an answer: Revealing audio recordings that he conducted in the last year of his life.

"That really opened up the possibilities for the film," Wignot said. "He revealed things that certainly were not part of his, you know, public presentation of self."

Ailey in the recordings talks candidly about his childhood in a segregated, impoverished Texas in

the Depression, the deep wounds of a non-existent relationship with his father, the transformative experience of seeing a pioneer like Katherine Dunham dance and his own sexual awakening, which for him was a beautiful experience.

"There's so few in particular Black institutions that survive their founders and it's an extraordinary institution in that regard," Wignot said. "But I wanted people to remember this kind of deeply passionate, vulnerable, sensitive person who is at the heart of it and whose presence you still feel."

The Bill T. Jones project came about differently. Co-director Rosalynde LeBlanc, who herself had been a member of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, was restaging "D-Man in the Waters" in 2012 and felt that it wasn't coming alive.

Experience

"That question as to why the dance was so elusive was really what fueled the project," LeBlanc said. "Originally, I wanted to put the piece in its historical context. The idea was to create an immersive experience for the students so they could understand the birth of the piece."

In 1988, Zane, who was Jones' co-director and romantic partner, died of AIDS complications. While creating a new dance after the loss, based around water and waves, one of the dancers in the company Demian Acquavella (D-Man) was also diagnosed with AIDS. In this context, the dance took on a different tenor and became about survival in the face of an epidemic.

LeBlanc enlisted noted documentary cinematographer Tom Hurwitz for help creating the piece. But soon they realized their small project had evolved into something bigger and distinct from the other documentaries about Jones.

"I've been doing this for a really long time and this was certainly one of the very, very best set of interviews I've ever shot in my life," Hurwitz said.

"The dancers, their experience was so rich, their ability to convey it was so rich, the accessibility of their emotions and just their personalities were so vibrant that it really felt to me like this was a big story. The story that they were telling was so much bigger than just this simple dance. It was a story that really talked about the role of art in the human experience and the necessity for art and community in the face of the catastrophes that befall us regularly."

So they decided to dive in and make a feature, although it took a little longer than either thought at the time.

"He really is one of the most impactful and preeminent artists of our time," LeBlanc said. "And if that 14-year-old-kid, a young Black boy in a class who loves to move, could see this film one day and be like 'being a choreographer is an option?'...that would be incredibly gratifying to me."

Also:

VICKSBURG, Miss.: A movie called "My Stolen Life" started filming last week in a city that has a wide view of the Mississippi River.

The film, for the Lifetime network, is being shot in Vicksburg. It's about twin sisters who have endured a traumatic situation. One becomes a famous writer and the other is driven mad.

The Vicksburg Post reported that the movie features several Vicksburg landmarks and some local faces. Vicksburg Police Chief Penny Jones plays herself in one scene.

"The film wasn't originally set in Vicksburg, but we came here and didn't want to try to make it look like it was set somewhere else," producer Liana Rae Perez said.

Filming locations include the B.B. Club, Vicksburg's riverfront murals and downtown area and the antebellum home Anchuca. The film is directed and produced by Atlanta native Dylan Vox. (AP)

score. "It didn't really seem like the streaming component hurt the box office in any significant way. The movie theater is still showing its resilience and appeal to moviegoers despite the fact that there's so much news everyday, most of it not moving in the right direction, in terms of the pandemic." "Jungle Cruise" also earned



Johansson



Patel

five times more than "The Green Knight," which came in at No. 2 with \$6.78 million. The A24 film starring Dev Patel barely edged M. Night Shyamalan's "Old," which had \$6.76 million after scoring the top spot last weekend. "Black Widow" placed fourth after a past week of turmoil between Disney and the film's lead,

Scarlett Johansson. The actor sued the studio over the film's streaming release, which she said breached her contract and deprived her of potential earnings.

Disney responded to Johansson's claim saying she received \$20 million in compensation and that she benefited from Disney Plus' revenue.

Matt Damon's "Stillwater" opened at No. 5 with \$5.1 million but faced criticism as well. The drama film was blasted by Amanda Knox, who spoke out last week about her name being associated with the new movie, saying any connection rips off her story without her consent at the "expense of my reputation." (AP)