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For Immediate Release
April 18, 2005

A CORNUCOPIA OF CELEBRITIES TO APPEAR AT THE 6TH STARZ DENVER PAN AFRICAN FILM FESTIVAL

Oscar-nominee and East High School Graduate, Don Cheadle to Attend, be Honored

On April 25–May 1, 2005 the 6th Starz Denver Pan African Film Festival (DPAFF), produced by the Pan African Arts Society (PAAS) and the Denver Film Society, presented by Comcast and the Gay & Lesbian Fund for Colorado returns to the Starz FilmCenter on the Auraria Campus, located at 900 Auraria Parkway, Denver, CO 80204. For schedules and ticketing information go to <http://www.panafricanarts.org> or call 303-893-FILM (3456) or 303-298-8188. Tickets range from FREE to \$35 and go on sale Monday, April 18. The theme is “I See Hip Hop,” in honor of an omnipresent culture that has lasted more than 30 years since its beginnings in The Bronx, New York.

“Percentage-wise we don’t have any more Hip-Hop films than in previous years, but we’ve focused this year’s centerpiece, panels, and some special events on this phenomenon that connects various socio-economic and ethnic groups worldwide,” says Ashara Ekundayo, PAAS founder and executive artistic director. “Each day of the festival will highlight one of the four main elements of Hip Hop: the DJ, the emcee, breaking (or B-boying), and graffiti art.”

The festival centerpiece features a trio of back-to-back films that shed light on the various dynamics of Hip Hop. “Sweet Honey In The Rock: Raise Your Voices,” (2004) directed by Stanley Nelson, is a documentary on the legendary, five-part harmony group, Sweet Honey In The Rock. “MC2: How We Do It,” (2005), directed by Peter Spierer and DVD impresario QD3, (Quincy D. Jones, III), features interviews with old-school Hip-Hop artists, KRS-One, Slick Rick, MC Lyte and new artists, Kanye West and Common. Securing this film is a coup says DPAFF co-director Shawn White: “We have the world premier.”

Rounding out the centerpiece trio is “Bomb the System” (2003), directed by Adam Bhala Lough. It is a true New York story dedicated to the art of graffiti, and to the city where it all began more than two decades ago.

Some of this year’s “I See Hip-Hop” performers and panelists include, but are not limited to: M1 of Dead Prez, Demetrius “Hook” Mitchell, Jimi Izrael, Nefertiti Strong, Nelson George, Toni Blackman, Colorado Hip Hop Coalition founder, Apostle and CU-Boulder professor Polly McClean.

The Opening Night film, “Constellation” (2005) directed by Jordan Walker-Pearlman and Closing Night film, “Crash” (2004) directed by Paul Haggis and co-produced by Don Cheadle, while not Hip-Hop, continue the festival’s mission of featuring the work of distinguished African-American filmmakers. Both artists will be in attendance. The PAAS will honor Mr. Cheadle with its SoulSpirit Award for his proven history of using filmmaking as a tool for social change and community growth. “His work in Hotel Rwanda was outstanding,” says DPAFF co-director Jennifer Mabry. “The fact that he personally and actively stands against such atrocities as genocide, endears him even more to the public and to the industry.”

As is tradition at the festival, Monday-Thursday, 8:45 a.m.–1:45 p.m. will be reserved for !BLAM (Black Literature, Art & Music). More than 600 Denver Public School students (K-12) will view films and participate in workshops. Opening Night to the public is Wednesday, April 27. Closing Night is Sunday, May 1.

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6th STARZ DPAFF: HIP-HOP PANELS (Locations, times and panelists subject to change.)

REVOLUTIONARY RAPPERS...WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Thursday, April 28th, 7–8:30 p.m. Starz FilmCenter

Description: In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Black Nationalism, Afro-centric themes, and evolutionary rhetoric were the touchstones of rap music. The most successful acts at the time blended Hip-Hop culture with blatant calls to action and African American affirmation. Eventually, rap became a threat. Attention from the FBI was directed toward artists like Ice T and NWA and towards Tupac's lyrics during his murder trial. Consequently, the 1992 presidential campaign made rap a national nuisance. By 1994, the music had descended into marijuana anthems, and novelty attempts at crossing over onto pop radio. Within three years, rap music would become the country's most popular music, and Hip-Hop artists would command the largest audience in the history of the genre. But in 2005, where are the revolutionary Rappers?

Moderator: Shawn "DJ Style N. Fashion" White, DPAFF co-director

Panelists:

Apostle—Spoken-word artist and director of Colorado Hip Hop Coalition

MC Q'Burse—Local Hip-Hop artist

Quibian Salazar-Moreno—Cultural Journalist

Nefertiti Strong—Film producer and director

Jennifer "J-Love" Calderon—Writer and educator

WU-TANG IS FOR THE CHILDREN

Saturday, April 30th, 2–3:30 p.m. Starz FilmCenter

Description: During the 1998 Grammy Awards show, the late rapper Ol' Dirty Bastard hijacked the stage and spouted his famous line "Wu Tang is for the Children." His statement correctly addressed the tremendous impact Hip-Hop culture has on youth of all ages. Adolescents are the largest age demographic viewing, listening and learning about the world from today's Hip-Hop artists. Today's youth are the first generation to have their own defining culture: Hip-Hop. This same culture is "corporatized," repackaged and sold back to them. Interestingly, they seem to be among the first generation of those who openly accept, and at times crave this corporate version of a grass roots movement. How has Hip-Hop culture truly affected this generation? Has the explosion of Hip-Hop sewn the seeds of individuality or complacency? Is it more important to kids today to differentiate themselves or fall in line? And what of the next generation? The children who are growing up learning dance steps and not their multiplication tables? What lessons are our "children learning from our attitude toward Hip-Hop?"

Moderator: Dave Herrera, *Westword* Newspaper Music Critic

Panelists:

Nelson George—Internationally renowned writer, filmmaker, educator, and cultural critic

Toni Blackman—Poet, founder and executive director of the Freestyle Union (FSU)

Kingdom—Local Hip-Hop artist and emcee, official Denver Nuggets home-game emcee, and radio show host for the KS107.5 Mix Tape Show featuring the Radio Bums.

Jennifer "J-Love" Calderon—Writer and educator

Rie Rie Tha Home Girl—Only local female veteran emcee, performing artist, and music producer, who established independent record label, MobRuled Productionz.

Polly McClean—Associate Professor, Program Director for the Women's Studies Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

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6th STARZ DPAFF: HIP-HOP PANELS, cont.
(Locations, times and panelists subject to change.)

WHAT THE F*^#@\$% IS A TIP DRILL?
Saturday, April 30th, 4–5:30 p.m., Starz FilmCenter

Description: In the fall of 2004, Spelman College students boycotted a performance by Hip-Hop artist Nelly, based upon what were deemed by detractors as the negative images of Black women in his X-Rated clip for the song “Tip Drill”. Since the 1980s, Hip-Hop artists have often been blamed for what many consider the demeaning and misogynistic portrayal of women in music videos. But what about the women who agree to appear in the videos? What about the larger society that demands “video hos” to appear in every clip? Who is responsible for determining when a clip is degrading? These questions and more will be addressed, as panelists explore the choices made by the women who appear in Hip-Hop music video clips, the motives and choices made by those who direct and produce the videos and most importantly, the aesthetic in our culture that demands to see women objectified.

Moderator: Ebony “Isis” Booth, local spoken-word artist

Panelists:

Goodfellas Enterprise Video—directors
Gloria Velez—2004 BET Video Vixen. Appeared in Ja Rule’s video “Holla Holla”, Jay-Z’s “Big Pimpin” and DMX’s “What these b**tches want”
Jimi Izreal-journalist and opinion writer
Rie Rie Tha Home Girl—Only local female veteran emcee, performing artist, and music producer, who established independent record label, MobRuled Productionz.
Polly McClean—Associate Professor, Program Director for the Women’s Studies Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder.
Deanna Lowman—Filmmaker

INCARCERATED SCARFACES
Sunday, May 1, 3–4:30 p.m., Starz FilmCenter

Description: Currently, the five most popular rap artists in Hip-Hop have either spent time in jail, been released from jail, are facing charges that could send them to jail or have narrowly escaped jail time. America’s war on its youth doesn’t omit rappers and members of the Hip-Hop generation. Sadly, Hip-Hop embraces incarceration, and criminal activity as the norm. Some rap artists use their legal troubles as fuel for their careers. For instance, a significant majority of rap artists make references to the film “Scarface.” America continues to build more and more prisons, and incarcerates more and more citizens. So why are Hip-Hop artists not taking a stand against this from anywhere but inside the prison cells? It seems as though prison bars are more prevalent than music bars in contemporary Hip-Hop. Should today’s rappers be seeking to glorify prison time and prison life? Isn’t that what they do right now? Why are there so many Hip-Hop artists who want to be “Incarcerated Scarfaces?”

Moderator: Bob Choflet, Breakdown Book Collective & Community Space

Panelists:

“Hook” Mitchell—Filmmaker, former athlete considered by several NBA All-Stars to be the greatest player to never reach the NBA.
Larry Hales—Organizer, Author of “The Voice Down Here”
Tanya Wollerman—Racial Justice Organizer
Omar Montgomery—Visiting Professor of Metro State’s Department of African American Studies
Torrin Noel Roberts—Author, Transition Specialist for juvenile probation and substance abuse treatment

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6th Starz DPAFF: OPENING, CENTERPIECE AND CLOSING

For a complete listing of films, events and tickets, visit www.panafricanarts.org. All films will be screened at the Starz FilmCenter at the Tivoli on Auraria Campus unless otherwise noted.

OPENING NIGHT FILM AND MAYOR'S AFRICHIC RECEPTION

Wednesday, April 27, 7:30 p.m.

"Constellation," directed by Jordan Walker-Pearlman (USA, 2005, 103 min.) will be featured. The film chronicles the lives and loves of an African-American family in the deep South as they are forced to come to terms with a tumultuous past marked by an unrequited interracial affair. Immediately following the film is the Mayor's AfriChic reception, (Tivoli 460) where Mayor John H. Hickenlooper will read a proclamation for Billy Dee Williams, who will be receiving the Gordon Parks Maverick Award from the Pan African Arts Society, producer of the 6th Starz Denver Pan African Film Festival. Reception is included in \$35 Opening Night ticket. In addition, winners of juried awards will be announced.

HIP-HOP CENTERPIECE TRIO

Saturday, April 30, 5:15–11:00 p.m.

"Sweet Honey In The Rock: Raise Your Voices" (USA, 2004, 82 min.) directed by Stanley Nelson is an inspiring documentary on Sweet Honey In The Rock—a strong-voiced group that, for more than three decades, has mingled five-part harmony with socio-political uplift by fusing African songs with gospel, blues, jazz and hip hop. "MC2: How We Do It," (USA, 2005, 80 min.) directed by Academy Award nominee, Peter Spier and QD3 (Quincy D. Jones, III) features interviews with old-school hip-hop artists, KRS-One, Slick Rick, MC Lyte and new artists, Kanye West and Common. The film ventures as far back as Cab Calloway and James Brown for the roots of Hip-Hop. Rounding out the centerpiece trio is "Bomb the System" (2003), directed by Adam Bhala Lough. It is a true New York story dedicated to the art of graffiti, and to the city where it all began more than two decades ago.

URBAN SPECTRUM'S "FADE2BLACK" CLOSING NIGHT WITH DON CHEADLE

Sunday, May 1, 7:30 p.m. at the Buell Theatre

Urban Spectrum newspaper will present the closing night reception immediately following the movie "Crash" (USA, 2004, 110 min.), directed by Paul Haggis and co-produced by Don Cheadle. The film explores racial and ethnic struggles in southern California. It is a glimpse into the complicated lives of average, everyday people and features an A-list ensemble where each member of the cast is remarkable in carrying out their part of the story. Cast highlights include Don Cheadle, Matt Dillon, Sandra Bullock and Brendan Fraser.

Following the film, *The Denver Post* film critic, Lisa Kennedy will conduct a Q&A with Mr. Cheadle. An acclaimed actor of the stage, screen and television, Mr. Cheadle has numerous credits to his name, including: "Picket Fences" (1993–1995), "Devil in a Blue Dress" (1995), "Volcano" (1997), "Boogie Nights" (1997), "Rosewood" (1997), "The Rat Pack" (1998), "Bulworth" (1998), "A Lesson Before Dying" (1999), "Ocean's 11" (2001) and "Swordfish" (2001).

The evening will also include an award presentation to Mr. Cheadle for a career that most lately includes his work in "Hotel Rwanda" (2004). He will be presented with the PAAS SoulSpirit Award, which is given to a film artist/activist (director, producer, actor) who is passionate about a societal issue and through their filmwork challenges the audience to raise their consciousness and moves them to think and act differently in their spiritual, personal and professional life. This film artist uses their art of filmmaking as a tool for social change and community growth.

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6th STARZ DPAFF: SYNOPSIS FOR SELECT FILMS

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Directed by Maurice A. Dywer and Adetoro Makinde (USA, 2004, 19min) In Time As a Nigerian-American, Bisi has lived her life balancing between the freedom of an American lifestyle and the beliefs of her Yoruba ancestors. On the eve of her wedding, tradition takes over, but it could cost her the man she loves. Shorts package. April 30, 2:15–3:45 p.m. & May 1, 3–4:30 p.m.

Directed by John Lewis (USA, 2004, 65 min.) Unstoppable is a revealing and candid conversation with these three highly influential “renaissance men” of cinema who paved the way for today’s generation of African American filmmakers: Melvin Van Peebles, Gordon Parks and the late Ossie Davis. April 28, 8:45–10:15 p.m.

Directed by Christine Turner (USA, 2005, 10min.) Rubber Soles explores the life of Francis is an 11-year-old kid whose got moves on the dance floor, but not on the basketball court. When he falls for Regina, an eighth grader with a nice jump shot, he is forced to part with his most prized possession. Shorts Package. April, 30, 4:15–6 p.m. & May 1, 5-6:30 p.m.

Directed by Thomas Gibson (USA, 2004, 90min) Letter to the President is a prescient documentary described as a “hip-hop Fahrenheit 9/11,” that frames current political and social issues in a dynamic way, targeting an audience mostly neglected by current discussions: Black youth. Letter to the President traces our current repressive government to Ronald Reagan’s time in office, when rap music shifted into more political realms as it began to be a hot topic on the Senate floor. April 29, 8:15-9:45 p.m. & April 30, 6:30–8 p.m.

Directed by Nic Hill (USA, 2005, 78min.) Piece by Piece journeys into San Francisco’s mysterious graffiti underground, documenting the last 20 years of the creation and destruction of the movement as told through the people that lived it. April 29, 8–9 p.m. & April 30, 5–6:30 p.m.

Directed by S. Pearl Sharp (USA, 2004, 89min. 42sec.) The Healing Passage: Voices from the Water explores the present day behavior that connects to psychological trauma, genetic memory and community consciousness, carried by the Africans who endured Trans-Atlantic slave trade from their homeland across the Atlantic Ocean (The Middle Passage) for over 300 years. April 30, 2:45–4:30 p.m. & May 1, 1:45–3 p.m.

Directed by Brian Lilla (USA, 2005, 58min.) Ghetto Fabulous explores the 25-year history of the Falcon Boys of Oakland, California, and their talents with customizing Ford Falcon cars, their struggles and the bonds of being a Falcon Boy. The young men are indoctrinated as Falcon Boys and ride like kings in the face of murder, poverty, and crime. As Falcon Boys are murdered and disappear into the California penal system, new generations of young men absorb their vehicles and continue to represent the ghettos of Oakland. April 29, 6:30–7:45 p.m. & April 30, 9–10:15 p.m.

Directed by Christopher Scott Cherot (USA, 2004, 20min.) The Male Groupie tells the tale of two childhood friends who, seemingly on the same path towards success, are steadily drifting apart. Their relationship takes a turn on a no-so-typical night out when their journey meets a bittersweet fork in the road. Shorts Package. April, 30, 4:15–6 p.m. & May 1, 5–6:30 p.m.

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6TH STARZ DPAFF: SPECIAL EVENTS & AWARDS

Café Nuba: Friday, April 29, 2005, 8–2 a.m., Rock Island/LoDo

“Café Nuba: It’s Hot and It’s Black” at Rock Island: Featured guests include revolutionary spoken-word artists, Umar Bin Hassan, Donald Eaton, and Abiodun Oyewole of Last Poets, M1 of Dead Prez and Toni Blackman, poet, founder and executive director of FreeStyle Union. The micro-cinema set that precedes the spoken-word performances will include trailers for films by international Hip-Hop cultural critic, Nelson George (“Smart Black People”), and local award-winning filmmaker, donnie I. betts (“Music is My Life, Politics is My Mistress”). In addition, the audience will see a trailer on H. Rap Brown, entitled “American as Cherry Pie: The Life of H. Rap Brown”. This month, Café Nuba will be at Rock Island at 1614 15th Street (15th & Wazee). Age requirement is 18. Bar service will be available for those 21 and over. Tickets are \$12 and are available at the door and at the Starz FilmCenter Box Office.

Brown Suga Fest: Saturday, April 30, 2005, Noon–7 p.m, Tivoli BrownSuga Fest on the patio at the Starz FilmCenter at the Tivoli Student Union on the Auraria Campus. The FREE event is a local youth programming project coordinated by high school students from PS1@The Spot. Local emcee and racial profiling organizer, Michael “Itef” Walker conceptualized this “underground” event as his senior project. The celebration, open to the public, aims to highlight some of Colorado’s most eminent emcees, break dancing B-girls, graffiti artists, DJs and poets. For performance info or to sign-up to perform at the open mic segment, call Itef at 303-291-1077 x3.

2005 PAN AFRICAN ARTS SOCIETY (PAAS) SPECIAL AWARDS

Liberation Award—Last Poets

Gordon Parks Maverick Award—Billy Dee Williams

SoulSpirit Award—Don Cheadle

Beverly Robinson Award—Mojisola Sonoiki

For background on awards, visit <http://www.panafricanarts.org>

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6TH STARZ DPAFF: PAAS HISTORY AND FOUNDER

BACKGROUND

The Denver Pan African Film Festival is produced by the Pan African Arts Society, a non-profit 501(c)3, which collaborates with individuals, organizations and corporate entities in the community-at-large in order to increase dialogue and action in diverse settings through the use of cultural icons including film, performance, creative writing and oration. PAAS year-round programming includes: !BLAM (Black Literature, Art & Music) Youth Project, a K-12 arts education curriculum/programming utilizing Black art forms to educate, entertain and inspire students and educators; Café Nuba, an award-winning monthly micro-cinema, poetry and “open mike” set; SOIL Emerging Artists Series, a quarterly collaboration with various arts institutions to present new and established but “not known to this market” artists.

The mission of the PAAS is to cultivate the palate of a young urban audience as well as provide sustenance for the arts connoisseur of Black art forms, and to include cinematic expression in that universe as a valid form of social art. It is our hope that these seeds will be nurtured and yield increased possibilities for public engagement, professional, spiritual, and personal development, and preservation and perpetuation of cultural heritage.

FOUNDER

Ashara Saran Ekundayo is still instigating art and social change and setting new trends with the Pan African Arts Society and her consulting company BluBlak Ultramedia, LLC., seven years after conceptualizing an “urban” organization that would provide a foundation for the presentation and intellectual discussion of provocative, neo-traditional, and always “political,” Black culture in the Denver community. She spends her days and nights integrating life experiences as a single parent of two teenage sons, cultural worker/curator, educator, and producer. She is the ultimate multi-tasker and visionary often assisting her friends and lovers in manifesting their artistic visions. Awarded many times over by various community groups such as the Colorado Black Women for Political Action; the African American Leadership Institute, the *Urban Spectrum* newspaper, and the Colorado Association of Black Journalists, Ms. Ekundayo was recently featured in *The Denver Post* for her development and execution of a 4-week intensive which focused on self-respect, health education, and art therapy for teenage girls in Northeast Denver called, “A Young Sistah’s Bootcamp.” She also provides mentorship for many students, writers and artists through her monthly nationally broadcast microcinema/poetry venue “Café Nuba”. Ashara is also the co-director of the H2O Hip-Hop Odyssey Film Festival in New York City, and consults as film programmer for screenings in places such as Amsterdam, NL, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Paris, France, and Burkina Faso, West Africa. Favorite movie: “Daughters of the Dust” (dir. Julie Dash); Favorite food: sushi; Favorite lyricist: Stevie Wonder; Favorite quote: “There ain’t no damn box!” Favorite Title: “Mommy”

6TH STARZ DPAFF: DIRECTORS

CO-DIRECTOR

JENNIFER MABRY: This marks the second year that Jennifer E. Mabry has served as co-director of the Denver Pan African Film Festival. She holds a doctorate in Communication from the University of Maryland, College Park and a master’s degree from the Newhouse School of Public Communication at Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York. She brings a broad array of media expertise to the 6th Starz Denver Pan African Film Festival. Dr. Mabry has worked as a staff writer and reporter for *The Baltimore Sun* and *Gannett News Service*, in Washington, D.C., and has served in a variety of capacities as a media practitioner, including former Bureau Director of the Children’s Express Foundation in the nation’s capital. She is a former assistant professor of media studies at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York and her published work has appeared in *TV Guide*, *The Chicago-Sun Times*, *Detroit News*, *Savoy* and *Honey* magazines and the *Temple Review*.

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CO-DIRECTOR

SHAWN "DJ STYLE N. FASHION" WHITE: Starting out back in the day at the University of Missouri's college radio station KCOU 88.1 FM, Styles hosted the rap show "Beats N Pieces" on Fridays at KCOU. He quickly played his hand in the industry becoming a regional rep for Tommy Boy, Polygram and Priority Records. Styles quickly found out that the biz is 10% music, 90% industry, and returned back to Colorado to focus on his first love: music. Styles has done it big, but kept it underground. He helped create Denver's longest running club night (So What! The Club), hosted and produced a music video show (Da Hook Up), even published his own "Guide to Stylish Life in the Mile High City" (*Freestyle Magazine*). Still, he is driven by the need for new cuts, and as long as there are now 12s in the bins, Styles will be loving music. Currently he is proud to be reppin' the Radiobums crew, and holding down his Step On Productions crew. Styles is also a prolific graphic artist, holding down Mobstyle Records, his own Step On crew, and a diverse list of national clients including the PAAS. This is his first year as co-director of the DPAFF.

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Angelia McGowan has served as the director of communications for the annual Starz Denver Pan African Film Festival since 2000. For more than six years, Ms. McGowan has maintained a presence in the Denver community as a freelance public relations professional and writer, primarily helping state and non-profit agencies to implement health-awareness campaigns to Colorado's minority communities. She has worked with the following agencies: Burks Communications, Cordy & Co. Inc., Denver Water, the Colorado Department of Transportation, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance and the Colorado Department of Health & Environment. The Colorado Association of Black Journalists has recognized her as a journalist and public relations professional. In 2000, her article entitled "Mission to Haitian orphanage offers heartbreak, hope," was nominated for "Print Feature" of the year. The piece detailed her trip with a local church to an orphanage in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The CABJ also honored her with the 2004 Public Relations Professional of the Year award. Ms. McGowan has a B.A. in Communications and an M.A. in Journalism from the University of Colorado at Boulder where she volunteers as a mentor in the University of Colorado Athletic Mentor Program.



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