

February 8, 2016

## **BET Networks Partners with the American Black Film Festival to Produce the 2016 ABFF Awards: A Celebration of Hollywood Premiering Tuesday, February 23rd at 8pm ET/PT**

***Don Cheadle, Regina King and Ryan Coogler Join Diahann Carroll and Will Packer as Honorees for an Evening Celebrating Excellence in Entertainment***

LOS ANGELES--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Today, ABFF Ventures and BET Networks announced their partnership to produce the "ABFF Awards: A Celebration of Hollywood," hosted by actor and comedian Mike Epps and premiering on BET and Centric Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> at 8 p.m. ET/PT. The Awards celebrates Black culture and recognizes individuals, movies and television shows of the past year that have had a significant impact on American entertainment, as well as the people who have been proponents in championing diversity and inclusion in Hollywood. This year's event will be taped on Sunday, February 21<sup>st</sup> at the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles.

This Smart News Release features multimedia. View the full release here:

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In addition to recognizing the top television shows and films of the year, the "ABFF Awards: Celebration of Hollywood" will pay tribute to film legends along with today's creative forces, who together inspire the filmmakers and entrepreneurs of tomorrow. Iconic actress, **Diahann Carroll**, will be presented with the *Hollywood Legacy Award*, and television and film producer **Will Packer** will receive the *Distinguished ABFF Alumni Award* at the 2016 ABFF Awards: A Celebration of Hollywood.

Joining our illustrious list of honorees, we are excited to reveal the *Excellence in the Arts Award* (male and female), to Actors/Directors **Don Cheadle** and **Regina King**. Our *Rising Star Award* honoree is Director **Ryan Coogler**.

"Twenty years ago, I created the American Black Film Festival to spotlight the rich diversity of talent and achievement. It was born out of my love for film and desire to ensure that Black people gained opportunity and equity in every arena of Hollywood. I am truly honored to partner with BET to showcase the work of our most talented artists." - Jeff Friday, ABFF Founder and CEO

"It's clear that there's a need for this show. BET is very excited to partner with Jeff and ABFF to present A Celebration of Hollywood. We will unabashedly acknowledge performances and achievements of African-Americans on screen from this past year and give special honor and recognition to artists that have thrilled us during their highly-acclaimed careers. 2015 was ripe with tremendous and inspiring performances by African-Americans and we are beyond thrilled to be the ones to recognize them with class and admiration." - Stephen Hill, President of Programming, BET Networks

With a resume that's as varied and expansive as it is rich in depth of the characters he brings to life, Academy Award nominee **Don Cheadle** is, without question, one of the most highly sought after and premier actors of his generation. Turning in consistently powerful performances, Don has not only taken on challenging roles, but put his talents into producing projects he believes in as well.

Don currently stars as 'Marty Kaan' on the critically acclaimed Showtime series *House of Lies*. *House of Lies* has earned multiple nominations for the series and Don himself, including four Emmy Nominations, a Golden Globe<sup>®</sup> Award and two additional Golden Globe<sup>®</sup> nominations and a SAG Award nomination. Recently Don directed his first feature film, *Miles Ahead*, which he also co-wrote and produced. Don also stars in the film, based on the life of legendary jazz artist, Miles Davis, along with Ewan McGregor.

Don is well known for his passionate performances on stage and screen, stemming from his breakout performance opposite Denzel Washington in *Devil in A Blue Dress*, where he was named Best Supporting Actor by the Los Angeles Film Critics. In 2012, Cheadle garnered critical acclaim for his role in Robert Zemeckis' *Flight*. Additional film credits include *Talk To Me*; the 2006 Oscar<sup>®</sup> winning Best Picture, *Crash*, which Cheadle also produced; *Hotel Rwanda*, for which his performance garnered Academy Award<sup>®</sup>, Golden Globe<sup>®</sup>, Broadcast Film Critics Award and Screen Actors Guild<sup>®</sup> Award nominations for Best Actor; *Ocean's Eleven*, *Ocean's Twelve* and *Ocean's Thirteen*, *Boogie Nights*, *Bulworth*, *Swordfish*, *Mission To Mars*

and *Rosewood*, for which Cheadle earned an NAACP Image Award nomination.

**Regina King's** distinguished talents have not gone unnoticed by Hollywood. She has recently been seen in recurring roles on CBS's hit show *The Big Bang Theory*, Showtime's critically acclaimed series *Shameless* and FX's thriller *The Strain*. The skilled actress wrapped the fifth and final season of TNT's drama *Southland* in 2013. In addition to directing episodic television for ABC's *Scandal* and BET's *Being Mary Jane*, King also helmed the teleplay adaptation of the best-selling book, *Let the Church Say Amen*, for BET Networks. Regina is currently a series regular on two critically-hailed television dramas including HBO's "The Leftovers," as well as the John Ridley ABC anthology *American Crime*, which has garnered her very first Emmy Award Nomination, as well as her first Golden Globe Nomination for "Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Series, Mini-Series or Motion Picture Made for Television." Regina also starred opposite Sandra Bullock in the comedy *Miss Congeniality 2: Armed and Fabulous*, as well as voiceovers for the animated film, *Ant Bully* and the hit television show, *The Boondocks*. Her appearance in the Oscar-nominated film *Ray*, opposite Jamie Foxx, garnered King critically-acclaimed praise, as well as her role as Cuba Gooding Jr.'s wife Marci, in the blockbuster film, *Jerry Maguire*.

Regina made her television debut on the hit sitcom "227." After five seasons, King made the leap to the silver screen with a role in John Singleton's powerful directorial debut, *Boyz n the Hood*. She would soon collaborate with Singleton again in *Poetic Justice* and *Higher Learning*. This committed actress has always been consistent in showing her dynamic range, bouncing effortlessly from dramatic material to comedic performances, like in the hit film *Friday* with Ice Cube and in *A Thin Line Between Love and Hate*, opposite Martin Lawrence.

American Black Film Festival alum, **Ryan Coogler**, was born in Oakland, CA and always harbored a talent for storytelling. Ryan discovered his own passion for filmmaking as a college freshman, and began shooting shorts with his teammates and friends. After being admitted into the USC School of Cinematic Arts, he went on to create his award winning shorts *Locks*, *Fig* and *Gap*. After receiving his M.F.A., he began to work as a juvenile hall counselor before creating a short film, which won the HBO Short Film Competition at the American Black Film Festival in 2011 and then directed his first feature film, *Fruitvale Station*, which debuted at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival. Ryan has received much success with his recent feature, *Creed*, and has recently been tapped to direct Marvel Comics' *Black Panther*.

"The ABFF Awards: A Celebration of Hollywood," presented by the American Black Film Festival and BET Networks, will be one of the highlights of the Hollywood Awards season and Black History Month. The event is an ABFF Ventures production and is executive produced by show creator Jeff Friday, Debra Lee, Stephen Hill, Jesse Collins, Suzanne de Passe and Connie Orlando. Sponsors are Cadillac (Presenting Sponsor), Hilton Worldwide, Moet Hennessy, and Prudential Inc. (Gold Sponsors), and Morgan Stanley and Verizon (Silver Sponsors).

For more information on the American Black Film Festival and the ABFF Awards: A Celebration of Hollywood, go to [www.ABFF.com](http://www.ABFF.com), [www.ABFF.com/ABFFAwards](http://www.ABFF.com/ABFFAwards), [www.BET.com](http://www.BET.com) and [BET.com/ACelebrationOfHollywood](http://BET.com/ACelebrationOfHollywood).

Join the conversation on social media by logging on to ABFF and BET's multiple social media platforms:

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- On Instagram by liking the fan page at [Instagram.com/BET](https://Instagram.com/BET) and [Instagram.com/AmericanBlackFilmFestival](https://Instagram.com/AmericanBlackFilmFestival)

#### **ABOUT ABFF:**

The American Black Film Festival (ABFF), founded in 1997, is an annual event dedicated to showcasing quality film and television content by and about people of African descent. The festival is committed to the belief that Black artists and content creators deserve the same opportunities as their mainstream counterparts. ABFF founder Jeff Friday, conceived the festival in 1997 as a vehicle to promote diversity in the motion picture industry, and strengthen the Black filmmaking community through resource sharing, education, artistic collaboration and career development. Today, the ABFF is recognized as the preeminent pipeline to new Black talent, both in front of and behind the camera, and is regarded as one of the leading film festivals in the world. The ABFF is a property of ABFF Ventures LLC., which is a partnership between Film Life, Inc. and Black Enterprise. Celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> year, the 2016 ABFF will take place June 15-19, 2016 in Miami, Florida.

#### **ABOUT BET NETWORKS:**

BET Networks, a subsidiary of Viacom Inc. (NASDAQ: VIA, VIAB), is the nation's leading provider of quality entertainment, music, news and public affairs television programming for the African-American audience. The primary BET channel reaches more than 90 million households and can be seen in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, the United

Kingdom and sub-Saharan Africa. BET is the dominant African-American consumer brand with a diverse group of business extensions: [BET.com](http://www.bet.com), a leading Internet destination for Black entertainment, music, culture, and news; Centric, the first network dedicated to Black women; BET Digital Networks - BET Soul, BET Jams and BET Gospel, attractive alternatives for cutting-edge entertainment tastes; BET Home Entertainment, a collection of BET-branded offerings for the home environment including DVDs and video-on-demand; BET Event Productions, a full-scale event management and production company with festivals and live events spanning the globe; BET Mobile, which provides ringtones, games and video content for wireless devices; and BET International, which operates BET in the United Kingdom and oversees the extension of BET network programming for global distribution.

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