

Black STARZ Present 'Unstoppable'

Written by Robert ID829

Friday, 04 February 2005 07:36 -

Black STARZ! will present the Denver premiere screening of its original documentary, "UNSTOPPABLE: A Conversation with Melvin Van Peebles, Gordon Parks and Ossie Davis" in cooperation with Comcast Cable, the Starz Denver Pan African Film Festival and NAMIC Denver, Inc. The screening will be held at 6:45 p.m. Tuesday, February 8 at the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Theater in Denver.

"UNSTOPPABLE: A Conversation with Melvin Van Peebles, Gordon Parks and Ossie Davis" will premiere on Black STARZ! at 8 p.m. (ET/PT) on Sunday, February 13.

"Today's sad news of the death of Ossie Davis makes us all so much more grateful for the chance we had to visit with him and record his thoughts and memories about his prolific career for our documentary "UNSTOPPABLE: A Conversation with Melvin Van Peebles, Gordon Parks and Ossie Davis,"" said Stephan Shelanski, senior vice president, programming and acquisitions, with Starz Entertainment Group. "Our scheduled premieres in Denver and New York will go on with added poignancy as a tribute to his career and those of his colleagues in the African American film making community."

"We are excited to join with Black STARZ! to present this local premiere screening of "UNSTOPPABLE: A Conversation with Melvin Van Peebles, Gordon Parks and Ossie Davis" to honor these legendary African American filmmakers," said Jill Stark, vice president and general manager of Comcast Denver. "This program is an example of the exemplary programming lineup of the Starz Entertainment Group channels that we are pleased to offer our customers."

"UNSTOPPABLE: A Conversation with Melvin Van Peebles, Gordon Parks and Ossie Davis" provides a candid and revealing look at the first African Americans to direct Hollywood features -- Melvin Van Peebles ("Sweet Sweetbacks" Baadasssss Song," "Classified X"), Gordon Parks ("The Learning Tree," "Shaft") and Ossie Davis ("Cotton Comes to Harlem"). Van Peebles, Parks and Davis came together for the first time on screen and discuss a myriad of issues surrounding their distinguished careers, including their struggles and triumphs.

Also featured in the special are testimonials from actor/writer/director Reginald Hudlin, director Julie Dash, actress/director Ruby Dee, writer/filmmaker Nelson George, and actor/director Mario Van Peebles who comment on the trio's influence on their careers, our culture and society.

"UNSTOPPABLE: A Conversation with Melvin Van Peebles, Gordon Parks and Ossie Davis" is

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directed by John Lewis who serves as producer with Hudlin. Hudlin ("House Party," "Boomerang," "Bebe's Kids") moderates the conversation.

Van Peebles made his feature film debut in 1967 as the director, writer and composer of "The Story of a Three Day Pass." In 1971, he starred in, wrote, produced directed, financed and distributed the ground-breaking "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song," one of the highest-grossing independent films at the time. The film ushered in a new era of Black independent filmmaking and many proclaimed Van Peebles the godfather of African American cinema.

His other directing credits include "The Watermelon Man" (1970) and "Don't Play Us Cheap" (1973).

In addition, he wrote the Tony Award(R) nominated Broadway musical "Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death," and "Classified X," a Black STARZ! premiere.

Parks, an acclaimed photographer for Life magazine turned to directing films in 1969. When he directed, wrote and composed the score for "The Learning Tree," he became the first African American director to helm a major studio film.

His next film "Shaft" (1971) starring Richard Roundtree was a huge box office success and would signal the beginning of the blaxploitation genre.

Other film credits include the sequel "Shaft's Big Score" (1972), "The Super Cops" (1974) and "Leadbelly" (1976).

Parks is the author of a number of books and was a founder of Essence magazine.

Davis, a highly regarded performer, distinguished himself as an actor, director, producer, writer and historian. He first appeared on screen in 1950 in "No Way Out" with Sidney Poitier and Ruby Dee, who later became his wife. He directed and co-wrote "Cotton Comes to Harlem" (1970). Other directing credits include "Black Girl" (1972), "Gordon's War" (1973) and "Countdown at Kusini" (1976). His career has spanned 65 years and 20 films including, "Grumpy Old Men," "Do the Right Thing," "Miss Evers' Boys" and "Malcolm X" to name a few.