

Hip-Hop Included in Showtimes Black History Month Salute

Written by Robert ID2263

Wednesday, 11 January 2006 08:15 -

In celebration of Black History Month, SHOWTIME will anchor a month of original programming and compelling stories focused on the African-American experience kicking off February 1st with the 15th annual Black Filmmaker Showcase, featuring seven shorts by up-and-coming African-American filmmakers.

In addition, SHOWTIME's Black History Month salute will showcase the premium network premiere of "Hotel Rwanda," starring Don Cheadle in his Oscar(R)-nominated role and costarring Joaquin Phoenix ("Walk the Line"), and the documentary "Fade to Black," an intimate look at hip-hop / rap music sensation Jay-Z's recording career.

BLACK FILMMAKER SHOWCASE -- Premiering at 7:30 p.m. February 1, 2006

Founded in 1992, the Black Filmmaker Showcase has been responsible for introducing talented African-American filmmakers to the industry. Through this program, the network selects several films that have their debut on SHOWTIME.

Beginning in 1995, Showtime Networks began awarding a \$30,000 grant to one of the selected filmmakers. This money is used towards the production of a short film which will later have its exclusive world premiere on SHOWTIME. Following their premiere, the showcase films will also repeat during the course of the month as individual shorts.

This year's short film selections are:

The grant-winning film -- THE SUNDAY MORNING STRIPPER by Writer/Producer Lionell Hilliard & Director Sheldon Collins -- focuses on a small town church that is turned upside down when choir singer Sister Wilma becomes so inspired by the music that she begins to strip in church.

JUMP, by Director David McMillan, tells the story of a young boy who loses his kite and in the process finds his courage.

Loss is also a theme in BROOKLYN's BRIDGE TO JORDAN, directed by Tina Mabry. A gay woman deals with the loss of her wife and at the same time has to fight for custody of their

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teenage son.

In *SQUIRREL MAN*, directed by Jeffrey Lynn Shepherd, a down-on-his-luck jazz singer thinks he is a superhero after being bitten by a squirrel in the park. He becomes convinced that his new powers can help rebuild the relationship between him and his estranged son.

Yake Smith directs *HOPE'S WAR*, in which a man suffering from Post Traumatic Stress relives the horrors of his time in the Gulf War through hallucinations.

In addition to the winners of this year's Showcase, the grant winners for both 2004 and 2005 will present the shorts made with their award money.

Tamika Miller directs *SARANG SONG*, a love story set in 1970's Los Angeles. Two female graduate students try to deal with an incident of police violence against two black students on campus.

JUMPIN THE BROOM, a documentary from director Debra Wilson, examines gay marriage in the African-American community by profiling four couples on the subject.

FADE TO BLACK -- 8:00 p.m. February 7, 2006

Filmed during his "Black Album" era, hip-hop rap artist Jay-Z looks back on his career as one of rap music's most successful emcees and entrepreneurs. Narrated by Jay-Z, the rap artist reminisces on his legendary concert at Madison Square Garden in November 2003, a hip-hop event that sold out in two hours and featured guest hip-hop, rap and R&B performers Beyonce Knowles, Mary J. Blige, Missy Elliott, R. Kelly, Foxy Brown, Pharrell, and P. Diddy, among others. His account of the night takes on reflections of his entire musical career and the journey that led to this one astounding, fabled evening-rightfully called "Fade to Black."

HOTEL RWANDA -- 9:00 p.m. February 11, 2006

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Starring 2005 Best Actor Oscar(R) nominee Don Cheadle, "Hotel Rwanda" tells the inspiring true story of one man's brave stance against savagery during the 1994 Rwandan conflict. As his country descends into madness, five-star hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle) sets out to save his family.

But when he sees that the world will not intervene in the massacre of minority Tutsis, he finds the courage to open his hotel to over 1,200 refugees.

With the rabid militia at the gates, he has only his wits and words to help keep them alive another hour, another day.

This poignant film was nominated for three Academy Awards(R) in 2005, including acting nods for Don Cheadle and Sophie Okonedo.

Nick Nolte costars.

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