

ArtMattan Films Acquires USA Rights to TIFF 2024 Selection VILLAGE KEEPER!

Village Keeper had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2024. The film is scheduled for a sneak preview screening in NYC and Chicago

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, April 25, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- ArtMattan Films, the film distribution arm of ArtMattan Productions, has announced the acquisition of the Canadian drama *Village Keeper* by filmmaker [Karen Chapman](#).



Village Keeper had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in 2024. The film is scheduled for a sneak preview screening as part of the [ADIFF Caribbean Film Series](#) in New York and will also screen at [ADIFF Chicago](#) on June 14, 2025. ArtMattan Films plans a US theatrical run later this year, followed by digital and home-video releases.

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Dr. Reinaldo B. Spech

Village Keeper tells the story of Beverly-Jean (Olunike Adeliyi), a resilient Jamaican-Canadian widow living in Toronto's Lawrence Heights community. After her husband's violent death, she struggles to protect her two teenagers (Zahra Bentham, Micah Mensah-Jatoe) from neighborhood violence while navigating her own unprocessed grief and trauma. Supported by her mother

(Maxine Simpson), whose home pulses with Jamaican culture, Jean embodies fierce maternal love. The film is a powerful exploration of resilience, the search for community support, the weight of generational trauma, and ultimately, a journey towards Black healing.

“Karen Chapman brings an authentic and emotional lens to the screen with *Village Keeper*, exploring profound themes of grief, resilience, and motherhood within the vibrant context of Toronto's Caribbean community,” says Dr. Reinaldo B. Spech, Principal at ArtMattan Films. “This film powerfully portrays the journey of healing and the strength it takes to care for others while

needing care oneself. It's a deeply relevant story about the Black experience, focusing on recovery and connection, and we are proud to bring this outstanding feature debut to US audiences."

The film has received 7 Canadian Screen Award nominations from the Canadian Academy—the third most nominations of any film this year—including:

- Best Motion Picture
- Best Original Screenplay
- Best First Feature Film
- Best Lead Performance
- Best Supporting Performance (three separate nominations)

Village Keeper has also captured the attention of audiences and juries across North America, winning multiple top awards:

Festival Honors

- Arizona International Film Festival

Winner: Festival Grand Prize & Jury Award for Best Performance

- Minnesota International Film Festival

Winner: Festival Grand Prize

- Vancouver GEMS International Film Festival

Winner: Festival Grand Prize & Jury Award for Best Performance

- Regent Park Film Festival

Winner: Best Feature Film

In addition to its festival success, the film has received industry recognition through key nominations:

- Directors Guild of Canada: Outstanding Direction in a Feature Film
- Canadian Media Producers Association: Emerging Producers Award
- ACTRA Award Nomination: Outstanding Performance, Female for Oluniké Adeliyi

"Village Keeper isn't a film about Black trauma; it's a celebration of and journey towards Black healing." ~ Kevin Bourne, SHIFTER Magazine



"Writer-director Karen Chapman has taken a well-worn single mother story to a new level of relevance that is, in a word, outstanding." ~ Jeanine T. Abraham, Medium.com

KAREN CHAPMAN is a Canadian filmmaker with strong roots in Caribbean culture, which she often celebrates in her work.

Village Keeper is her feature directorial debut, based on her 2019 short film "Measure".

Chapman aims to tell complex stories, particularly focusing on the strength and resilience of mothers, and strives to create safe, collaborative environments on set.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND SCREENERS, PLEASE CONTACT: Diarah N'Daw-Spech, ArtMattan Films - Tel (212) 864-1760, e-mail: info@africanfilm.com

ABOUT ARTMATTAN FILMS ArtMattan Films, co-founded by Dr. Reinaldo Barroso-Spech and Diarah N'Daw-Spech, celebrates over thirty years of exposing US audiences to a large variety of films about the human experience of people of color in many parts of the world. Films released by ArtMattan Films include Kirikou and the Sorceress, The Tracker, The Pirogue, Mama Africa: Miriam Makeba, The Last Tree, The Sleeping Negro, Marighella, Ludi and Power Alley. More info at AfricanFilm.com and ArtMattanFilms.com.

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