

# Idris Elba to star in Jay-Z-produced film

By Defender News Service

(DEFENDER) - Actor Idris Elba is bringing narratives about Black cowboys to the forefront. Months after it was announced that the London native would star in a film about Black horsemanship in Philadelphia, Elba has now been tapped to star in a Western film titled *The Harder They Fall*, Billboard reported.

The project—which will be featured on Netflix—is being produced by Jay-Z and directed by British singer-songwriter Jeymes Samuel. Lawrence Bender and James Lassiter will also serve as producers. The all-Black film chronicles the journey of a fugitive who finds out that the individual

who killed his parents is being released from prison and aims to retaliate. Jonathan Majors will star alongside Elba in the film.

This isn't the first time that Samuel has worked on a Western film. In 2013, he directed a short film titled *They Die By Dawn* which was centered on four outlaws in Langston, Oklahoma. The film starred Michael K. Williams, Isaiah Washington, Jesse Williams, Rosario Dawson, and Nate Parker. "I am a die-hard lover of film and cinema, and possibly my favorite genre is Westerns. I would watch Westerns, because I love them so much, and I would get really, really frus-



trated," Samuel told the *Life + Times*. "The portrayal of Black people in cinema disturbed me anyway, but watch the Westerns. The reason why Westerns used to bug the hell out of me was because they never, ever show Black people

and when they would, they'll give a reason for us being there. It frustrates me that they'll never show us in Westerns without us being subservient or slaves. It would irritate me that you'd see the misappropriation and

our history; not just me as a Black person, but as a human being. History is for everyone. I love Westerns and every time I saw a Black person there was a reason for them being there, so for me, I wanted to change that."

Jay-Z has been expanding his repertoire in the film industry. Over the past few years, he's created powerful documentaries including *Free Meek*, *Rest in Power: The Trayvon Martin Story* and the *Kalief Browder Story*.

## Jussie Smollett Slams Chicago For 'Humiliation' And 'Emotional Distress' In New Counterclaim

By Defender News Service

(DEFENDER) - The **Jussie Smollett** vs. Chicago saga continues with the *Empire* actor now filing a counterclaim against the city.

According to the Chicago Sun-Times, Smollett filed his claim in federal court targeting not just the city of Chicago, but also multiple police officers and people allegedly involved in his case, claiming a malicious prosecution caused him economic harm, "humiliation, mental anguish and extreme emotional distress."

The 49-page counterclaim was in response to a lawsuit filed by the city against Smollett. It aims to recover \$130,106 for the investigation it carried out after Smollett made the allegedly false claim that he was the victim of a

homophobic and racist attack in January.

Specific people listed in Smollett's counterclaim includes Detectives **Michael Theis** and **Edward Wodnicki**, Supt. **Eddie Johnson**, and **Abimbola** and **Olabinjo Osundairo**, among other unnamed individuals.

Lawyers for Jussie argue that the police sought to have Smollett prosecuted based on the Osundairo brothers' "false, self-serving, and unreliable statements in order to close the investigation into the attack on Mr. Smollett."

They also argue that proceedings against Smollett were terminated "in Mr. Smollett's favor and in a manner which indicates his innocence because all 16 counts of the criminal indictment were dismissed two and a half



weeks after the indictment was filed."

They go on to say that the city can't recover costs from Smollett because it already accepted \$10,000 from him "as payment in full in connection with the dismissal of the charges against him."

The counterclaim, which was filed on Tues-

day, comes after a decision by U.S. District Judge **Virginia Kendall** not to toss the city's suit against Smollett. In her ruling, Kendall explained, "The city must prove the truth of these allegations to prevail at summary judgment or trial, at which point Smollett will be free to dispute the city's

claims."

On Jan. 29, while walking to a subway, Smollett said that two men yelled racial and homophobic slurs at him, according to The Hollywood Reporter. They allegedly punched and poured bleach on him while one of the suspects put a rope around his neck. As they

fled the scene, Smollett told police they said, "This is MAGA country."

Abimbola and Olabinjo Osundairo, the Nigerian-American brothers who were allegedly involved in the attack, were also reportedly suing Jussie for defamation because they felt "alienated" in Chicago and couldn't get work. According to The Chicago Tribune, the lawsuit alleged in part that Smollett's attorneys "doubled down, not simply affirming that Mr. Smollett was a wholly innocent victim, but that ... (the brothers) unequivocally led a criminally homophobic, racist, and violent attack."

Although the Chicago police believes Smollett's attack was staged, he has maintained his innocence this whole time.

## Houston to host all 8 XFL preseason training camps

By Defender News Service

The XFL is bringing the fun back to football and the rebooted league is bringing all eight of its teams to Houston to start off the inaugural season.

The XFL along with the Houston Sports Authority announced this week that all eight of its teams will hold their preseason training camps in the Houston area from Jan. 4-22. The teams will all start their training camps in their respective cities in December before moving to Houston as a centralized location.

The XFL, which played one season in 2001 under pro wrestling front man Vince McMahon, will kick off its season on Feb. 8, a week after the NFL's Su-

per Bowl.

"Everyone at the XFL is grateful to each of the area college and high school athletic directors who have helped make this a reality," Commissioner Oliver Luck said. "We are excited to welcome our teams to Houston and benefit from these world-class facilities as we prepare for kickoff on February 8, 2020."

Houston has a team in the upstart league, the Roughnecks, and they will play their home games this upcoming season at UH's TDECU Stadium.

"Houston is a sports town," Houston mayor Sylvester Turner said in a released statement. "We have great fans and we support

our teams.

"The XFL made the right call when it chose the city as the home of the Roughnecks, and now, I am even more excited that all eight XFL teams and nearly



1,000 representatives will come to the Houston area for their training camps in January 2020. I'm confident this will generate a great deal of fan excitement and interest in the new football league."