



**UNIVERSAL**

**IDLEWILD**

**Production Information**

What could possibly be left for two men who have crafted six critically and listener-praised, genre-blending albums—two of which were platinum and four multi-platinum—30-plus videos; sold-out concerts worldwide with musical performances that meld R&B, pop, hip-hop and urban street sounds; and have found themselves decorated with the majority of music awards on the planet? Simply put, to tackle the film industry.

ANDRÉ BENJAMIN and ANTWAN A. PATTON, better known to their legions of fans as André 3000 and Big Boi of OutKast, were not looking for a vanity project to help them become the latest crop of singers-turned-actors. The groundbreaking group, known for its unconventional stylings and mixed-genre performances, has been long interested in working with their frequent-music video-director, writer/director BRYAN BARBER, on a film that shared intriguing stories of classic Southern characters from the 1930s African-American viewpoint. And if they were going to make a movie...they'd do it the OutKast way.

A tale of the loves and ambitions of two struggling Prohibition-era performers is told through intricate musical numbers and vibrantly choreographed dance sequences in Universal Pictures and HBO Films' *Idlewild*, an original musical starring the multi-platinum and multi-Grammy winning OutKast members André Benjamin as the shy piano player, Percival, and Antwan A. Patton as Rooster, the showy headliner and manager at a free-for-all speakeasy called "Church."

In his latest project with the genre-fusing group, first-time feature filmmaker (and award-winning OutKast music-video visionary Bryan Barber) writes and directs this musical—set against the backdrop of a '30s Southern nightclub—that synthesizes drama,

music, cinema and style to bring the tale of the singers to life. *Idlewild* includes an all-star roster of some of the most notable performers in music, film and theater today and introduces movie lovers to America's top dancers in never-before-seen sequences—choreographed by three-time Tony winner HINTON BATTLE (*Dreamgirls*).

True to form, OutKast writes and performs songs in their musical numbers. Most of the music—including the score—is a mixture of contemporary hip-hop, classic blues and swing music, with music from legends such as Cab Calloway and Bessie Smith. Classic songs were scratched and mixed to give the *Idlewild* soundtrack a modern feel. Contemporary performers such as Arturo Sandoval lend their talents to the soundtrack and musical numbers.

In the 1930s American South, there was one spot that served as a haven—a place of prayer for the weary, joy for the hopeful and music for the masses. All were welcome to come and find the Lord as they walked into church on Sunday mornings. When the good and righteous built these houses of worship, however, they did ask guests to leave a few things at the door, namely: cussing, liquor, fast women, gambling and guns. And *that* was the part of the sermon to which Rooster just didn't pay attention. In his nightclub called "Church," there was only one story to tell...one in the key of cool.

Welcome to Idlewild, Georgia. Welcome to Church.

In *Idlewild*, players gather nightly at Church, with childhood friends—who grew up on opposite sides of the tracks—Rooster and Percival playing two key roles at the club. Soft-spoken and reserved mortician Percival sees playing piano at the nightclub as welcome respite from the doldrums of working in his overbearing father's (Tony Award winner BEN VEREEN, *Roots*, *Why Do Fools Fall in Love*, Broadway's *Wicked*) funeral home. One night in Church, Percival meets the latest celebrity to tour the South, the ethereal Angel (newcomer PAULA PATTON). Percival falls head over heels in love with the ingénue and is faced with a choice: stay or leave his oppressive father behind and pursue his dreams of becoming a song-and-dance man in the big cities of which he's only dreamed.

Church's manager, Rooster, is the son of a moonshine runner, a man who has grown into his flashy clothes and role as a wheeler-dealer—juggling both his suspicious wife, Zora (MALINDA WILLIAMS, television's *Soul Food*), and a cast of characters

who make their money off the place's illegal dealings. From the club's blustering owner, "Sunshine" Ace (FAIZON LOVE, *Elf, Friday*), to the swop dancers, showgirls, musicians, fire-eaters and divas who light up the stage—including hard-drinking, sultry singer Taffy (Grammy-winning singer and actor MACY GRAY, *Training Day, Domino*)—Rooster makes sure the show goes on nightly and Church's customers get just the entertainment they came to find.

But Rooster's problems multiply after he witnesses a shooting that places Trumpy (Academy Award®-nominated actor TERRENCE HOWARD, *Hustle & Flow, Lackawanna Blues, Crash*)—one of the mob men—into control of the influx of liquor into his juke joint. While on the run from the mob, the good-hearted scoundrel realizes his life of petty crime is taking him nowhere and must now fight his way back to his family while his best friend Percy tries to escape the hold Idlewild has on him...and start a new life performing in a faraway city.

Set to OutKast's show-stopping musical numbers, Percival and Rooster's parallel journey of discovery takes them deep into the sultry South and across Idlewild as they grow from precocious children to stand-up men. From the back roads of Georgia to the bright lights of Chicago blasting in the Prohibition heat, the friends will learn the truths of deepest love, heartbreaking loss and family ties that bind them forever to a place called Idlewild.

Writer/director Barber is joined on *Idlewild* by producers CHARLES ROVEN (*Batman Begins*) and ROBERT GURALNICK (former Warner Bros. executive), costume designer SHAWN BARTON (*A Man Apart*), composer JOHN DEBNEY (*The Passion of the Christ*), editor ANNE GOURSAUD (*Bram Stoker's Dracula*), production designer CHARLES BREEN (*A Cinderella Story*), director of photography PASCAL RABAUD (*Paris, je t'aime*) and executive producers WILLIAM GREEN (*Ali G Indahouse*), ROBIN O'HARA (*King of the Jungle*) & SCOTT MACAULAY (*The Château*).

## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

### A Safe Haven for Talent: *Idlewild* Gets the Greenlight

Barber met Benjamin and Patton in 1993 during his time at Clark Atlanta University's School of Film. Since then, the filmmaker has cut his teeth directing OutKast in videos from their first entry, "Skew It on the Bar-B," to their signature series, including "Hey Ya!," "Roses" and "The Way You Move." The in-demand director has also created music videos for a diverse slate of talent from Destiny's Child and Nelly Furtado to Kelly Clarkson and Missy Elliott, most recently helming Christina Aguilera's "Ain't No Other Man," which shares a stylistic sensibility with *Idlewild*.

The friends had long discussed creating a 1930s period musical with an all-black cast of actors to tell the stories of people they knew growing up in the Deep South. Indeed, they had been working on the idea of a musical since OutKast's album "Aquemini" came out in 1998. 2000's "Stankonia" and the blockbuster follow-up, 2003's "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below," would shoot OutKast into the musical stratosphere...and keep kindled their passion for the film project.

The trio knew they didn't want to do a musical in which, according to Benjamin, they just, "break out in song." The right project would need to be a performance-based film that was built around the music, one that would tell the story of ragtime-infused hip-hop and semi-autobiographical stories. Writer/director Barber knew he had the perfect combination for the film in Benjamin and Patton, with one of the artists' tastes pop-culture in flavor and the latter more urban in his stylings.

Through Erika Conner, an executive of Charles Roven's Mosaic Media Group's urban division, Barber had heard that HBO Films was looking for material to feature on the network. He met with Conner and showed her a film treatment he'd created from two songs off of OutKast's double-disk "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below." Barber had placed into script form a story of two young men on parallel paths—in the Deep South of 1932—an idea that resonated quite well with Conner and Guralnick. Mosaic knew they'd found just the film to produce for HBO, and Barber had found a home for his project.

With OutKast's rising success, Mosaic Media Group was confident of the film's chance to reach a wide audience. Mosaic's long track record of hits—including *Scooby-Doo* and its sequel, as well as *Three Kings*, *Twelve Monkeys* and the enormously successful franchise reinvention *Batman Begins*—led Mosaic's Roven to trust his gut on the project. The producer says that he was fascinated to help create “a compelling musical with purposefully anachronistic themes woven into the storyline.”

As the project developed for HBO, so did the juggernaut success of OutKast's latest release, the aforementioned “Speakerboxxx/The Love Below.” The album was well on its way to selling an astonishing six million units, and establishing OutKast as more-than-bankable stars in the world of entertainment. Notes fellow producer Guralnick, “The movie was in development before ‘Speakerboxxx’ was released. When that album came out, it changed the film's emphasis and helped us to create the movie both Bryan and our team wanted to make. It started as a 35-page treatment and morphed into this refined production.”

Both Mosaic and HBO knew there was an even bigger audience for this film, based on OutKast's success, and they sold worldwide distribution rights to Universal Pictures in September 2005, which would release the picture as the duo finished its latest album, the soundtrack “Idlewild.” The album features new songs by OutKast and will be released by LaFace/Zomba Label Group on August 22, 2006. The artists feel that, as a work three years in the making, it is an excellent representation of what they went through during this time period.

“I wanted to do a film that encourages people to pursue their dreams, because the graveyard is full of ideas that never happened,” Barber reflects. “I wrote the two characters based on music from Dré and Big Boi and an experience that I was going through. Rooster and Percival are two sides of my personality—creative and as a family man.”

Barber continues that his film is “about two individuals who go on two separate paths, but cross each other and help one another get to the next chapters of their lives. When I wrote this movie, I wanted to express how short life is. That's why we start the film at a funeral.”

Both director and talent were adamant about the direction *Idlewild* would take, with no one interested in doing a biopic or “rapper movie.” Songs would be used as background or in performance settings, not broken out into whenever the characters felt their mood change. Barber laughs, “It’s more *Purple Rain* than *Singin’ in the Rain*.”

Neither did the guys want a puffed-up documentary of their humble beginnings. If and when a biography is made, Benjamin laughs, “I’d want Leonardo DiCaprio to play me,” while Patton riffs “John Leguizamo” would be a better fit for his style.

### Actors, Singers, Dancers and Fire-Eaters:

#### Casting the Film

Barber liked the fact that 1930s films were “strong for African-Americans.” He drew particular inspiration for *Idlewild* from Vincente Minnelli’s *Cabin in the Sky*, a period musical infused with swing-dance choreography that also told a tale of harsher life among its residents. A musical buff since he was introduced to them as a boy by his mother, Barber feels that films of this era are “very romantic,” and he wanted a cast that could reflect that spirit. He began choosing talent who could help pay homage to the classics and become the believable citizens of his tiny Georgia town.

Naturally, first to be cast were Benjamin as the dutiful son Percival and Patton as the roaming lothario Rooster. Producer Roven notes, “The ambience of this film is set by OutKast. They really are willing to take chances in terms of what they’ll do—their essence is all over *Idlewild*.”

As Barber wrote the part of Percival, he was certain that Benjamin would have the sensitivity needed to play a man who has bottled up his spirit until the perfect woman comes along and sets it free.

Benjamin had acted in supporting roles before *Idlewild* was shot, including F. Gary Gray’s *Be Cool*, and the producers felt sure that his knack for the craft would make him quite the leading man. Commends Roven, “André is a spectacular actor and quite the Renaissance man.”

Benjamin notes, “When people see me performing on stage, they see a different guy than when they meet me in person. The character of Percival is actually more true to life.”

Antwan A. Patton’s showy alter ego, Big Boi, would help him slip easily into his first-time acting role as Rooster, the manager/carnival barker of Church. “There’s a lot of hustling going on with Rooster,” he says. “There’s a little of me in Rooster, because Bryan loosely based it on me; I’m just trying to bring my edge to it. His club is everything bad, from prostitution, liquor, booze running, but it’s a fun place.”

Patton’s acting coach, Ben Vereen, would encourage the actor to watch *Casablanca*, *Public Enemy* and *Stormy Weather* to get a feel for the genre and study movement and posture. Producer Guralnick also recalls of the initial time he saw Patton on location: “When I first saw Big Boi on set, he reminded me of Jimmy Cagney. I told him to rent *White Heat*.”

Benjamin laughs of his partner Patton, “He likes to throw the parties, have everybody come down. For him to run Church, that’s Rooster.”

“Dré and Big Boi’s characters are part of who they are in life,” summarizes Barber. “The magic of filmmaking with them is when the film starts to take on its own life.”

The production team would begin the casting process, throwing a wide net to find the players who would become the singers, dancers, prostitutes, gamblers and Church-goers to be found way down in the seamy South.

Paula Patton, cast as Angel, began her career on other side of the camera, where she worked as a television producer creating documentaries before she pursued her acting dream. To play the sultry lounge singer Angel, Patton conducted character studies of African-American film legends Lena Horne and Dorothy Dandridge.

“When we screen-tested Paula,” Roven commends, “everyone was blown away by her outer and inner beauty. We couldn’t see anyone playing Angel but her.” The *magna cum laude* film school graduate was also no stranger to music. She is married to soul singer Robin Thicke and provided back-up vocals on Usher’s “Confessions” album.

Academy Award®-nominated for his work as a pimp who dreams of the big life as a rapper in *Hustle & Flow*, actor Terrence Howard was cast as the gin-running mob

boss Trumpy, the man who would try to rule Rooster, Percival and the rest of *Idlewild*'s crime syndicate with an iron fist.

Noting Howard's nuances as an actor, Roven commends, "Terrence plays him not as a 'straight-ahead bad guy,' but as someone quite complicated and with a number of ambiguities."

Malinda Williams, much lauded for her performances in the television series *Soul Food* and the theatrical release *The Wood*, was cast as Zora, the woman who loves her husband Rooster dearly and encourages him to become a family man and take care of his four daughters and infant son.

The irrepressible Faizon Love was selected to play "Sunshine" Ace, Church's owner and a swaggering bootlegger, a man who self-proclaims he "sells more hot sauce than anyone this side of the Mason-Dixon." PAULA JAI PARKER would flesh out the role of oversexed Rose, Ace's opportunistic girlfriend (and Rooster's mistress).

Barber offers, "Malinda Williams, Paula Jai Parker and Faizon Love all gave me great ideas on where to expand scenes...a certain gesture here or there that might take the scene a bit further."

Bringing gravitas to the troupe of actors was Cicely Tyson, whose *CV* reads like a university guide to American cinema. From *Roots* and *A Woman Called Moses* to *The Women of Brewster Place* and *Fried Green Tomatoes*, her presence on the film was cause for excitement for actors and crew alike. "Cicely brings this warmth and spirituality to a pivotal moment of the film," Roven lauds.

A good friend of Barber's, Macy Gray came onboard to play the chief hen of Rooster's henhouse, Taffy. The musician had surprised moviegoers with a standout performance in *Training Day* several years before and noted work in *Lackawanna Blues*. "André had a song for about seven years called 'The Greatest Show on Earth,'" the filmmaker notes. "Macy took it and just did a fabulous performance with it."

Actor Ben Vereen doubled in duty on the set. Not only would he play Percival's stern, alcoholic father, Percival Sr., Vereen would serve as an "acting coach" to the younger talent, according to Benjamin. Barber compliments, "Ben brought such an element of class. He helped me understand what actors look for in communication."

Paula Patton adds, “Having Ben on set brought such a strong connection to the people involved with *Idlewild*. You can’t be in his presence without understanding the impact his career has had on all of us as performers.”

Playing a raging diva for the film is R&B legend Patti LaBelle. “Miss LaBelle,” as Barber and the crew affectionately called her, “was adorable,” remembers swing dancer Erika Johnson. “She’d touch everyone and just hug you if you came near her.”

To play the mob boss Spats, producer Roven relates, “We needed someone who had a big presence. Spats is the mentor and patriarch of this Church family. Ving’s a fantastic actor and did exactly what we hoped he would do.”

Antwan A. Patton echoes Roven’s feelings for the actor: “It was real organic with Ving. We’d do freestyle off one another. Then he went and told my mom, ‘Do you know what your son did today?’ I was like, ‘Wow! Ving Rhames thinks I’m pretty good!’”

Core casting was only the beginning for Barber and the producers. Aside from the hundreds of extra “Churchgoers” needed for each scene, they would need to find dozens of talented dancers, showgirls and circus performers to make the juke joint a place like nowhere else in the dirty South. Once selected, it was time for the army of performers to head to the sweltering heat of its new Idlewild—Wilmington, North Carolina—chosen for its soundstages, local beauty and deep film crew.

Greatest Show on Earth:  
The Musical Stylings of OutKast

Barber loved the fact that he could draw his audience in to experience his fictional town’s history through modern-day music. Very aware that ’30s music was no longer all the rage, Barber knew OutKast could draw inspiration from the greats like Calloway and Ellington—as have all R&B acts—while infusing their 2006 style into the musical. The group’s seventh album, “Idlewild,” would serve as soundtrack to the film. “Since college, whenever I write treatments or scripts, I always took a song to help me key into different layers of characters,” the director shares. “OutKast’s music has that in each song. It’s fun, but there’s a message when you listen closely.”

From the opening sequences of *Idlewild* to the closing scenes where Percival Sr. is placing his son and Angel's pictures on the wall, Barber wanted to tell his tale through powerful visuals as the audience heard OutKast's musical score. "This film is told through the eyes of a photographer. Old photographs greatly influenced my vision of telling this story. When I think about the '30s, so much of what I know is through photographs."

Offers Benjamin, "There are some numbers from 'Speakerboxxx/The Love Below,' but the soundtrack for the film is a new OutKast album. It's been an interesting way of recording, because we've been shooting and recording songs at the same time. With film, you have to be right on it, every second."

Adds producer Guralnick, "The guys created new songs for the film, so we had to make sure those songs fit the exact pieces we planned to film."

In addition to songs used for the film that the group had previously written and recorded, OutKast wrote additional music immediately preceding filming days.

In keeping with cinematographer Pascal Rabaud's inspiration to film *Idlewild* as Paris in the '30s, Barber worked with the singers to create magical numbers in song and dance—such as the rain-drenched plantation sequence "Take Off Your Cool," featuring Norah Jones. In particular, "PJ & Rooster" is performed in the film on a Busby Berkeley-influenced set. In this sequence, when Percival makes his premiere at a Chicago nightclub, the renowned choreographer would serve as inspiration to Benjamin's music and Battle's steps as they re-created Berkeley's signature style. The first music videos and singles to be released off of the film's soundtrack were Patton's solo "Morris Brown," and Benjamin's "Idlewild Blue: Don'tChu Worry 'Bout Me."

With most film soundtracks, building the score is a parallel project to creating the film. With *Idlewild*, form very much followed function. Without the music, there would be little to choreograph or film. Benjamin acknowledges that, many a night, he and Patton had to work until the early morning hours to get just the right lyrics and melodies for the next day's choreography and subsequent shooting. He proudly notes, however, they were always planning to make "an OutKast album, not something thrown out with the movie."

Swop 101:  
Schooling the Dancers

Director Barber knew that if he were going to direct this musical, he needed one of the world's top choreographers to design the dance sequences. Triple Tony Award winner Hinton Battle—who has received the theatrical industry's top award for Best Featured Actor for *Sophisticated Ladies*, *The Tap Dance Kid* and *Miss Saigon*—signed on to choreograph *Idlewild*.

Notes the director, “In the '30s, people carried themselves with a sense of pride. I wanted to take hip-hop and put it in that setting. I thought it would be mind-blowing to take rap and put it in that era, watching people do the lindy-hop and jitterbug to it. If you listen to Cab Calloway or Duke Ellington, it has that feel to it.”

He continues, “I met with Hinton in New York and discussed my idea for the film. His experience with hip-hop and swing numbers let me know he could marry the two. He's just a genius.”

Barber and Battle assembled dancers from across the country who were specialists in swing dancing, hip-hop, break dance and freestyle...and who had been trained in one form or another of classical dance training, gymnastics or tumbling. Battle had six weeks to teach them his signature “swop,” a hybrid of swing and hip-hop the choreographer designed for the film.

“The vision I'd had of putting swing and hip-hop together was always there, but what I wanted to create didn't exist,” he shares. “Swing and lindy is one community, and hip-hop another...and the hip-hop community is an entirely different group. In bringing them together for the film, Bryan gave me license to go berserk with the numbers.”

Rehearsal began for *Idlewild* six weeks before the beginning of principal photography in September 2004. The dancers, brought from Los Angeles, New York and road shows, came to live and work in Wilmington, North Carolina. Used to rigorous training, they would work with Battle six days a week, eight hours a day, to get their signature moves as tight as possible. The choreographer wanted his dancers to get to the point, where they could “do it with their eyes closed.”

“My dancers stood there with their mouths open on the first day, realizing they had to learn all these things,” laughs Battle. Dancer/actress/circus performer Karen Dyer, who worked with OutKast in the “The Whole World” video, and accomplished swing dancer and actress Erika Johnson were two of the LA-based dancers who participated in Battle’s swop school, living and breathing the ’30s for two months in sultry Wilmington.

“Hinton asked us all to think, ‘What do you bring?’” recalls Dyer, who plays Eva the Fire Diva in the film. “Whatever skill set you brought to the table, he wanted to see. The swingers had to learn to breakdance and vice versa.”

Battle felt each number should be self-sufficient, and he inserted tap dancing, modern dance and jazz steps into each of the seven dance numbers he created for *Idlewild*, based on the music OutKast was adapting for the film.

Barber knew as he saw Battle at work that he and his cinematographer would occasionally need to slow Battle’s steps down to capture the flair and excitement of the dancers. Even Patton often felt that Rooster was, at times, “Cab Calloway with a lot of hand movements.”

Guralnick notes, “The big numbers are easier for Bryan than some of the small pieces; he’s had so much experience with them as a music-video director. He uses techno-crane, multiple cameras, steadicam, and is just very adept at it.”

For the dancers, it was all about rehearsal and evolving choreography. Multiple weeks of training were necessary to get Battle’s team ready for the intricate sequences. Swing dancers worked closely with hip-hop dancers to teach them partnering and lifts. Hip-hoppers returned the favor by providing the swingers with the moves necessary to master their skills. Battle and Barber exposed them to new mixes of OutKast’s music for the film, and Battle evolved the steps as new horn music and drum beats were added daily.

With a pyrotechnics crew in place to manage Eva the Fire Diva’s fireball-spewing sets (read Benjamin and Gray jumping back a foot or two), even the fire diva herself struggled with the heat. “Lord, it was hot,” laughs Dyer. “Shooting in 95-degree weather in a swamp in the North Carolina summer. Even for the dancers used to extreme physical work, we were whipped.”

Twenty-three dancers were brought in to create Battle's signature moves, six showgirls and the remaining, a collection of other dancers. One might assume the last thing they would want to do as they wrapped the day was head out on the town. Rolling to the local clubs, however, the dancers would face the occasional dance-off challenge from local freestylers.

"It was very *You Got Served*," recalls Johnson. "After a long day on set, we would take a break and go out to the club. Here are master dancers like Chopper, Flipz, Ya Ya—these phenomenal break, house and swing dancers—getting challenged by locals who heard we were in town."

"Don't worry, the locals *got served*," she notes dryly.

Despite the inclement weather of multiple hurricanes and an unexpected tornado blowing through the location, there would be no time for complaining during the shoot. Laughs Dyer, "One night, the dancers went to the local grocery store and wiped out the supply of Epsom salts."

It helped to ease the sore muscles that legends of Broadway were sprinkled throughout the course of production. In addition to Battle's "godfather of the lindy-hop," Frankie Manning, schooling Battle on the history of the dance, Vincente Minnelli's own daughter dropped by the set. Liza made a surprise visit during her pal Ben Vereen's birthday...delighting even the most seasoned of dancers.

Now with over 100 freestylers, tumblers, B-boys, B-girls, swing dancers and extras at the ready for this *Cabaret* meets *The Cotton Club*, it was time to get them in (or out of) various stages of dress.

### Dressing a Speakeasy:

### Costumes of the Film

Barber didn't just blend music and dance from across the past 80 years for the film. He also desired the retro-modern look of *Idlewild* to be reflected in the costumes. To accomplish this, he would turn to costume designer Shawn Barton. Known for her work on *Love Jones*, *Friday* and *A Man Apart*, Barton would provide a '30s flair and sensibility that the director was looking for...coupled with modern fashion. "Much of the

wardrobe for the lead characters is a combination of contemporary pieces influenced by the '30s," he comments. "Shawn and Anthony Franco had a vision for fashion that's superb."

Barber's experience as a music-video director would inform his costume stylings. Outfits had to be somewhat true to the period, but also have a completely contemporary feel to them and be wearable for the acrobatic dance moves expected of the cast. The designer received a look book from Barber that "put together his ideas of production design," Barton says. "From there, he told me 'Do what you do,' which is fantastic to hear."

Barton's team researched outfits of 1935 and added a "sprinkling of the '70s in there," according to the designer, that would include dressing Percival's muse, Angel, in Bob Mackie originals. Her group even managed to find vintage Cher costumes that Barton tweaked for Angel's time on- and offstage.

For Benjamin's upscale undertaker look, it wasn't much of a stretch to get the actor into period costume. Barton understands for OutKast, the guys are very much known for what they wear onstage, looking like "rock stars on- or off-camera." Barton believes that Dré, in particular, is "dressed in this time period normally."

To get into the look that was Percival, Benjamin offers, "I watched Sammy Davis Jr. in films that were set in the '30s. I watched Cary Grant. I dig that, in that time period, people dressed up every day and on Sunday they relaxed."

Rooster's wide, bright ties, brimmed hats, pocket handkerchiefs and checked vests were partnered with his female counterparts' costumes. Patton gives special thanks to "Mr. Giorgio Armani for takin' care of old boy Rooster for a good portion of the movie's outfits." Contributions from Ralph Lauren and other designers added to the costume team's fashion arsenal.

Charles Roven recalls "Sunshine" Ace, Faizon Love, asking to change costumes from his original wardrobe. The producer feels, "It's great when talent comes to the party thinking about their character. I remember Faizon saying, 'I need to stand out. This is my club! I'm a hick who's made it good.'" Barton dressed him in overalls, a narrow hat and a pocket watch. "And it was definitely the right choice," notes Roven.

Attention to detail penetrated the costume design on the set. While not always the easiest costumes in which to lindy-hop or jitterbug, even the dancers were outfitted with boots and heels by a team that became obsessed with fashion. With swing dresses and flapper-esque outfits for the ladies and sharp vests and spats for the gentlemen, the costumes would take the audiences back to a more genteel era.

\*\*\*\*\*

Production wrapped, actors and crew reflected on the monumental task that was the creation of *Idlewild*. Whether it was swing dancers learning hip-hop or singers understanding the craft of acting, all were altered by their time in Wilmington, North Carolina—especially OutKast, in their first starring roles off of the video screen. At the end of the day, these big changes could only happen in a tiny little town called *Idlewild*.

This '30s musical with its modern-day sensibility began with three young men who met years ago in Atlanta and toured the world before returning to their Southern roots. *Idlewild* is their story—told through the lens of a photographer—about two men who save each other's lives. Ultimately, Rooster and Percival do that for one another, as Rooster dares his best friend to dream of something bigger and Percival literally saves his partner's life. In the wise words of the eight-year-old Percival, "God don't make no mistakes." A statement that will always beg Rooster's wide-eyed reply, "Ain't nothing slick to a can of oil."

Universal Pictures and HBO Films Present A Mosaic Media Group / Forensic Films Production of A Bryan Barber Film: *Idlewild*, starring André Benjamin, Antwan A. Patton, Paula Patton, Terrence Howard, Faizon Love, Malinda Williams, Cicely Tyson, Macy Gray, Ben Vereen, Bruce Bruce, with Patti LaBelle and Ving Rhames. Casting for the film is by Billy Hopkins, Suzanne Smith and Kerry Barden. The film's costume designer is Shawn Barton. The choreographer is Hinton Battle; music score is by John Debney. *Idlewild* is co-produced by Bryan Barber, André Benjamin, Antwan A. Patton, Erika Conner, Michael "Blue" Williams. The editor is Anne Goursaud, ACE; the production designer is Charles Breen. The director of photography is Pascal Rabaud. The film's executive producers are William Green, Robin O'Hara & Scott Macaulay. The film is produced by Charles Roven and Robert Guralnick. *Idlewild* is written and directed by Bryan Barber. ©2006 Universal Studios. [www.idlewildmovie.net](http://www.idlewildmovie.net)

## **ABOUT THE CAST**

**ANDRÉ BENJAMIN** (Percival/Co-Producer/Music Supervisor) is best known for his work as half of the world-renowned, pioneering, Grammy Award-winning duo OutKast. Their album “Speakerboxxx/The Love Below” sold over 10 million copies, propelled by Benjamin’s number-one single “Hey Ya!” For their distinguished body of work spanning over a decade, OutKast has received multiple Grammy Awards, including Album of the Year for “Speakerboxxx/The Love Below” in 2004.

Fueled by his artistic passion, Benjamin now has turned his attention to other creative outlets and is making an indelible mark on the film and television world. He has lent his voice to the animé feature *Whasango* and will soon do the same for Paramount’s upcoming live-action/CG feature *Charlotte’s Web*. Benjamin was most recently seen co-starring with John Travolta, Uma Thurman, Vince Vaughn and Cedric the Entertainer in *Be Cool*, the sequel to the smash-hit comedy *Get Shorty*. He also received rave reviews for his portrayal of an adopted brother, opposite Mark Wahlberg, in director John Singleton’s drama *Four Brothers*. He also appeared on an episode of the critically acclaimed F/X dramatic series *The Shield*.

Benjamin is an accomplished painter and clothing designer, further solidifying his role as a true multimedia artist and entrepreneur. Among his many accolades, Benjamin has been named the “World’s Best Dressed Man” by *Esquire* magazine and was named as one of *Premiere* magazine’s “New Power Players.”

**ANTWAN A. PATTON** (Rooster/Co-Producer/Music Supervisor) made his acting debut in the film *ATL*. This was a coming-of-age story set in Atlanta at the famous roller rink Jellybeans.

In 2004, Patton formed his own Atlanta-based record label, Purple Ribbon. The label showcases a mixture of established artists, as well as young up-and-coming MC’s and R&B singers. The first album, “Big Boi Presents...Got Purp? Vol. 1,” was released in fall 2004, which was followed up by “Big Boi Presents...Got Purp? Vol. 2” in fall 2005. In 2005, Patton also joined the world of car racing by investing in the NASCAR

World Racing Team. He has also established the Big Kidz foundation, which helps children make lifestyle advances through film and music.

Patton, aka Big Boi, is half of the Atlanta-based super duo OutKast. OutKast started their luminous career in 1994 when their classic hit “Player’s Ball” became an unlikely single on LaFace Records’ Christmas album. Soon after, the young duo became the label’s first hip-hop act. Their spectacular debut LP “*Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*,” sold one million copies and helped to lay a solid foundation for the current explosion of Southern hip-hop.

With their sophomore LP, “ATLiens,” OutKast showed the world that the South really did have something to say, and 1.5 million people were listening to their trunk-rattlin’ funk, gleaned from the spirit of Sly Stone, Mandrill and George Clinton.

On “Stankonia,” OutKast pushed the envelope even further by revisiting the spirit of George Clinton, Jimi Hendrix and Eddie Hazel, dipping millions of listeners into some good old-fashioned psychedelic hip-hop funk. The record sold five million units worldwide.

For their fifth effort, the two decided to take a break and release a greatest hits album, “Big Boi and Dré Present...OutKast.” The record contained three new songs, one of which, “The Whole World,” earned them a coveted Grammy Award for Best Rap Song by a duo or group.

With their sixth release, “Speakerboxxx/The Love Below,” OutKast reaffirmed their talent by adding another great album to their ever-expanding catalog of hits, and further solidifying their legacy as one of the greatest hip-hop groups of all time.

OutKast has earned six Grammys, three World Music Awards, three BET Awards and four American Music Awards.

Patton currently lives in Atlanta with his family.

**PAULA PATTON** (Angel) is sure to emerge as an unforgettable talent in 2006.

Patton recently wrapped production on the new Tony Scott film *Déjà Vu*, with co-stars Denzel Washington and Jim Caviezel. The film, shot in New Orleans, is about an FBI agent who travels back in time to save a woman (Patton) from being murdered.

Before *Idlewild*, Patton was last seen in Columbia Pictures' romantic comedy, *Hitch*, in which she co-starred opposite Will Smith, Eva Mendes and Kevin James.

Patton grew up in Los Angeles, attending the Hamilton School for the Performing Arts. She always had a passion for acting as well as filmmaking; upon graduating from high school she was chosen as one of four young filmmakers for a documentary series made for PBS entitled *The Ride*, which followed the four filmmakers as they directed their own documentary films about young people across America.

After spending her freshman year of college at UC Berkeley—with an increasing passion for filmmaking—Patton transferred to the prestigious USC Film School, where she graduated *magna cum laude*. Upon graduation, she began various production assistant work and eventually worked her way up to shooting and producing *Medical Diaries* for the Discovery Channel. When the show was completed, Patton realized her love of acting and immediately enrolled in acting classes. After a year of studying, she decided to pursue a career in professional acting.

Patton currently resides in Los Angeles.

Crowned as the “Indie Film King” by *Entertainment Weekly*, **TERRENCE HOWARD** (Trumpy) exploded onto the Hollywood scene this year after delivering strong performances in a number of film and television productions. This year alone he has received multiple nominations including an Academy Award® and Golden Globe nomination. He has also received awards for Breakthrough Actor by the National Board of Review, *Movieline* and Gotham Awards. Howard received the Rising Star Award from the Palm Springs International Film Festival, the Renaissance Artist Award from the Diversity Awards and the Career Achievement Award from the Chicago International Film Festival. Called Sundance's “newest golden boy” by *New York Magazine* after a record-breaking year at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, Howard recently served as a drama juror at Sundance's 2006 festival.

Howard will next be seen in *August Rush*, with Robin Williams and Freddie Highmore and The Weinstein Company's *Awake* with Jessica Alba and Hayden Christensen. Howard has recently wrapped production on *Pride*—also starring Bernie Mac—in which he stars as swim coach Jim Ellis. This summer he is filming the Warner

Bros.' thriller *The Brave One*, in which he stars opposite Jodie Foster; he will follow up this film with *Spring Break in Bosnia*, also starring Richard Gere and Jesse Eisenberg.

Howard started off 2005 with dynamic performances in Paul Haggis' Academy Award®-winning film *Crash* and in Craig Brewer's *Hustle & Flow*. For his leading role in *Hustle & Flow*, Howard received Academy Award®, Golden Globe, Image Award and Independent Spirit Award nominations and won the Satellite Award for Best Actor. The song, which he performs in the film, received a Critics' Choice Award and was the first rap song ever to receive an Academy Award®. The cast of the film also received a Screen Actors Guild nomination for Best Ensemble.

For the critically acclaimed *Crash*, Howard and the all-star cast—including Sandra Bullock, Don Cheadle, Thandie Newton and Matt Dillon—received a Screen Actors Guild Award for Best Ensemble and was nominated for a Gotham Award. The film also won an Oscar® for Best Picture at the 2005 Academy Awards®.

Keeping a powerful presence on the small screen as well, Howard was seen in the critically acclaimed HBO film *Lackawanna Blues*, based on Tony Award-winning Ruben Santiago-Hudson's autobiographical play and directed by George C. Wolfe. The cast, which included Jeffrey Wright and S. Epatha Merkerson was nominated for an NAACP Image Award.

Howard's love for acting came naturally, through summers spent with his grandmother, New York stage actress Minnie Gentry. He later began his acting career on *The Cosby Show*, after being discovered on a New York City street by a casting director. The chance encounter helped Howard break into feature films, and soon he was cast in such films as *Mr. Holland's Opus*.

Some of Howard's memorable performances are of scene-stealing characters such as Cowboy in the Hughes brothers' film *Dead Presidents* and as Quentin in Malcolm D. Lee's film *The Best Man*. The latter film earned him an NAACP Image Award, Independent Spirit Award nomination and a Chicago Film Critics Award nomination.

A self-taught musician Howard plays both the piano and the guitar. He can be seen displaying these musical talents opposite Jamie Foxx in 2004's *Ray*, for which they both earned a SAG nomination. A promising songwriter, Howard's lyrics are soon to be acquired by some of today's biggest artists.

Other film credits include John Singleton's crime drama *Angel Eyes* and *Four Brothers*, Gregory Hoblit's *Hart's War* and Jim Sheridan's *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*.

**FAIZON LOVE** ("Sunshine" Ace) has starred in numerous films and television series over the past decade. Most well known for his role opposite Will Ferrell in the blockbuster *Elf*, Love was also recently seen in *Just My Luck*, starring Lindsay Lohan. In 2006, Love also appears in the drama *All You've Got* and the musical *A Day in the Life*.

The actor has brought his signature flavor to additional film roles including *Torque*, *The Fighting Temptations*, *Wonderland*, *Blue Crush*, *Made*, *The Replacements*, *The Players Club*, *B\*A\*P\*S*, *A Thin Line Between Love and Hate* and the unforgettable comedy *Friday*.

In television, Love has appeared in the Disney Channel's *That's So Raven*, *The Big House*, *The Wayans Bros.* and *The Parent 'Hood*. Love has lent his vocal talents to the juggernaut video game *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* and the groundbreaking animated show *Bébé's Kids*.

**MALINDA WILLIAMS** (Zora), an esteemed Hollywood sweetheart, is currently starring in the exciting television drama *Windfall* on NBC. Williams portrays Kimberly George, a 22-year-old single mother whose luck finds her winning the \$386 million dollar lottery and leaving her life in the trailer park behind.

Williams is currently shooting the upcoming feature film *Daddy's Little Girl*, which was written, directed and produced by Tyler Perry. She stars as Maya, the assistant and friend to Gabrielle Union's character, Julia, a successful lawyer who falls in love with a janitor named Monty—much to the chagrin of her father. Maya convinces Julia that Monty is a good guy and she should listen to her heart and not to her judgmental family and friends about his social status.

This talented actress notes of her career goals: "I just want to portray African-American women accurately, because that is all I represent; not necessarily positively or negatively, just correctly."

**CICELY TYSON** (Mother Hopkins) has had a life and career that tell a story of personal excellence and profound choices. She is perhaps best known for her performances in roles that not only challenge universal stereotypes, but also raise the consciousness of audiences to our common humanity. This she consciously sets out to do in groundbreaking award-winning films and television dramas.

In 1962, she became the first black actress to co-star in a television drama series, *East Side/West Side*. It was in the role of George C. Scott's secretary, Jane, that Ms. Tyson set the "natural trend" by daring to wear her hair in its natural state. In so doing, she challenged the soul of African Americans to recognize the beauty in their own hair. In the role of Rebecca, her character in the feature film *Sounder*—for which she received an Oscar® nomination—she once again validated African-American beauty by wearing her hair in cornrow fashion.

A gifted actress, she represents success without compromise. She has been noted as being serious, soul stirring, powerful and majestic with extraordinary range. Over the span of her career, she has defied stereotypes. She sets standards and makes others rise to them. She is self-assured, knowing and perceptive and has been credited by critics as having helped shape and elevate an entire generation.

All of these attributes have led to her award-winning career. Ms. Tyson has received numerous Emmy nominations and received an Emmy for her performance in the role of Castralia in *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All*; an ACE Award for the television docudrama on Watts, *Heat Wave*; and holds an unprecedented two Emmys for her performance as Jane, the title character in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*.

Among some of her other awarded films are *A Woman Called Moses*, *The Marva Collins Story*, *The Women of Brewster Place*, *Blessed Assurance*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *King*, *Mama Flora's Family* and *A Lesson Before Dying*—based on the novel written by Ernest Gaines. Additional recognition of her talents have come from The National Council of Negro Women, PUSH, SOLO, CORE, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center and receipt of a record 13 Image Awards from the NAACP.

Ms. Tyson has served as world ambassador for UNICEF, calling attention to the plight of children throughout the world, and is currently involved with Save the Children. Along with Arthur Mitchell, its artistic director, and actor Brock Peters, Cicely Tyson co-

founded The Dance Theatre of Harlem. She also co-chaired the first and second National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta with Harry Belafonte.

On the occasion of Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Mandela's first visit to America, Cicely Tyson served as mistress of ceremonies for the tribute to Winnie Mandela held at BAM and was asked by Mayor Bradley to speak at the tribute to Nelson Mandela in Los Angeles.

At the 1988 economic summit of world leaders in Texas, Ms. Tyson was selected by President George H.W. Bush to serve as the mistress of ceremonies. She was invited by President Carter to perform for President Shagari of Nigeria at a White House dinner and has served on the Kennedy Center Honors Board since his administration.

In 1994, Ms. Tyson co-starred in the television drama series *Sweet Justice* and received her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on August 21, 1997.

In 2001, Ms. Tyson was called upon to serve as mistress of ceremonies for President Clinton's *Welcome to Harlem*. She also served as emcee for the Democratic National Committee's *A Night at the Apollo* fundraiser for voter registration.

In 2003, Ms. Tyson was appointed commissioner by President George W. Bush, and acknowledged as a driving force in creating the National Museum of African American History and Culture, which will be located in Washington, D.C.

Her deep concern for young people led her to set aside one month out of the year to communicate with them on campuses, in churches and in other organizations across the country. On November 3, 1996, the New Jersey Board of Education unanimously voted to change the name of a public middle school to the Cicely Tyson School of Performing and Fine Arts. Within a year, it was expanded to a high school. The school, located in East Orange, NJ, has a student body of close to 800 primarily underprivileged students. Among her many accolades, Ms. Tyson acknowledges this to be one of the most meaningful and is involved in many aspects of the students' education.

Ms. Tyson believes that in an age of brokenness, self-aggrandizement, polarization and the increasing breakdown of family life, each one of us is an embodiment of an indomitable life-giving spirit and must be involved in some voluntary capacity, ministering to the lives of those less fortunate than others. In this regard, over the years she has solicited, collected and distributed clothing, food and toys to homes and

shelters in the New York and New Jersey areas. In January 2005, she visited Phuket, Thailand, to assist in the planning and rebuilding of an elementary school that was devastated by the tsunami.

Ms. Tyson is a founding member of CHAA (Coalition for a Healthy and Active America) and The Future Pac—an organization dedicated to raising funds to support women with political aspirations—and is spokesperson for the anti-smoking organization the American Legacy Foundation.

Ms. Tyson's latest works, *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*, *Madea's Family Reunion* and *Because of Winn-Dixie*, debuted in first, first and third place (respectively) on the list of highest-grossing movies of the week.

From her award-winning music career to her memorable character roles, **MACY GRAY** (Taffy) has proven to be not only a triple threat in the entertainment community, but a true superstar sensation.

Gray exploded onto the music scene with her incredibly successful debut album, "Macy Gray On How Life Is." Her single "I Try" landed her a Grammy in 1999 for "Best New Artist," and the album went on to sell over seven million copies worldwide. With her second album, "The Id," Gray was immensely successful with such eclectic songs as "Relating to a Psychopath," "Sexual Revolution" and "Sweet Baby." She has traveled extensively throughout the world, performing in various territories such as Israel, Australia and Europe—where she is extremely popular—including Spain, Italy, Germany and Holland.

In July 2003, Gray released her highly anticipated third album, "The Trouble With Being Myself." The album demonstrated Gray's exploring a more intimate side of herself, revealing just how textured and unique she can be. Music critics universally hailed the album as her best yet. Her album's reviews are spectacular, with high praise from *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, *People*, *Entertainment Weekly* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Her two singles, "When I See You" and "She Ain't Right for You," received considerable play on radio and television.

Gray is currently in the studio finishing off her latest album, "BIG," which will be released this September. The album is being produced by will.i.am (from The Black

Eyed Peas) and features collaborations with Justin Timberlake, Sleepy Brown, Linda Perry and Natalie Cole.

When not working on her own albums, Gray continues to collaborate with many artists such as Carlos Santana, contributing a song on his latest album, “The Essential Santana.” Gray’s pleasing sound has also recently graced such soundtracks as *Mona Lisa Smile* and Eminem’s critically acclaimed blockbuster *8 Mile*, in which she was the only female artist featured. She also recorded a song for the Academy Award®-winning film *Chicago*, along with Queen Latifah and Lil’ Kim.

Gray has managed to find time to spread her acting wings as well. She most recently appeared in the HBO television movie *Lackawanna Blues*, which received seven Emmy Award nominations, and guest starred on Lifetime’s *Missing*. She has also appeared in the ABC television drama *MDs*, where she played a talented singer who was diagnosed with a career-damaging throat disease. Many television critics applauded her sensitive portrayal of this character. She also appeared on the NBC show *American Dreams*, in a guest-starring role as the legendary Carla Thomas.

With roles in Warner Bros.’ *Training Day*, starring Denzel Washington, and a cameo in the blockbuster hit *Spider-Man*, Gray’s film career is taking off. She has also appeared in *Scary Movie 3*, *The Crow: Wicked Prayer* and in Jackie Chan’s remake of *Around the World in 80 Days*. Gray is currently developing her own animated cartoon with Warner Bros., which will be based on her own childhood. She will lend her unique voice as the central character in this cartoon.

In her latest role, Gray joined another talented and diverse cast—which featured Keira Knightley, Lucy Liu, Mickey Rourke and Christopher Walken—in New Line Cinema’s *Domino*. She can also be seen in *Shadowboxer*, opposite Cuba Gooding Jr.

In addition to her acting and music career, Gray has proliferated into the world of fashion. The Natalie Hinds Collection by Macy Gray delivers beautiful clothes designed in the spirit of the world’s most beautiful places. Like Gray, this brand-new clothing line is bold and exquisite, with enough attitude to stand out from the crowd.

Gray also strives to give back to her community. Her most recent effort was the opening of her own music school, the M. Gray Music Academy, in NoHo Arts District (North Hollywood, CA) this past October.

Gray currently lives in Los Angeles with her three children.

**BEN VEREEN** (Percival Sr.) has a unique ability to blend rare talent with a strong sense of social consciousness, which has enabled him to take on impressive musical, comedic and dramatic roles with finesse and excellence.

A year after suffering a near-fatal accident, Vereen made his triumphant return to Broadway in 1993 as the *Chimney Man* in the musical *Jelly's Last Jam*. Says Clive Barnes of the *New York Post*, "Ben Vereen—unquestionably one of the finest performances seen on Broadway." After appearing on Broadway in *Sweet Charity*, *Hair* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Vereen channeled his intensity into a lead performance in the long-running hit *Pippin*. For this portrayal, he won the prestigious Tony Award for Best Actor in a Musical and a Drama Desk Award. Vereen also starred in the Broadway musical *Grind* and in the San Francisco production of *I'm Not Rappaport*, Herb Gardner's poignant Tony Award-winning comedy about aging in America. Most recently, Vereen graced the Broadway stage, starring as the Ghost of Christmas Present in the Madison Square Garden production of *A Christmas Carol*, to outstanding reviews.

Live audiences remain Vereen's first love. His exhilarating one-man show earned him the highest honors awarded by the American Guild of Variety Artists: Entertainer of the Year, Rising Star and Song and Dance Star. He is the first person to win three of these AGVA awards in one year. He continues to headline on showroom stages in Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Lake Tahoe—and throughout the United States—as well as in Europe, Asia and the Caribbean Islands.

Vereen has recently appeared in guest spots on *Touched by an Angel* and *Second Noah*, and has co-starred on *The Nanny*, *New York Undercover*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In 1992, he was nominated for an Emmy Award for his part in the CBS miniseries *Intruders: They Are Among Us*. Vereen also had a recurring role on the syndicated television series *Silk Stalkings*, as well as his own television series, *Tenspeed and Brownshoe*—created by Stephen J. Cannell—followed by recurring roles on *J.J. Starbuck* and *Booker*. Previously, he had a recurring role as Uncle Phillip on the ABC hit series *Webster*. His role in the television docudrama *Louis Armstrong: Chicago Style* led to several widely acclaimed roles, including the

unforgettable Chicken George in the Emmy Award-winning miniseries *Roots*. Vereen followed these achievements with his own network special, *Ben Vereen: His Roots*, which won seven Emmy Awards. He also appeared in *The Jesse Owens Story* and the CBS miniseries *Ellis Island*, for which he received a Golden Globe nomination. On film, Vereen portrayed the quintessential entertainer in *All That Jazz*. In *Funny Lady*, the tender sequel to *Funny Girl*, Ben performed a routine as the vaudeville character Burt Robins.

An integral part of Vereen's career is the lecture circuit, where he has become one of the nation's most in-demand speakers. Vereen addresses audiences of all ages, speaking at corporate functions, universities and high schools, churches, conventions and community gatherings around the country. His topics range from overcoming adversity, arts and education, black history, motivation and the importance of continuing education.

Vereen has also been widely honored for his humanitarian activities. He was awarded the prestigious Victory Award in 1990, received the Eleanor Roosevelt Humanitarian Award in 1983, received Israel's Humanitarian Award in 1978, and for two consecutive years (1978 and 1979) the NAACP handed Vereen its prestigious Image Award. Vereen has received honorary doctorates from Boston's Emerson College, Brooklyn's St. Francis College and, most recently, from Chicago's prestigious Columbia College. In addition, Vereen has served as chairman of several renowned organizations including The American Heart Association and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Association. In 1991, Vereen spearheaded his own organization, Celebrities for a Drug Free America, which raised more than \$300,000 for drug rehabilitation centers, educational programs and inner-city community-based projects.

Comedian and actor **BRUCE BRUCE** (Nathan) established himself in the early 1990s, appearing regularly on *Def Comedy Jam*. After his debut on *Def Comedy Jam*, he went on to host *BET's Comicview* and perform on *Comedy Central Presents*. Bruce's first transition into film was a starring role as Pastor Gregory in *The Sunday Morning Stripper*. He has since appeared in *Hair Show*, *xxX: State of the Union* and *Larry the Cable Guy: Health Inspector*. His first work with OutKast was his role in the group's video "So Fresh, and So Clean" in 2003. Bruce currently resides in Atlanta.

Nowadays, new school rhythm and blues flagrantly breeds carbon-copy-here-today-gone-tomorrow artists chartered by formulaic gimmicks, synthesized beats and digitalized studios, but longevity is rarely synonymous with their futures. However, authentic R&B veterans who revolutionized the genre command respect and staying power. One notable, soulful maven whose indelible talent has earned her a rightful place among rhythm and blues royalty is the incomparable **PATTI LA BELLE** (Angel Davenport).

Even as the melodic doyenne of the legendary '60s quartet Patti LaBelle & the Bluebelles and the retro '70s trio LaBelle—Patti LaBelle's kinetic performances and signature four-octave instrument served as the groups' torch. For more than 40 years in the music business, the two-time Grammy-winning legend continues to solidify herself as a musical pioneer. Never resting on her laurels, Ms. LaBelle embarked on a new genesis with the release of her introspective masterpiece, "Timeless Journey," in May 2004 and her exquisite collection of remakes, "Classic Moments," in June 2005.

Ms. LaBelle's artistic evolution has enabled her to be a chameleon without diminishing her edge, vocal prowess or legion of fans. "I'm always moving and trying to discover something new to entice me," explains Ms. LaBelle.

Although she's widely known for classic moonstruck ballads such as the duet "On My Own" with Michael McDonald, "If Only You Knew," "You Are My Friend" and "If You Asked Me To," her diverse musical tastes have only enhanced her versatility. Today, Ms. LaBelle continues to receive a respectful nod from the new litter of pop-pound. Pop princesses Christina Aguilera, Missy Elliott, Pink, Mya and raptress Lil' Kim paid homage to the soulful diva with a hip-hop infused rendition of the 1973 hit "Lady Marmalade," which appeared on the soundtrack for the Academy Award®-winning silver-screen musical *Moulin Rouge!* In 2003, DMX enlisted Ms. LaBelle's renowned pipes to season his spiritual tribute "Thank You." Other hip-hop aficionados such as Kanye West ("Roses"), OutKast ("Ghettomusick") and Wyclef Jean ("Celebrate") have also recruited Ms. LaBelle to grace their tracks.

The Philly songbird's resilience isn't surprising, since she's savored one of the longest-lived careers in contemporary music—spanning from girl-group pop to space-age funk to heavenly ballads. Despite her appreciation for today's younger artists, Ms.

LaBelle concedes that her goal has never been to emulate younger artists. “Youth has nothing to do with it, because I’m not trying to stay young. I’m still trying to love me no matter what my age. I just want to show the world that at 60+, you can still record like you’re 20.”

Still, Ms. LaBelle adheres to a few cardinal rules of her own when it comes to her musical philosophy: “Foremost, the song must always be age-appropriate,” she says. “Then I listen to the beat, because I have to be moved emotionally. I often find myself being moved by melody and sometimes it’s the modulation that moves me. Finally, the lyrics have to be something that I want to say.” And rightfully so, Ms. LaBelle’s soulful timbre and earth-quaking crescendos have resonated with millions worldwide.

While Ms. LaBelle’s celebrated career has been more than laudable, she has also endured and survived personal strife. Within a 10-year period, she lost her mother, three sisters and best friend to diabetes and cancer. However, Ms. LaBelle persevered and refused to be hindered by sorrow and instead lives her dreams—something she knows her family and friends wanted her to do. As a mother, author, actress and activist, the Philadelphia native (born Patricia Holte) has transcended the music arena. A devoted mother of four sons and one daughter (one biological son, four adopted children of her late sisters), four Rottweilers and two Cane Corsos, Ms. LaBelle is a natural-born nurturer.

As an author, she has written four bestsellers, including *Don’t Block the Blessings: Revelations of a Lifetime*, *Patti LaBelle’s Lite Cuisine*, *LaBelle Cuisine: Something to Sing About* and *Patti’s Pearls: Lessons in Living Genuinely, Joyfully, Generously*. Finally, as an actress, she’s starred in her own sitcom, *Out All Night*, and numerous television shows and specials. Ms. LaBelle launched a lifestyle show, *Living It Up With Patti LaBelle*, on the TV One Network in 2004 and has expanded her horizons into fashion with Patti LaBelle Clothing, available on HSN and at HSN.com.

Also a diabetic, Patti has been proactive in the fight against the very disease that claimed her dear mother’s life. She serves as a spokeswoman for the National Medical Association that administers a scholarship in her name, the National Minority AIDS Council’s “Live Long, Sugar” campaign and the American Diabetes Association. Ms. LaBelle also serves on the boards of the National Alzheimer’s Association and the

National Cancer Institute. The University of Miami's prestigious Sylvester Comprehensive Care Center dedicated a special research laboratory in her honor for her work on behalf of cancer awareness. In addition, Ms. LaBelle has three honorary doctorate degrees from Cambridge University, Drexel University and the Berkley College of Music, among a host of other accolades.

Undoubtedly, Ms. LaBelle's exemplary and multifaceted career has enriched the music world and inspired intangible lives in song and philanthropy. Amid today's flourishing but often-lackluster newbie artists, Ms. LaBelle's incessant devotion to rhythm and blues and her fans is the good stuff that *real* artists are made of. "My motivation is having a public waiting for my music because it makes me feel better about what I've done. You think, 'Hey, I still got it and never lost it,'" she says. "If you're feeling what you're doing, if you have that soul, spirit and motivation, you can do anything. As for me, I'm ready for greatness—I am ready for the world." And the world is always ready for a true nightingale.

**VING RHAMES** (Spats) was born and raised in Harlem, New York. Rhames studied dramatic arts at the New York High School of Performing Arts and then at the Juilliard School of Drama. After graduating from Juilliard, Rhames went on to perform in Shakespeare in the Park productions. In 1984, he appeared in front of the camera for the first time in the television movie *Go Tell it on the Mountain* and was then quickly cast in minor roles in several popular television shows including *Miami Vice*, *Tour of Duty* and *Crime Story*. In a remarkable turn of events, while filming *The Saint of Fort Washington* in New York, he was introduced to a homeless man—who turned out to be his long lost, older brother, Junior, who had lost contact with the family after serving in Vietnam. The thrilled Rhames immediately assisted his disheveled brother in getting proper food and clothing and moved him into his own apartment.

Rhames' next big break came in 1994 when director Quentin Tarantino cast him as the merciless drug dealer Marsellus Wallace in the mega hit *Pulp Fiction*. Not long after, director Brian De Palma cast Rhames alongside Tom Cruise as the ace computer hacker, Luther Stickell, in *Mission: Impossible*. With solid performances in both these

highly popular productions, his face was now well known to moviegoers, and the work offers began rolling in more frequently.

The next career highlight for Rhames was playing the lead role in the HBO production of *Don King: Only in America*. Rhames' performance as the world's most infamous boxing promoter was nothing short of brilliant, and at the 1998 Golden Globe Awards, he picked up the award for Best Actor in a Miniseries. However, in an incredible display of compassion, he handed over the award to fellow nominee Jack Lemmon, as he felt Lemmon was a more deserving winner.

The talented actor then contributed attention-grabbing performances in *Bringing Out the Dead*, returned as Luther Stickell in *Mission: Impossible II* and *III*, contributed his deep bass voice for the character of Cobra Bubbles in *Lilo & Stitch* and played a burly cop fighting cannibal zombie hordes in *Dawn of the Dead*. A keen fitness and weight-lifting enthusiast, Rhames is also well known for his strong spiritual beliefs and benevolent attitude towards others.

## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

**BRYAN BARBER** (Written and Directed by/Co-Producer) makes the transition from award-winning music video director to first-time feature filmmaker with the release of *Idlewild*.

Barber's love for European cinema first spawned his creativity and has since helped him shape his unique vision and style. Over the past seven years, he has worked with some of the industry's biggest acts, including Missy Elliott, Destiny's Child, Kelly Clarkson and Ludacris...to name a few. Additionally, in July 2006 his directorial work on the Christina Aguilera video "Ain't No Other Man" garnered four MTV Video Music Award nominations, including Video of the Year.

At age 23, Barber began working with the group OutKast, and his video work for the song "The Whole World" went on to receive an MTV Music Video Award nomination for Best Hip-Hop Video. This partnership between director and artists would continue and help elevate Barber's profile, making him one of the most sought-after directors in the music business.

In 2003, Barber took his vision to the next level when he conceptualized and directed all the music videos off of OutKast's multiplatinum album "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below." While his work on the videos "The Way You Move" and "Roses" was widely recognized, it was the video for "Hey Ya!" which garnered Barber the most attention. In 2004, MTV awarded "Hey Ya!" with Video of the Year, Best Hip-Hop Video, Best Special Effects and Best Art Direction. Additionally, the London Cadz Awards honored Barber with Best International Video of the Year, Best Hip-Hop Video, Best Direction of a Male Artist and Video of the Year. International acclaim continued when MuchMusic, the Canadian MTV, awarded Barber with Video of the Year and Best Hip-Hop Video.

Barber has also taken on ambitious advertising campaigns, such as a project for Nokia's sponsorship of the Sugar Bowl, and Victoria's Secret "Uplift" line, for which he created a heavenly wonderland in which famous Victoria Secret Angels could frolic. Most recently, Barber participated in a promotion for Sunkist, with the contest winner securing a role in and access to a Bryan Barber video.

Distinguished by over two decades as a producer of independent and studio-based motion pictures, **CHARLES ROVEN** (Produced by) is co-founder of Atlas Entertainment and its affiliated company Atlas/Third Rail Management, which in 1999 became part of Mosaic Media Group—an integrated multimedia film, television and management company where he serves as a founding principal.

Most recently, Roven produced *Batman Begins*, directed by Christopher Nolan and featuring an all-star cast including Christian Bale, Michael Caine, Katie Holmes, Liam Neeson, Morgan Freeman, Gary Oldman and Ken Watanabe—which was number one at the U.S. box office two weeks in a row with a worldwide gross of more than \$370 million—as well as the Terry Gilliam-directed *Brothers Grimm*, starring Matt Damon and Heath Ledger. Roven also recently executive-produced for Universal Pictures *Kicking and Screaming*, starring Will Ferrell, which domestically grossed more than \$50 million. Previously, Roven produced the \$275-million-plus worldwide box-office hit *Scooby-Doo*, as well as the sequel, *Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed*.

Roven is one of the industry's most diverse filmmakers, producing many other films including *Heart Like a Wheel*, his first movie, as well as *Final Analysis*, the

Oscar®-nominated *Twelve Monkeys*, the \$200 million fantasy romance *City of Angels* and the highly acclaimed post-Gulf War tale *Three Kings*.

Roven took the reins of Atlas after an eight-year partnership with music manager Robert Cavallo, who left in 1998 to become chairman of Buena Vista Music Group and Hollywood Records. The company's success also benefited from the talents of Roven's now-deceased wife, Dawn Steel, who joined the venture from her former post as president of Columbia Pictures. Roven began his career as a talent manager, subsequently bringing an attuned sensibility of working with artists to the realm of production.

While focusing on Mosaic's feature film activities, Roven also participates in the music management division, often promoting synergy between the two groups. While overseeing production of the *Scooby-Doo* soundtrack, Roven initiated his relationship with the prolific band OutKast, utilizing their talents for the debut single in connection with the film's release. He was also heavily involved in the production of the *Scooby-Doo 2* soundtrack. In 1998, the soundtrack for the motion picture *City of Angels* earned three Grammy Awards, the coveted title of Best Selling Soundtrack of the Year, and number-one singles for Atlas/Third Rail clients The Goo Goo Dolls, Alanis Morissette and Sarah McLachlan.

**ROBERT GURALNICK** (Produced by) produced *Idlewild* for Mosaic Media Group, where he spent two years as president of production. Since January 2006, he has been working as president of Jerry Weintraub Productions at Warner Bros.

As president of production, Guralnick developed and produced projects through Mosaic's film subsidiary, Atlas Entertainment, as well as its talent management subsidiary, The Gold/Miller Company. Their recent projects include the \$275-million-plus worldwide box-office hit *Scooby-Doo* as well as the sequel, *Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed*; the Terry Gilliam-directed *The Brothers Grimm*, starring Matt Damon and Heath Ledger; and *Kicking & Screaming*, starring Will Ferrell, which domestically grossed more than \$50 million.

Prior to taking on the challenge of steering an independent film group, Guralnick spent 12 years at Warner Bros. as a senior executive, rising to executive vice-president in

the theatrical motion picture division. Guralnick's creative responsibilities included acquiring and developing material for production and envisioning a plan for its realization. His executive responsibilities included: negotiating and securing talent deals, supervising films (with budgets between \$50 million and \$100 million) from pre-production to production—through post-production—and marketing. His supervision necessitated extensive international travel both during production and release. Guralnick has produced projects at Warner Bros. with accumulated box-office receipts exceeding \$2 billion.

At Warner Bros., Guralnick worked with a veritable who's who of top actors, among them: Al Pacino, Julia Roberts, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Denzel Washington, Tom Hanks, Meg Ryan, Clint Eastwood, Jennifer Lopez, Kevin Costner, Tommy Lee Jones, Renee Russo, Whitney Houston, Keanu Reeves, Freddie Prinze Jr. and Sarah Michelle Gellar; and behind-the-camera talent including Oliver Stone, Andrew Davis, Nora Ephron, Ron Shelton, Arnon Milchan, Alan Pakula, Taylor Hackford and Raja Gosnell.

Guralnick's credits at Warner Bros. include *You've Got Mail*, *The Devil's Advocate*, *Angel Eyes*, *Collateral Damage*, *The Bodyguard*, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, *The Pelican Brief*, *Message in a Bottle*, *Tin Cup*, *JFK* and *A Perfect World*.

Before joining Warner Bros., Guralnick was executive vice-president at New World Pictures. He began his career as a film executive as vice-president of production with CBS Theatrical Films. After graduation from California Institute of the Arts, Guralnick produced and directed theatrically released documentaries including the Golden Globe-nominated *Mustang*.

**WILLIAM GREEN** (Executive Producer) is a film producer who has worked in and around the industry for the past 20 years.

As a teenager growing up in London, Green worked as a runner on numerous British and European films, most notably *Wilt* and *The Tall Guy*, during which time he landed the job as the assistant to renowned British writer and director Richard Curtis.

At 20 years old, Green thought it was time to helm his own projects and saw the birth of the music video as his opening into the industry. After producing a couple of

low-budget jobs, he was poached by the London-based production company Spidercom, where he produced and executive-produced over 500 music videos, as well as breaking into the world of television shows and commercials.

During the 1990s, Green relocated to Los Angeles and formed Strawberry Films, a cutting-edge, hungry, young production company. Over the next few years, Strawberry Films became known as a breeding ground for new and inspirational talent—with names like Guy Ritchie, Kevin Bray and noted photographer, Terry Richardson, on its radar.

At the end of the 1990s, Green took his career to the next level and became executive-producer at the LA- and London-based company The End, where he continued to harness and nurture directors such as television commercial heavy hitters Steve Ramser and Eric Efergan. There, he also oversaw projects for powerhouse artists such as The Rolling Stones, P Diddy, Bon Jovi and Oasis. During this time, Green received many accolades, such as an MTV and MVPA award for his work.

After producing the short film *James Drabinsky*, starring Mia Kirshner, Green decided that he would go freelance in 2000 in order to concentrate on some film projects that he had been developing. Two of the projects, *Hesketh Racing* and *Victor Delago Meets the King*, were bought by Universal Pictures and Working Title Films, with Green attached as the producer. Impressed by his production knowledge and experience, Universal made Green the LA producer on the 2001 film *Ali G in da House*.

In 2004, Green began working with director Bryan Barber. This winning partnership went on to create outstanding work in commercials and music videos, rewarded with a 2004 Grammy nomination for Best Music Video for the OutKast song “Hey Ya!”

Green is currently in post-production on *Live!*, a film being produced by Mosaic Media Group, starring Eva Mendes and directed by multiple-Oscar® winner Bill Guttentag.

Green continues to work on music videos and commercials, most recently for Christina Aguilera, Carlos Santana, Pepsi, Ford and the “Terry Tate” Reebok commercials with *Dodgeball* director Rawson Thurber.

**ROBIN O'HARA** and **SCOTT MACAULAY** (Executive Producers) are New York-based producers and co-presidents of the production company Forensic Films. Since their first production in 1992, they have been lauded for producing daring and provocative independent feature films and for helping to launch the careers of some of today's most interesting directors. In 1998, they were awarded an Independent Spirit Award for their producing work in independent film.

Most recently, Macaulay and O'Hara produced James Ponsoldt's debut feature, *Off the Black*, starring Nick Nolte, Trevor Morgan and Timothy Hutton. The film premiered at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival and will be released theatrically by Think Film in fall 2006. Also in 2006, Forensic executive-produced two films: Manuel Pradal's *A Crime*, for the French production company ARP—which stars Emmanuelle Béart, Harvey Keitel and Norman Reedus—and *The Babysitters*, David Ross's debut film starring John Leguizamo and Cynthia Nixon.

Previously, Macaulay and O'Hara executive-produced Alice Wu's debut feature, *Saving Face*, which was released in 2005 by Sony Classics. They also produced Peter Sollett's debut film, *Raising Victor Vargas*, which received its international premiere at the Cannes Film Festival and its American premiere at the Sundance Film Festival and was released by Samuel Goldwyn/Fireworks Pictures. *Raising Victor Vargas* received five Independent Spirit Award nominations including Best Feature and Best Director and was selected by *The New York Times* as one of the 10 best films of the year.

Among the duo's other credits as producers are a number of prize-winning films including Tom Noonan's *What Happened Was...*, their first feature which was executive-produced by Ted Hope, James Schamus and Good Machine (Sundance Grand Jury Prize and Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award); Frank Whaley's *Joe the King* (Sundance Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award); Harmony Korine's *Gummo* (FIPRESCI Award, Venice Film Festival); and Jesse Peretz's *First Love, Last Rites* (FIPRESCI Award, Rotterdam Film Festival). Other producing credits include Jesse Peretz's comedy *The Château*; Harmony Korine's *Julien Donkey-Boy*, the first American feature produced under the "Dogma '95" manifesto; and John Leguizamo's directorial debut, *Undeclared*, for HBO Films.

Forensic Films frequently acts as an American co-producer of various international productions. Recently, Forensic partnered on two films by Olivier Assayas,

*Clean* and *Demonlover*, both of which premiered in competition in Cannes and are distributed in the States by Palm Pictures.

Separately, O'Hara has numerous producing and line-producing credits for such directors as Alain Resnais, Chantal Akerman, Alain Berliner, Michael Almereyda and Zbigniew Rybczynski. Macaulay's other credits include associate-producing Raoul Ruiz's feature *The Golden Boat* for producer James Schamus. He is on the Advisory Committee of both the Toronto Film Festival Industry Center and the Rotterdam Film Festival's Cinemart. In addition to producing, Macaulay is the founder and editor of *Filmmaker Magazine*, a national quarterly devoted to American independent film published by the Independent Feature Project.

With a global body of work, **PASCAL RABAUD** (Director of Photography) has been the cinematographer of several critically acclaimed films, including *Paris, je t'aime*; *Cinévardefoto*; *Bossa Nova*; *Premier jour de printemps*; and *Krim*. *Idlewild* represents Rabaud's second North American full-length feature, following his work on *The End of Violence*, which starred Gabriel Byrne in 1997.

After studying architecture at Cranbrook, the world-renowned art and design school in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, **CHARLES BREEN** (Production Designer) moved to California to pursue his career.

Once in Los Angeles, he quickly gravitated to the film industry and received his first big break working as a set designer for Universal. As a set designer and assistant art director, he received the opportunity to work with some of the best directors in Hollywood—including Ridley Scott, Mike Nichols and Richard Attenborough. As an art director, he worked with Barry Levinson on *Disclosure*, Clint Eastwood on *The Bridges of Madison County* and William Friedkin on *Jade*.

As a production designer, Breen designed the controversial, yet critically acclaimed film, *Your Friends & Neighbors*, for director Neil LaBute and starring Jason Patric, Ben Stiller, Aaron Eckhart, Catherine Keener, Amy Brenneman and Nastassja Kinski. He also worked with LaBute on *Nurse Betty*, starring Renée Zellweger, Morgan Freeman and Greg Kinnear.

Breen has recently worked on a variety of films, including the comedy *Boat Trip*, directed by Mort Nathan and starring Cuba Gooding Jr., which was filmed entirely on location in Germany, Greece and the Mediterranean. He also designed the effects-driven thriller *Eight Legged Freaks* for Warner Bros., produced by Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin, as well as the commercially successful teen comedy *A Cinderella Story*, starring Hilary Duff.

He has also worked with director Bryan Barber on several music videos, including Christina Aguilera's "Ain't No Other Man" and Faith Evans' "Mesmerized."

Breen was nominated for an Emmy for Best Art Direction for HBO's *Weapons of Mass Distraction*. He is also a member of the art directors branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and sits on its executive committee.

**ERIKA CONNER** (Co-Producer) says she always had an out-of-the-box idea that she wanted to do with OutKast. So, she introduced OutKast and Bryan Barber to Mosaic and HBO. At the time, she was Mosaic Media Group's vice president of urban film.

At Mosaic, she worked closely with Mosaic's Charles Roven, managing the day-to-day operations and the development and production of all projects under the Urban Film Division.

Prior to joining Mosaic, Conner was director of film development for Naaila Entertainment, the production banner of video director Hype Williams.

**MICHAEL "BLUE" WILLIAMS** (Co-Producer), president & CEO of Family Tree Entertainment, has solidified his place as one of the music industry's elite power brokers with over a decade of experience in the business. Running his own management company since 1998, Williams' impressive client experience includes Grammy Award-winning group OutKast, superstar Nick Cannon, soulful singer Macy Gray, rapper Trina, R&B singers Case, Lyfe Jennings, Jagged Edge, Blu Cantrell, K-Ci & JoJo of Jodeci, Faith Evans and Monica, just to name a few.

Born and raised in the Bronx, this 34-year-old Kennedy High School product made his decision to pursue a career in music at a very young age, developing his shrewd

business sense through humble beginnings as a roadie for multiplatinum R&B group Jodeci. Eventually, Williams moved on to work with superstar Queen Latifah as president of her Flavor Unit management team before opening his own management company, Family Tree Entertainment, in 1997.

With headquarters in Times Square, and offices in Los Angeles and Atlanta, Williams has moved through the ranks from manager to a respected mogul. Most recognized as the catalyst behind OutKast's success—serving as the group's sole manager to date since 1996—Williams has generated over a quarter billion dollars in record sales for his clients; secured multimillion dollar endorsement deals with major corporations, negotiated artist-owned label deals through the majors, and has paved the path to Hollywood in the form of movie roles and lucrative television deals, amongst many others.

Williams not only has a proven track record as an aggressive entrepreneur who can generate income for his artists and major corporations through his network, but he is also someone who is highly regarded within the industry for his out-of-the-box thinking and ability to make things happen. From steering the careers of mega entertainers to unveiling his own exotic car dealership, Luxury Toy South, in Atlanta during spring 2006, Williams has expanded his Family Tree brand to include a division of producer management, as well as a film and television division. With a number of shows in development, including a game show and a tribute to Rosa Parks to be broadcast on primetime television, nothing is out of reach for this sharp businessman.

Williams is regularly quoted by the media as an expert voice for entertainment industry issues and may often be seen as a keynote speaker at major business conferences and panels throughout the country.

Film editor **ANNE GOURSAUD**'s **ACE** (Edited by) work dates back to the early '80s in such films as *The Night the Lights Went out in Georgia*, *One From the Heart*, *The Outsiders* and *American Dreamer*. Goursaud's most recent work includes *Kto nigdy nie zyl*, *Streets of Legend*, *Lost Souls* and *San tiao ren*.

Goursaud has also worked as a film director. Her credits include *Love in Paris*, *Red Shoe Diaries 6: How I Met My Husband*, *Poison Ivy II* and *Embrace of the Vampire*.

**JOHN DEBNEY** (Music Score by) earned an Academy Award® nomination for his score in Mel Gibson's film phenomenon *The Passion of the Christ*. Debney's music will be heard later this year in *Barnyard* and *Everyone's Hero*; and in 2007, it will be heard in *Sin City 2* and *Evan Almighty*.

Debney has worked repeatedly with several noted directors, including Garry Marshall on *The Princess Diaries*, *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement* and *Raising Helen*; Robert Rodriguez on *Spy Kids*, *Spy Kids 2: Island of Lost Dreams*, *Sin City* and *The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl 3-D*; Jon Favreau on *Elf* and *Zathura*; and Tom Shadyac on *Liar Liar*, *Dragonfly* and *Bruce Almighty*.

His extensive film credits include *The Pacifier*, *Swimfan*, *The Scorpion King*, *Snow Dogs*, *Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius*, *Scary Movie 2*, *Cats & Dogs*, *Heartbreakers*, *The Emperor's New Groove*, *End of Days*, *Inspector Gadget*, *Paulie*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, *The Relic*, *Little Giants* and *Hocus Pocus*, to name but a few.

Debney's classical training as a composer has led him to emphasize live performance. He has conducted some of the world's greatest orchestras performing his original works and, most recently, enlisted master violinist Joshua Bell to perform on his score for *Dreamer: Inspired by a True Story* and trumpet legend Arturo Sandoval for the score to *Idlewild*. Following the success of *The Passion of the Christ* film, he premiered "The Passion of the Christ Symphony" in Rome, featuring an 83-person choir and 96-piece orchestra.

In recognition of his many accomplishments, Debney, only in his forties, received ASCAP's prestigious Henry Mancini Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005.

Born in Germany, and raised in Washington, D.C. and New York City, **HINTON BATTLE**'s (Choreographer) tremendous talent became apparent at the early age of nine. After three years of studying ballet at the Jones & Haywood School of Ballet, he received a scholarship to the School of American Ballet, under the legendary George Balanchine, where he studied till the age of 15.

At the age of 15, Battle found himself on Broadway playing the Scarecrow in the historic Broadway musical *The Wiz*.

Battle has the honor to have been the first African American to have received three Antoinette Perry Tony Awards for his work in the Broadway Shows *Sophisticated Ladies* (1981), *The Tap Dance Kid* (1984) and *Miss Saigon* (1992). He has also received the NAACP Award and the Fred Astaire Award for his work in *The Tap Dance Kid*. Other Broadway shows Battle has starred in include *Dancin'*, *Dreamgirls* and *Chicago* as Billy Flynn. He received rave reviews as Coalhouse Walker, Jr. in the Chicago production of *Ragtime*, which garnered him an Ira Aldridge Award.

Battle served as associate choreographer on both the 65<sup>th</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> *Annual Academy Awards*®. He received great notices for his work as an actor and choreographer on the feature film *Foreign Student*. The following year, Battle wrote, directed and choreographed *712 Cathedral* for WJZ-TV. He has also choreographed for Coca-Cola and Disney; the sitcoms *Fired Up*, *Sister, Sister*, *The Trouble With Normal*, *Andy Richter Controls the Universe*, Warner Bros.' network promos; *The Ella Fitzgerald Tribute*; and prepared recording artists for music videos and touring.

In 1995, Battle performed Elton John's nominated song *Circle of Life* on the 67<sup>th</sup> *Annual Academy Awards*®. With Otis Sallid, Battle developed his one-man show, *Shine*, for the 1997 HBO Comedy Festival—where he received tremendous attention as a comic force. Battle also performed on *The Kennedy Center 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special*. Battle narrated The Kennedy Center's children's ballet, *Pepito's Story*.

As an actor, Battle starred opposite Shirley MacLaine, Joan Collins, Debbie Reynolds and Elizabeth Taylor in the ABC television special *These Old Broads* and choreographed and starred as Bill "Bojangles" Robinson in *Child Star: The Shirley Temple Story* for ABC. He also had the pleasure of playing Sweet, the evil dance master in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Battle will be acting in the upcoming Sony musical feature *Dreamgirls*.

In-demand designer **SHAWN BARTON** (Costume Designer) has worked on such features as *Friday*, *Jane Street*, *Love Jones*, *In Too Deep*, *Perfume*, *A Man Apart*, *Soul Plane* and, most recently, *ATL*. Barton's television credits include work on *Queens Supreme*, which starred Annabella Sciorra, Oliver Platt and Robert Loggia.

—*idlewild*—