

'THE BET HONORS' Kicks Off Inauguration Weekend with an Exhilarating Evening Dedicated to Mary J. Blige, Tyler Perry, Earvin 'Magic' Johnson, the Honorable Congressman James E. Clyburn, B. Smith and Judith Jamison

Hosted by Gabrielle Union, the Second Annual "BET HONORS" Features Appearances by Stevie Wonder, Diddy, Terrence Howard, Samuel L. Jackson, Angela Bassett, Queen Latifah, Anthony Hamilton, Anita Baker, Ne-Yo, Keyshia Cole, Hill Harper, Monica, Joss Stone, Yolanda Adams and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

"THE BET HONORS" Premieres Monday, February 9 at 9:00 P.M.*

WASHINGTON, Jan. 18 -- With powerful performances, inspirational speeches and a multitude of messages celebrating the upcoming Inauguration of President-elect Barack Obama, THE BET HONORS, held at the Warner Theatre in Washington, D.C., on Saturday, January 17, was the perfect "opening ceremony" to usher in the beginning of our nation's historic weekend.

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20070716/BETNETWORKSLOGO>)

This year, THE BET HONORS, which pays tribute to the lives and achievements of leading African American luminaries, recognizes the accomplishments of legendary songstress Mary J. Blige (Entertainment); groundbreaking filmmaker Tyler Perry (Media); celebrated dancer and choreographer Judith Jamison (Education); businessman, philanthropist and basketball legend Earvin "Magic" Johnson (Corporate Citizen); entrepreneur extraordinaire B. Smith (Entrepreneur); and the Honorable Congressman James E. Clyburn (Public Service). Hosted by talented actress Gabrielle Union, the second annual show will premiere on BET during Black History Month on Monday, February 9 at 9:00 p.m.*

The tone for the evening was set from the start when Debra L. Lee, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of BET Networks, and the Honorable Mayor Adrien Fenty of Washington, D.C. welcomed the audience. They both emphasized how meaningful it was to host THE BET HONORS on the eve of the Inauguration of our nation's first Black president, and how President-elect Barack Obama epitomizes the excellence that would be celebrated during the show.

Earvin "Magic" Johnson, this year's recipient of The BET Honor for Corporate Citizen, was presented with his award by Samuel L. Jackson, while legendary singer/songwriter Stevie Wonder performed a stirring rendition of "Superstition" in Magic's honor. Terrence Howard then introduced Entrepreneur Award honoree B. Smith, who was treated to a special performance of "Miss Independent" by Ne-Yo. Next up was Angela Bassett, Anthony Hamilton and a dancer with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, who performed a beautiful tribute to Judith Jamison, as she received The BET Honor for Education.

In an emotionally moving performance that had everyone in the theater on their feet with tears in their eyes, the incredible Anita Baker performed "One" and "Caught Up in the Rapture" and Monica sang "Not Gon' Cry" to pay tribute to Mary J. Blige (Entertainment), who was presented with her award by Diddy. Tyler Perry received the Media Award, as Yolanda Adams and Joss Stone sang "Just a Prayer Away" in his honor. Hill Harper presented the Honorable Congressman James E. Clyburn with The BET Honors for Public Service, and Queen Latifah gave an unforgettable performance of "Wishing on a Star."

Other highlights included Keyshia Cole's "You Complete Me" and Stevie Wonder coming on stage for a second time for "Love's in Need of Love Today."

Stephen Hill, President of Programming, BET Networks, and Lynne Harris Taylor, Vice President of Specials, BET Networks, are the show's executive producers, along with John Cossette of John Cossette Productions.

For up-to-the-minute and archival press information including releases and photographs, visit BET's press-only Web site at www.bet.com/pr.

*All times ET/PT

About the 2009 BET Honorees

MARY J. BLIGE (Entertainment) - Mary J. Blige is an eight-time Grammy Award-winning and Golden Globe-nominated singer-songwriter, rapper, record producer, and actress who has sold more than 40 million albums worldwide.

TYLER PERRY (Media) - Tyler Perry is a remarkable playwright, screenwriter, actor and director and producer known for his very funny yet poignant plays and movies. Over the years, many credited Perry with resuscitating (and reinventing) African-American theater. Perry's first eight plays reportedly earned a cumulative gross of more than \$75 million in ticket and video

sales.

EARVIN "MAGIC" JOHNSON (Corporate Citizen) - Earvin "Magic" Johnson is Chairman and CEO of Magic Johnson Enterprises. Through strategic investments, partnerships and endorsements, Magic Johnson Enterprises (MJE) provides products and services that focus on ethnically diverse urban communities. As Chairman and Founder of the Magic Johnson Foundation, he is dedicated to developing programs and supporting services that address the educational, health and social needs of those residing in minority communities. Mr. Johnson is universally known for his 13 year career in the NBA. His honors include: five national championships with the Los Angeles Lakers, three MVP awards, 12 NBA All-Star games, a gold medal at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, Spain and induction into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. Mr. Johnson is also Vice President and part owner of the Los Angeles Lakers.

CONGRESSMAN JAMES E. CLYBURN (Public Service) - Congressman James E. Clyburn is an illustrious politician and House Majority Whip, the third-ranking Democrat in the House of Representatives. In 1992 he became the first African American elected to the House of Representatives from South Carolina since 1897. He proudly represents South Carolina's 6th Congressional district, the state's only majority-black district, which includes Florence, Sumter and large portions of Columbia and Charleston. He is the second African American (behind Bill Gray of Pennsylvania) and the first South Carolinian to serve as Majority Whip.

JUDITH JAMISON (Education) - Judith Jamison is a celebrated dancer, choreographer, and artistic director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, now celebrating its 50th anniversary, and recognized by the U.S. Congress as a vital "American Cultural Ambassador to the World." One of the most renowned figures in modern dance, she has led the Ailey organization to new heights with the opening of a permanent home in New York City - the nation's largest building for dance. Dedicated to asserting the prominence of the arts in our culture, Ms. Jamison is an author and a recipient of a primetime Emmy Award and many of the nation's most prestigious honors given to artists.

B. SMITH (Entrepreneur) - B. Smith is a former fashion model turned restaurateur, television host, author, entrepreneur and entertainer extraordinaire who is widely regarded as an expert when it comes to casual but elegant living. A seasoned culinary expert who was recognized by Elle Decor as one of America's 10 most outstanding non-professional chefs, Smith is the owner of three successful B. Smith restaurants in New York, Washington D.C., and the scenic Long Island Hampton village of Sag Harbor.

About BET Networks

BET Networks, a division of Viacom Inc. (NYSE: VIA, VIA.B), 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 98 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 businesses extensions: BET.com, a leading Internet destination for Black entertainment, music, culture, and news; BET Digital Networks - BET J, BET Gospel and BET Hip Hop, 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 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.

SOURCE BET Networks

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