

AMERICAN FICTION

DIR: CORD JEFFERSON (2023)

JAN
23rd

Comedy, Drama

USA

1h 57m

Late one night, Black novelist and professor Thelonious “Monk” Ellison finds himself staring at a blank computer screen, reeling from rejection after rejection after rejection of his latest novel by his white publishers. “Editors want a ‘Black’ book,” his agent tells him. “They have a ‘Black’ book,” Monk replies, “I’m Black and it’s my book.” “You know what I mean, Monk.” Oh, and did I mention his mother is now showing signs of dementia and needs full time care? AND his sister has just died.

Fueled by the hypocrisy, his grief, and a bottle of liquor, Monk writes a new novel — “My Pathology” No, no, scratch that. He knows exactly what they’re looking for: “My Pafology” — a story filled with every Black stereotype and trope and the “ghetto-speak” a white audience expects from Black America. And suddenly the same white publishing houses LOVE IT!

From the trailer you’ll know this film is hysterically funny, but what will surprise you, and move you, is when you see this feature by Cord Jefferson and watching Monk navigate life’s universal struggles — ailing parents, wayward siblings, and, if we’re lucky, falling in love. Starring Jeffrey Wright, Sterling K. Brown, Tracee Ellis Ross, Issa Rae and the great Leslie Uggams — AMERICAN FICTION was not only voted the top film (People’s Choice Award) at the Toronto Film Festival this year, it is already the recipient of big Oscar buzz. The filmmaker also makes it clear that it’s not just Black authors that face this patronizing stereotyping, it’s also present and thriving for Black filmmakers — who must continue to fight to have Black voices heard, instead of white people telling Black filmmakers what the Black voices, and their films, should say.