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In this file photo The Air Ship, MJ Player Exclusive, Game-Worn Sneaker Nike, 1984, Left Shoe: Size 13.5, Right Shoe: Size 13, High-Top on display during a press preview at Christie's New York.



In this file photo The Air Jordan 1 High "Shattered Backboard" Origin Story, Game-Worn Signed Sneaker Nike, 1985 Size 13.5 High-Top on display during a press preview at Christie's New York. — AFP photos

## Michael Jordan's sneakers sell for \$615,000, new record

A pair of Michael Jordan's game-worn sneakers sold for \$615,000, Christie's auction house said Thursday, shattering a record set just months ago by the sale of another pair of the basketball legend's shoes. The sneakers were a pair of Air Jordan 1 Highs that the NBA megastar wore during a 1985 exhibition match in Italy when he dunked the ball so hard it shattered the glass backboard. "This is the original shoe with an actual piece of the

backboard, a piece of glass, in the sole of the shoe," said Caitlin Donovan, head of handbag and sneaker sales at Christie's—which organized the auction with Stadium Goods.

Jordan racked up 30 points while wearing the size 13.5 shoes, which are in the red and black colors of his Chicago Bulls team. Though the sale broke the record set in May when a pair of Air Jordan 1's sold for \$560,000, the new auction landed below the estimated

range of \$650,000 and \$850,000. The record setting sales highlight the soaring market value of objects identified with the retired basketball superstar since the release of "The Last Dance," an ESPN/Netflix documentary that chronicles the saga of Jordan and his Chicago Bulls. It also confirms that the lowly sneaker now has a place of pride in the world of wealthy collectors alongside more traditional collectibles.— AFP

## R. Kelly manager charged with threatening shooting against New York theater

Federal authorities have charged R. Kelly's manager with allegedly threatening a shooting at a Manhattan theater, by which he aimed to halt a docuseries screening about sex crime allegations against the disgraced singer. The charges announced Friday come just days after the self-described manager and friend of Kelly, Donnell Russell, was among three associates charged with allegedly harassing and intimidating women making accusations against the musician. New court filings say he threatened a shooting at the theater in Manhattan to prevent a December 2018 screening of the docuseries "Surviving R. Kelly," according to court documents.

His call led to an evacuation of the theater, which ultimately did not screen the series exploring accusations that the singer known for hits like "I Believe I Can Fly" engaged in decades of abusive sexual relationships with women and minor girls. "The violence Mr. Russell allegedly threatened succeeded in shutting down one airing of the documentary, but he was unable to



In this file photo singer R. Kelly leaves the Leighton Criminal Court Building after a hearing on sexual abuse charges, in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

silence the women featured in the film," said FBI Assistant Director William Sweeney in a statement. Earlier this week prosecutors accused Russell of threatening to release sexually explicit photos of a woman in a bid to bully her into withdrawing her claims against Kelly, prosecutors said.

The new filing sees Russell, 45, charged with one count of conspiracy to threaten physical harm by interstate communication and one count of

threatening physical harm by interstate communication. Each count carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison. He is expected to make an initial appearance before a US judge in New York later Friday. For more than a year the artist born Robert Sylvester Kelly has been incarcerated and awaiting trial in several states for alleged wrongdoings including sex crimes against minors and child pornography. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges, which range across the states of Illinois, Minnesota and New York.

The artist is set for trial first in New York, where the case against him includes racketeering accusations that he systematically recruited girls for sex while touring, later coercing them into sexual activity. Jury selection for those proceedings are currently set to begin September 29, but restrictions preventing in-person trials due to the coronavirus pandemic will likely see that date postponed.— AFP



## Phil Collins 'In the Air Tonight' back in charts after twins' viral video

Phil Collins' "In the Air Tonight" has made a huge comeback in the music charts nearly 40 years after its release, thanks to a viral video of young American brothers reacting to his 1981 hit. Twins Tim and Fred Williams posted a video of themselves listening to the British singer's debut solo single for the first time on YouTube in July. The brothers seem to enjoy nodding along to Collins' ambient sounds, when suddenly the two fall back in their chairs—jaws dropped—as the drum beats drop in the middle of the song. "This is unique," says one of the twins on the video after being blown away by the drumming on the track. "I've never seen anyone drop

a beat at the end of a song."

The video on the twins' YouTube channel "TwinsthenewTrend" has racked up more than five million views. As of Friday, "In the Air Tonight" was No.2 in the US iTunes charts, behind Darius Rucker's "Beer and Sunshine", according to itopchart.com. The hit launched Collins' solo career back in 1981, after he left British rock group "Genesis" as its frontman and drummer. Collins, 69, has sold more than 100 million albums during his solo career and 150 million with Genesis.— AFP

## French director breaking the barriers for young black women

Just like the heroine of her acclaimed debut film, "Cuties", Maimouna Doucoure knows what it feels like not to be taken seriously. Her remarkable portrait of an 11-year-old French girl and her friends coming of age caught between traditionalist immigrant families and hyper-sexualised pop culture, won a best director award at the Sundance film festival earlier this year. Yet even after her short "Maman(s)-Mother(s)" — a semi-autobiographical tale of growing up in a polygamous Senegalese family in Paris—was garlanded with awards, some in the French film establishment were jaw-droppingly condescending about the unapologetically glamorous 35-year-old. "You made it for her, didn't you?" her producer was asked by one mover and shaker, before being told very firmly that it was all her own work. "I can't believe this girl made this film, she is so feminine," the sexist sceptic repeated. When Doucoure won at Sundance with "Cuties"—which has since been snapped up by Netflix—she called out the doubters publicly.

has proved her mother and a lot of others wrong since. And she has a sense of herself opening the way for others, helping to "knock down the mental barriers" that have held black women back.

### 'Things are moving'

Indeed, in her rousing Sundance acceptance speech she quoted Oprah Winfrey's maxim that "You become what you believe." "Believe ladies!" Doucoure declared. With both the #MeToo and Black Lives Matters movements causing earthquakes within the entertainment industry, she believes the times are changing. Doucoure proudly recounts marching alongside French actress Adele Haenel and "Girlhood" and "Portrait of a Lady on Fire" director Celine Sciamma at a protest in the Paris suburbs over the death in police custody of Adama Traore, the black young man who is seen by many as the French George Floyd. "Things are moving, I have the feeling that I am coming through at the right moment," said Doucoure. Nor does she feel like she is on her own.

### New black wave

The black British writer-director Michaela Coel—whose parents come from Ghana—has won huge plaudits for her hard-hitting date-rape series "I May Destroy You", while Issa Rae—who like Doucoure has Senegalese roots—has become a small-screen phenomenon for her series "Insecure" and "Awkward Black Girl", in which, like Coel, she also plays the lead. And another Parisian Mati Diop won the grand jury prize at the Cannes film festival last year for "Atlantics", which she shot in Senegal, where her musician father Wasis Diop was born.

Doucoure also points to the unexpected success of Jean-Pascal Zadi's clever comedy "Tout simplement noir" ("Very Simply Black") — one of the biggest hits of the summer in French cinemas—as another sign of progress. But there is still much to do. "We need different models altogether, to blow up the barriers with fiction," said Doucoure. "From the moment when we open imaginations, all will become possible." Having written and prepared "Cuties" while she was pregnant, and cast it carrying her daughter in a sling, Doucoure said she is an example of what is possible. "Coming from nowhere" she is proud to be a symbol of the opening up of France's often cliquish cinema culture which she said "is above all a sport of the rich". The director is currently working on two new films, one of which, centred on social media, will start shooting soon—coronavirus permitting. "When young girls can get 400,000 likes by doing a sexy selfie... we have to offer them another way of being. To dream of being female astronauts, engineers or presidents..." Or even film directors.— AFP



In this file photo French-Senegalese film director Maimouna Doucoure poses during a photo session in Paris. — AFP

### 'Forbidden from dreaming'

"I want to say to this guy and everyone who thinks that femininity means you don't have the power to think, to write, lead and create, women are capable of doing everything," she declared to deafening cheers. But young black women artists do not only have to climb a wall of prejudice from the outside, Doucoure told AFP as "Cuties" was released in France. They also have to face down sabotage from their own communities and even their families, she said. "When I was small, I was forbidden from dreaming," said the director. Her mother, a cleaner, told her that making films was not for "the likes of her"—that people who made films didn't look like her. In other words, black women.

"I lacked role models so badly when I was growing up," Doucoure said of her childhood in a large polygamous family in northern Paris presided over by her binman father. "Television is a sort of mirror of society, but for me, I never saw my reflection in it. Which makes it quite difficult afterwards to open up all the imaginative possibilities," she added. But Doucoure

## World's oldest captive alligator marks 83 years in Belgrade zoo

Muja has lived through multiple bombing campaigns and several countries—all while never leaving a tiny pool in Belgrade's zoo for 83 years, making him the world's oldest captive alligator. While zookeepers don't know his exact hatch day, the reptile arrived in Belgrade this week in August of 1937 from a German zoo. "He's an older gentleman and we respect his age," Jozef Edvedj, the zoo's veterinarian, told AFP with a smile after handlers helped guide a dead rat to the jaws of the slow-moving reptile. He officially became the world's oldest captive alligator when Moscow zoo's famous Saturn, born in 1936, died in May.

According to news reports from 1937, Muja was two years old when arrived in Belgrade, a year after the zoo opened. But in photos from the reports he appears older, leading zookeepers to believe is over 90 now. While Muja has not seen much outside his shallow and spartan 12x7-meter pool, he survived bombings during World War II that killed many animals in the zoo, along with six zookeepers. The gator arrived in Belgrade when it was still the capital of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, lived through the country's socialist era and



For the last 83 years, Muja, world's oldest captive alligator, swims in a tiny pool in Belgrade's zoo, due to his advanced age, Muja doesn't move much but becomes snappy during feeding time, which comes only once or twice a month.—AFP photos

the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia which ended in yet another bombing campaign, carried out by NATO in 1999. Muja is still in "good health for his age", and the only time the veterinarians were seriously concerned was in 2012, when he had to have a right claw amputated due to gangrene.

"The surgery was very difficult, but successful. Muja recovered and adjusted to a new lifestyle," Edvedj said. Due to his advanced age, Muja doesn't move much but becomes snappy during feeding time, which comes only once or twice a month. These days, he often needs a bit of help finding his "prey",

which zookeepers place right in front of his jaws. His diet consists of skinned rats, rabbits, birds, horse meat and beef, Edvedj told AFP. "We call it a 'buffet'", he said, adding that the old-timer is also receiving mineral and vitamin supplements. Being cold-blooded works in Muja's favour, giving him a slow metabolism that impedes cell deterioration and thus prolongs his life, Edvedj explained. "I genuinely hope that we could celebrate his 100th birthday, as I believe he could live comfortably for another 15-20 years", the veterinarian said.—AFP



Elephant calves are seen with their mothers in the Africam Safari park in Puebla, Mexico. — AFP

## Mexican zoo live-streams birth of elephant named 'Zoom'

A baby African elephant whose birth was live-streamed by a safari park in Mexico has been named Zoom after the video chat app made popular by the coronavirus pandemic. The calf is the sixth born at the park in Puebla, southeast of the capital, to a herd of elephants rescued eight years ago in Namibia, where they were threatened by

poachers. "The birth of an elephant is difficult to see," said Frank Carlos Camacho, director of Africam Safari, where the baby elephant was seen Friday playing between its mother's legs.

"It's very useful for science, measuring times, fluid volumes, among other factors," he told AFP. The park said its goal is for the elephants to eventually return to

Africa. "They're not ours. They belong to the world," Camacho said. "We want them to be in Africa, but the current conditions are difficult. "People working in tourism were left without jobs due to the pandemic and they're looking for alternatives. The outlook is terrible." — AFP