

BET Networks Kicks Off Inauguration Weekend With 'THE BET HONORS' and Hosts Its First-Ever Inaugural Ball

Hosted by Actress Gabrielle Union, "THE BET HONORS" Recognizes the

Accomplishments of Tyler Perry, Mary J. Blige, Earvin "Magic" Johnson, B.

Smith, Judith Jamison and Congressman James E. Clyburn Inaugural Ball to Support America's Promise Alliance and Washington, D.C.'s

Dunbar High School and the Duke Ellington School of the Arts

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 12 -- BET Networks kicks off the inaugural festivities in Washington, D.C., with the second annual BET HONORS on Saturday, January 17 and concludes with BET's first-ever Inaugural Ball on Tuesday, January 20.

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

Hosted by world renowned actress Gabrielle Union, THE BET HONORS will celebrate 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). The second annual event will take place at the Warner Theatre in Washington, D.C., on Saturday, January 17 and premiere on the network during Black History Month on Monday, February 9 at 9:00 p.m.*

"We are thrilled to kick off this historic inauguration weekend with the return of THE BET HONORS, a truly inspirational event that pays tribute to extraordinary individuals in our community," said Debra L. Lee, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, BET Networks. "And it couldn't have worked out more perfectly that THE BET HONORS and the Inauguration are happening within days of each other, as President-elect Barack Obama epitomizes all that we had in mind when we first put this show together. I'm certain that this year's BET HONORS will be even more poignant and powerful than we could have ever imagined."

"THE BET HONORS recognizes excellence in achievement and celebrates inspiration," said Stephen Hill, President of Programming, BET Networks. "Last year's inaugural show had a number of leave-your-seat performances dedicated to our honorees. This year, we're finding new ways to musically pay tribute so look forward to fresh, unforgettable moments. The pride will show."

During the historic weekend and following THE BET HONORS, BET Networks will host its first-ever Inaugural Ball and will air a one-hour special, YES WE WILL! BET'S INAUGURAL CELEBRATION, on BET on Tuesday, January 20. Taking place at the Mandarin Oriental hotel, the Ball will be in support of our next generation of national and local leaders, with proceeds benefiting America's Promise Alliance, the nation's largest non-profit alliance dedicated to the well-being of children and youth founded by Colin and Alma Powell.

Additionally, the Ball will support two institutions that are committed to the education and advancement of today's youth in Washington, D.C. - Dunbar High School and the Duke Ellington School of the Arts.

"As we celebrate this historic inauguration and begin a new chapter in our nation's history, it's important that we stay focused on our most precious resource -- our children and youth," said Alma J. Powell, chair, America's Promise Alliance. "We are deeply honored to partner with BET to raise awareness of the challenges facing our young people -- and applaud those making a positive difference in their communities. We cannot afford to stand still as more than a million students drop out of high school every year."

About THE BET HONORS

Last year's honorees included Alicia Keys, Tyra Banks, Dr. Cornel West, Richard Parsons, the Honorable Maxine Waters and Janice Bryant Howroyd. Hosted by Cedric "The Entertainer," the first annual event boasted performances and presentations by Stevie Wonder, Jill Scott, Wyclef Jean, Gladys Knight, Brian McKnight, Blair Underwood and Vivica A. Fox, just to name a few.

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 - 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 - 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 - 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 - 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 second African American (behind Bill Gray of Pennsylvania) and the first South Carolinian to serve as Majority Whip.

JUDITH JAMISON - 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 - 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 America's Promise Alliance

America's Promise Alliance is the nation's largest partnership alliance comprised of corporations, nonprofit organizations, foundations, policymakers, advocacy and faith groups committed to ensuring that children receive the fundamental resources - the Five Promises - they need to lead successful, healthy and productive lives and build a stronger society. Building on the legacy of our founder General Colin Powell, the Alliance believes the success of our children is grounded in experiencing the Five Promises - caring adults; safe places; a healthy start; an effective education; and opportunities to help others-at home, in school and in the community. For more information about America's Promise Alliance, visit www.americaspromise.org.

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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