

How "Hair Love" went from Kickstarter project to Oscar-winning film

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A scene from "Hair Love," which won an Oscar for Best Animated Short Film. Image from: Sony Picture Animation

In 2017, Matthew A. Cherry created a Kickstarter fundraiser. Cherry hoped to fund an animated short film.

His film was about a young black father. The man learns how to do his daughter's hair.

Cherry finally made the short film "Hair Love" happen. He had watched many internet videos. They showed black fathers. The men tackled their daughters' curls.

Three years later, Cherry has won an Oscar for "Hair Love." The Oscars are awards given to some of the best films. "Hair Love" won Best Animated Short Film.

Lively Kinky Curls

Cherry's film is under seven minutes. It follows Zuri. She is a 7-year-old. She has lively kinky curls. The girl wakes upon a special day. She tries to do her hair. Zuri is using a video made by her mother.

It does not go well.

Enter Zuri's father. Stephen is young. He is tattooed. Stephen has dreadlocks. He also tries to do Zuri's hair. He fails. Stephen nervously tries again to part her thick curls. His daughter cries. Stephen tries again. He moisturizes and detangles Zuri's curls. Finally, he twists them into a nice row of puff buns.

Two Goals

Cherry said he had two goals with "Hair Love." He wanted the film to tell kids to enjoy their hair. He also wanted to show black fathers deeply present in their children's lives.

The response to the Kickstarter was overwhelming. Cherry's idea blew past its first \$75,000 goal. It also topped a second \$125,000 goal. It made more than \$280,000.

As "Hair Love" got underway, Cherry asked Karen Rupert Toliver to help. She's been working in animation for a long time. Toliver once brought the "Rio" and "Ice Age" series to Fox. She decided to work on "Hair Love."

"There's never been a project that hit me so personally as 'Hair Love.' Living with black hair my whole life, growing up in Texas," said Toliver. Her company bought the short last March. "I was like, 'It has to get done.'"

Cherry's job before making films was as an NFL player. He has also worked at filmmaker Jordan Peele's company.

Surprise Ending

The ending of "Hair Love" might surprise some. It shows why Zuri's mother was not around to do her hair. It is emotional.

"I always try to think of twist endings," Cherry said. "You want to try to keep people entertained and kind of take them on a roller coaster of emotion."

Quiz

1 Read the paragraph below from the section "Lively Kinky Curls."

Enter Zuri's father. Stephen is young. He is tattooed. Stephen has dreadlocks. He also tries to do Zuri's hair. He fails. Stephen nervously tries again to part her thick curls. His daughter cries. Stephen tries again. He moisturizes and detangles Zuri's curls. Finally, he twists them into a nice row of puff buns.

Which question is answered in this paragraph?

- (A) When did Cherry start "Hair Love"?
- (B) What events happen in "Hair Love"?
- (C) Who helped Cherry make "Hair Love"?
- (D) How long does "Hair Love" last?

2 Which sentence from the section "Two Goals" explains a reason WHY Matthew A. Cherry made "Hair Love"?

- (A) He also wanted to show black fathers deeply present in their children's lives.
- (B) The response to the Kickstarter was overwhelming.
- (C) As "Hair Love" got underway, Cherry asked Karen Rupert Toliver to help.
- (D) Cherry's job before making films was as an NFL player.

3 How did "Hair Love" affect Karen Rupert Toliver?

- (A) It caused her to work on "Ice Age."
- (B) It reminded her of her own life.
- (C) It made her give to Kickstarter.
- (D) It helped her with her daughter.

4 WHY did Matthew A. Cherry end the film with information about Zuri's mother?

- (A) because he likes terrifying endings
- (B) because he likes happy endings
- (C) because he likes unexpected endings
- (D) because he likes funny endings