



Tyler Perry's
DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN
THE MOVIE

Starring
Kimberly Elise
Steve Harris
Shemar Moore
Tamara Taylor
Lisa Marcos
Tiffany Evans

and
Cicely Tyson

and introducing
Tyler Perry

Rating: PG-13 (for drug content, thematic elements, crude sexual references, and some violence)

Running time: 116 mins.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Filled with a mix of comedy and drama the film *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* is based on the immensely popular play of the same name written by Tyler Perry. The story focuses on Helen McCarter (Kimberly Elise), who has seemingly had the perfect life with husband Charles McCarter (Steve Harris). Over the years, Helen has been a faithful and loving wife, while Charles built a successful and lucrative career as a prominent Atlanta attorney. They wear the latest fashions and drive the nicest cars. They live on an expansive estate complete with an extravagant mansion, swimming pool, tennis court and all the trappings of wealth – a little piece of paradise away from the city. They have all the possessions one could want. However, on the eve of their 18th wedding anniversary

Helen's paradise begins to crumble as Charles announces that he wants a divorce. He abruptly -- and literally -- tosses Helen out of the mansion to make room for the other woman.

With all of her belongings packed in a moving van, Helen starts on her journey to put the pieces of her life back together. Through the assistance of her family, faith, and a twist of fate, Helen finds the strength and empowerment she needs to get control of her circumstances. She also finds that the tragic events of her life soon become comic, especially with the help -- mostly unsolicited -- of pot-smoking, gun-toting, and much beloved, grandmother figure Madea (Tyler Perry).

Director Darren Grant brings Tyler Perry's vision to screen by intricately weaving together drama and comedy to portray the universal experience of redemption and forgiveness, broken hearts and new-found love, recovery, inner strength and the importance of family and faith as revealed through a cast of colorful and often familiar characters.

Lions Gate Films presents DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN directed by Darren Grant, based on the play by Tyler Perry. Screenplay by Tyler Perry. The producers are Tyler Perry and Reuben Cannon. The co-producer is Mike Upton. The director of photography is David Claessen, the production designer is Ina Mayhew, and the editor is Terilyn A. Shropshire. The costume designer is Keith Lewis. DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN stars Kimberly Elise, Steve Harris, Tyler Perry, Cicely Tyson, Shemar Moore, Tamara Taylor and Lisa Marcos.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN brings to the screen the zesty storytelling, larger-than-life characters, and uplifting vision that have made Tyler Perry a phenomenon in American urban theater. Adapted by Perry from his 2000 play of the same name, DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN is quintessential Perry: the story of a woman who, having been grievously wronged by her husband, must find a way to heal her wounds and move on with her life. DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN follows its heroine's journey from heartbreak and vengefulness to recovery and renewal, blending intense emotional drama with raucous comedy and soaring gospel music. It is a buoyant portrait of African-American life and culture, and a film that speaks to anyone who has had to grapple with betrayal and hurt at the hands of those they love.

It was Tyler Perry's own experience with pain and unresolved grief that led him to take up writing in his late teens. A series of letters he wrote to himself about his traumatic childhood evolved into his first musical play, "I Know I've Been Changed." A portrait of two adult survivors of child abuse, the play established the template for Perry's subsequent work, creating a colorful, unpretentious milieu around serious subject matter. In writing that play and its successors, Perry drew inspiration from his hometown, New Orleans, and the people he knew there. As the playwright explains, "The great thing about growing up in New Orleans is you have a backdrop. You can't write some of the scenes that I saw growing up, with people who are absolutely hilarious. The music aspect comes from my childhood, too. I could walk on Bourbon Street, from one end to the other, and hear all kinds of music."

Armed with the script of his play, Perry took his savings of \$12,000 and moved to Atlanta, where he staged the first production of “I Know I’ve Been Changed” in 1992. His hopes of quick success evaporated after the first weekend drew just thirty people, but Perry persevered. Over the years, he produced the play in small Southern theaters, serving as director, stage manager and makeup artist as well as actor, writer and composer. Each production would eat up Perry’s savings, and the playwright found himself homeless more than once.

Perry was about to give up when in 1998, he was persuaded to mount one final run of “I Know I’ve Been Changed” at the House of Blues, a converted church in downtown Atlanta. The entire eight-night engagement sold out, and Perry was on his way to becoming a genuine sensation. “I Know I’ve Been Changed” toured the country to rapturous audiences, and was followed by six more plays. These include “I Can Do Bad All by Myself,” which introduced pistol-packing, pot-smoking grandma Madea, played by Perry in dress, wig, cat’s-eye glasses and ample padding. Madea was an instant sensation, and demand was so great that Perry reprised the character for “Diary of a Mad Black Woman” and two more plays.

“Madea is a term short for ‘mother dear,’” Perry explains. “Madea was actually a lady in the neighborhood – she’d stay on all the kids, and if somebody was doing something wrong, she would call the parents. The character Madea is a cross between my mother and my aunt and the ladies in the neighborhood.”

To date, Perry has independently written seven plays, producing, directing and starring in five of them. His works have grossed over \$75 million and have set box office records at major theaters in over a dozen cities, including New York’s Beacon and Los Angeles’ Kodak Theater. Performances draw 20,000 to 30,000 people a week, and Perry’s e-mail list numbers some 400,000 members. DVDs and videotapes of his plays have sold millions of copies at theaters and by mail order.

Perry has also written two plays for Dallas’ Bishop T.D. Jakes, including a 1999 stage adaptation of Jakes’ best-selling book “Woman, Thou Art Loosed.” In 2003, a film version went before the cameras, bringing Perry into contact with producer Reuben Cannon. Given Perry’s sellout tours and ever-growing audience, it was clear that the time was right to adapt Perry’s work for the screen. Perry felt DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN was the place to start: it is a classic tale of a woman scorned, but with a twist that raises the stakes for its heroine, Helen McCarter.

As Perry describes it, “It’s an age old story: boy meets girl, they fall in love, they get married and boy leaves girl. I thought, what happens if something happens to the boy? And his wife has to come back and take care of him after he’s really done some things to really make it a bad situation and really make her mad. It asks the question: how much will you take? Where is your breaking point? When I started the script, it just flowed because there was so much more that these characters wanted to say.”

By January of 2004, Perry had completed the screenplay, which he gave to Cannon. “Tyler has that independent spirit,” Cannon notes. “He is not one to wait around for approval or permission to produce something. I tend to have that same spirit. So we connected and committed to making the film.”

The search for a director led producers Cannon and Perry to Darren R. Grant, an award-winning helmer of music videos and commercials. Among Grant’s 130 video credits are clips for Destiny’s Child, Missy Elliott, Jay-Z, Jewel, and Busta Rhymes. Recalls Perry, “When they sent me Darren’s reel, I couldn’t stop watching it. Visually it was just incredible. His eye and his attention to detail are stunning - it’s like looking at the different petals in a rose when you watch one of his videos.”

Grant had been looking for an appropriate project to make his feature directorial debut. Comments the filmmaker, “I’ve read a lot of scripts, and there aren’t many of them that really move me. DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN moved me - it made me cry, it made me laugh. Because it was a small project with an independent spirit, we had the freedom to make it special, to mix drama and comedy.”

Though not a high-profile project, DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN attracted an exceptional cast, which includes Kimberly Elise (THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE), Emmy Award nominee Steve Harris (“The Practice”) and Academy Award® nominee and multiple Emmy Award winner Cicely Tyson (SOUNDER, “The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman”). Says Cannon, whose began his film career as a casting director, “My belief is that with good material you can always approach talent. This script is exceptional and whenever we sent it out, there was a response. A response that grew even stronger once the actors had a chance to meet with Tyler and Darren Grant.”

Perry himself plays three roles: the indomitable Madea, who is Helen’s grandma; Uncle Joe, Madea’s slovenly brother; and Brian, Helen’s cousin.

Elise, who starred in the screen version of WOMAN THOU ART LOOSED, was the filmmakers’ first choice to play Helen McCarter. Remarks Perry, “She is such a powerful actor; her eyes tell so many stories.”

The actress appreciated the complexity of her character and the evolution she undergoes. “I thought that Helen had such a fantastic journey, an arc that was true to real life and human experience,” Elise comments. “Helen is sort of blind to her own self, her own beauty and strength. She married very young and never really defined herself as an individual human being. So you watch this woman, who is suddenly thrust into a different reality, try to put the pieces together and create herself as her own person.”

Finding the right actor to portray Helen’s husband, the cheating Charles McCarter, was a bigger challenge – one that was resolved with a stroke of luck. After meeting with several candidates, producer Cannon found himself seated next to Steve Harris on a flight from Las Vegas to Los Angeles. Cannon phoned Perry upon arriving in L.A., and a meeting was arranged. Recalls Perry, “When Steve came in and sat down with me, he told me things about Charles McCarter that I didn’t even realize.”

DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN marks the first screen role for celebrated actress Cicely Tyson in over ten years. The actress acknowledges that she wasn’t familiar with the play or Perry when she received the screenplay. “I read the script. I mentioned it to a few people, and everyone I spoke to was aware of the play and aware of Tyler’s genius,” Tyson recalls. She adds, “And I have wanted to work with Kimberly from the moment I first saw her.”

DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN began filming in Atlanta on July 21, 2004. Rounding out the principal cast are Shemar Moore as Orlando, Helen’s respectful suitor; Tamara Taylor as Debrah, Helen’s childhood friend and Brian’s wife, who has sunk into drug addiction; and Lisa Marcos as Brenda, Charles’ mistress.

Grant enlisted director of photography David Claessen, an Amsterdam native who began his career in Europe, where he worked with legendary cinematographers Henri Aleken (Cocteau’s BEAUTY AND THE BEAST) and Sacha Vierny (Resnais’ LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD). Grant and Claessen first met in the early 90s, and Claessen has since shot many of Grant’s music videos. Says Claessen, “Darren’s an extremely bright man, very good at visualizing emotion on the screen.”

Claessen and Grant referenced dramas in devising the film’s visual scheme. “We talked about movies like UNFAITHFUL and AMERICAN BEAUTY - films that have a

human drama, which this movie has. We added a little bit of magic to the world where this story unfolds. With the visuals, we used different little techniques to keep the look realistic, but not in the arbitrary way we call ‘realism,’” Claessen explains. “The idea was to have people be connected to the story, yet at the same time feel that this is a special world. Because maybe that uplifts people, like a church. A church is an arbitrary place where we create an atmosphere that's magical.”

One of the film’s most astonishing locations is the home of Helen and Charles McCarter – played by Tyler Perry’s real life home, Avec Chateau, located in an Atlanta suburb. As one of the film’s producers, Perry knew that loaning out his home would aid the film’s ledger sheet. But he had no idea what he was in for when the production took up residence. “It was like a tribe had moved into every room of my house and there was something going on from end to end! Dumbest thing I’ve ever done,” he laughs.

Costume designer Keith Lewis outfitted Perry for his three separate roles, a task that was made easier by the actor/writer’s mastery of the characters. “It was really just a question of adapting what Tyler’s done on stage for the film,” remarks Lewis. “For *Madea*, we had three sets of body pads made, because of the heat in Atlanta. The key thing was to make sure that the pads read naturally, and didn’t look like body pads. We had to make sure that the breasts had the right swing and that Tyler was comfortable enough in them that he could move freely without being obstructed.”

Perry enjoyed reprising the character of Uncle Joe, who made his debut in “I Know I’ve Been Changed.” “It was good to play Joe again because he’s been in *Madea*’s shadow for all of these years. Getting an opportunity to bring him back and put him and *Madea* together was pretty darn awesome,” the writer/actor enthuses. He adds that the role of Brian, who has all but given up on his drug-addicted wife, offered a different set of challenges. “I’m a person that likes to hide behind a character. *Madea* and Joe are easy - I can put the makeup on and become them. But when I’m exposed and I have to be myself, it’s pretty interesting.”

It is that combination of emotional revelation with no-holds-barred comedy that makes Perry’s work unique, and has won him one of the most devoted audiences in contemporary theater. *DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN* expands on the themes of Perry’s play, taking the story and its characters in new directions. Says director Grant, “I think the audience that loved the play is going to love this too. There are so many other layers and characters, and new turns that happen in the story.”

Comments Elise, “There are so many unique things about this film. It is a blend of heavy drama and broad comedy, and that’s brave and interesting. The story revolves around African-Americans, but it’s a universal story. Helen’s just like anybody else - she’s a human being who wants to be loved, and wants to love someone back. She wants to have respect and a place in the world.”

Perry agrees. “I think this is a movie for everybody. It doesn’t matter what race. Anyone in the world, who knows love, hurt, pain, and needs to know how to get over it.”

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Darren R. Grant (Director)

Director Darren R. Grant has a catalogue of over 130 music videos and a cluster of award-winning commercials. Grant has been recognized by record and film company

executives for his innate ability to capture and present aspects of an artist's personality that hadn't been truly recognized before on film. This ability has made him one of the most viable and sought after directors in the Pop, R&B and Hip-Hop music video markets.

Grant has worked such notable entertainers as Jay Z, Destiny's Child, Jermaine Dupri, Mya, TI, Anthony Hamilton, Wyclef Jean, Brian McKnight, Busta Rhymes, Monica, Jermaine Dupri, Jaheim, Jewel, Missy Elliot and the late Aaliyah.

Grant was introduced to the film industry at an early age by his mother Patsy Hilbert, who was an independent filmmaker. A vital part of the Seattle film scene, Hilbert wrote and directed several award-winning small films, and was part of several popular commercial campaigns in that city. After graduating high school Darren headed to San Diego State University in a VW bug he had purchased for \$300. Three hours into the trip the car's engine blew. Grant hopped on a bus and arrived with an undeclared major at SDSU. Two years later he transferred to the Los Angeles-based Cal State Northridge where he earned his BA and completed his formal education in film.

He has been awarded the Video Music Award for R&B Video of the year for Destiny Child's video for "Survivor"; the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Music Video for "Stomp" with Kirk Franklin; Billboard Music Video Awards for Best Dance new Artist Clip and Best R&B New Artist Clip for the Craig David video "Fill Me In"; and the Music Video Production Association Award for Adult Contemporary Video of the Year for Jewel's "Standing Still" video.

DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN marks Grant's feature film directorial debut.

Tyler Perry (Brian, Madea, Joe, Producer, Writer, Composer)

Within a six-year span, Tyler Perry went from being homeless to selling out theaters wherever he goes. He has become America's most successful young playwright, grossing, \$75,000,000 in box office with seven productions, five in which he also acted, directed, and produced.

It all began when the New Orleans native moved to Atlanta with \$12,000 to put on a production of "I Know I have Been Changed," a stage play about adult survivors of child abuse based on a series of letters Perry wrote as a catharsis for his own childhood pain.

Only 30 people showed up for the entire weekend of shows. However, one member of the audience became an investor in the show. The show continued to fail over and over again. Over the following six years Perry found himself homeless on several occasions. He continued to hold on to his faith in God and to the belief that one day it would all come out all right.

Then came to a point where he reluctantly decided to do one more show. That one faithful decision changed his life forever.

In the summer of 1998, what was supposed to be the final production of "I Know I've Been Changed" opened at the House of Blues in Atlanta and sold out eight times over.

The show moved to the prestigious Fox Theater where it sold out 9,000 seats for two shows.

After seeing the production of the show in Dallas, Bishop T.D. Jakes asked Perry to help write the production of “Woman Thou Art Loosed,” based on Jakes’ book of the same name. With Jakes’ blessing, he rewrote, produced and directed the show which went on to gross over \$5 million in five months. SRO crowds followed with productions in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Miami and D.C.

Perry next wrote “I Can Do Bad All By Myself.” This play marked the first appearance of one of his most beloved characters, Madea, the large-bosomed, gun-toting, brutally honest grandmother figure who says whatever she wants whenever she wants. According to Perry, the character is based on his mother and one of his aunts.

Perry’s other works, which include “Behind Closed Doors,” “Diary of a Mad Black Woman,” “Madea’s Family Reunion,” and “Madea’s Class Reunion” sold out in major markets across the country. He holds box office records at Los Angeles’ Kodak Theater and New York’s Beacon Theater.

Perry’s latest plays, “Meet the Browns” and “Why Did I Get Married,” began touring last year.

Reuben Cannon (Producer)

Producer Reuben Cannon’s background in film and television is in casting. In these roles he has worked with some of the biggest names in film and TV, including Bruce Willis, Oprah Winfrey, Will Smith, Spike Lee and Whoopi Goldberg.

After attending Southeast City College in Chicago, Cannon moved to Los Angeles. Cannon began his career in Hollywood in the mailroom at Universal Studios. This position led to him becoming a casting director and then he served as head of television casting at Warner Brothers.

Some of Cannon’s producing credits include last year’s WOMAN THOU ART LOOSED, based on the book by Bishop T.D. Jakes; LOVE DON’T COST A THING with Nick Cannon; DANCING IN SEPTEMBER; DOWN IN THE DELTA, directed by Maya Angelou; Spike Lee’s GET ON THE BUS; and THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE with Oprah Winfrey and Cicely Tyson.

Among his casting credits are JOHNSON FAMILY VACATION, DELIVER US FROM EVA, THE BROTHERS, THE COLOR PURPLE, WHY DO FOOLS FALL IN LOVE, A SOLDIER STORY, WHATS LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?, and THE JOSEPHINE BAKER STORY, and “The Bernie Mac Show”.

Cannon has received an Honorary Doctorate of Human Letters from Morehouse College. His work was recognized at the 2002 NAACP Image Awards when Daimler/Chrysler honored him with the Behind the Lens Award for his contributions to both film and TV.

Mike Upton (Co-Producer)

Since receiving his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Texas at Austin, Mike Upton has worn a variety of hats in the film world. He has served as executive producer, unit production manager, associate producer, line producer, 1st assistant director and co-producer on range of projects.

His most recent credits include the upcoming features DOWN IN THE VALLEY with Edward Norton and Bruce Dern, and HAPPY ENDINGS with Laura Dern, Tom Arnold and Maggie Gyllenhaal. Other credits include BOAT TRIP; LEPRECHAUN: BACK IN THA HOOD; FEAR OF FLYING; MEN IN WHITE; CASPER: A SPIRITED BEGINNING; CARNOSAUR 2; MANHUNT; and BLACK ROSE OF HARLEM.

Upton also served as the Head of Studio Operations for Concorde/New Horizons from 1992-1996.

David Claessen (Director of Photography)

In the late 1970's, David Claessen was first introduced into the film industry in his native Amsterdam. In the 80's he worked in the vast television documentary market in Europe for which he traveled all over the globe shooting film for the Dutch, French and British Television.

Later Claessen was given the opportunity to work as a camera operator under the legendary French cameramen Henri Alekan (Jean Cocteau's BEAUTY AND THE BEAST; William Wyler's ROMAN HOLIDAY and Wim Wenders' WINGS OF DESIRE) and Sacha Vierny (Resnais' HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR and LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD; and Peter Greenaway's THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE & HER LOVER).

Claessen first worked as a feature film director of photography on the film HAUTE MER for Argentinean director Eduardo Cozarinsky. Claessen's other credits as a DP include THE TELEPHONE with Whoopi Goldberg; GETTING IN with Matthew Perry and Calista Flockhart; EVERY DOG HAS ITS DAY, for which he received the Kodak Award for Best Cinematography; and THE ROSA PARKS STORY for director Julie Dash.

With DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN Claessen reunites with director Darren Grant with whom he has collaborated for years in the commercial music video market.

Terilyn A. Shropshire (Editor)

Terilyn A. Shropshire has most recently worked on REDEMPTION: THE STAN TOOKIE WILLIAMS STORY with director Vondie Curtis-Hall. Her other credits include BIKER BOYZ with Lawrence Fishburne and Derek Luke and produced by Gina Prince-Blythewood with whom Shropshire also worked on LOVE & BASKETBALL, NEVER GET OUTTA THE BOAT, LUMINARIAS and THE JOYRIDERS. Shropshire has also worked on two films, EVE'S BAYOU and THE CAVEMAN'S VALENTINE with director Kasi Lemons.

Shropshire was recognized for work with an Emmy nomination for the Outstanding Multi-Camera Picture Editing for a Miniseries, Movie or a Special award for her part in the Sidney Poitier tribute aired at the 74th Academy Awards.

Keith Lewis (Costume Designer)

Keith Lewis received his graduate degree from the North Carolina School of the Arts. He began his career designing costumes in theater with work on such shows as “The Miracle Worker,” “Hamlet,” “Chicago,” “1940’s Radio Hour,” “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum” and “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.”

Lewis served as Wardrobe Supervisor on the films YOUNG GUNS, GRUMPY OLD MEN, GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE and HBO Films’ BOYCOTT.

He worked as the costume designer for MEN AT WORK with brothers Emilio Estevez and Charlie Sheen, UNSHACKLED with Morgan Freeman and FIRST OFFENSE with Joan Severance and Corbin Bernsen.

In addition to his design work, Lewis has returned to the North Carolina School of the Arts to serve as an instructor and guest designer. He has also been the Resident Costume Designer and Instructor at East Carolina University.

Bill Johnson (Specialty Make-Up)

Bill “Splat” Johnson has been working in the film industry for over 20 years. He began his make-up skills working in super eight features back in the late seventies. He then moved on to creating effects for student films at the University of Georgia. After graduating from college with a BFA in graphic design, he was accepted in Dick Smith’s Advanced Professional Make Up Course. It was during his enrollment that he got his first major make-up effects job, doing SLEEPAWAY CAMPS 2 & 3. He has now worked on over 30 movies including THE PATRIOT, EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS, HOODLUM, IN DREAMS, and OCTOBER SKY.

In addition to his make-up effects talents, Johnson is also a graphic designer with the Horror Channel and has moved into directing some of his own horror projects.

Patrice Coleman (Make-Up Artist)

While studying to get her BA degree in Psychology from Spelman College in Atlanta, Patrice Coleman practiced make-up as a hobby. Soon after college her hobby proved to be a valid means of support and her career began.

She has worked with a wide range of well-regarded producers, photographers and filmmakers. Among her clients are NBC, CNN, HBO, TNT, Disney, VH1, MTV, BET, Arista Records and SO SO Def Records. Her list of entertainers includes Queen Latifah, DaBrat, Dianne Weist, Indigo Girls, Vivica A Foxx, Babbie Mason, Samuel L. Jackson and Kenny Rogers.

She has also done commercial and print ads for McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Coors, Bell South, General Motors, Dark & Lovely, Wal-Mart and the Georgia Lottery.

Coleman's film credits include STROKE OF GENIUS, BIG FISH, THE FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS, DRUMLINE, WE WERE SOLDIERS ONCE... AND YOUNG, FRIED GREEN TOMATOES, MALCOLM X and SCREAM 2.

Taylor Knight (Hair – Department Head)

In her career as a hair stylist, Taylor Knight has created a wide variety of looks in specialty, contemporary and period designs.

Knight's film credits include DRIVING MISS DAISY, SOMMERSBY, DOGMA, O, JAY AND SILENT BOB STRIKE BACK, DUMB AND DUMBERER, and STROKE OF GENIUS.

She has also worked on such TV productions as TO DANCE WITH THE WHITE DOG, GETTING OUT, PAST THE BLEACHERS, A SEASON IN PURGATORY, "I'll Fly Away," "Caroline in the City," "The Client," and the pilot for the WB's "In My Life."

Knight's list of talent on whom she has worked include Gwyneth Paltrow, Ellen Burstyn, Kevin Smith, Diane Lane, Julia Stiles, Shannon Elizabeth, Queen Latifah, Jessica Tandy, Mira Sorvino, Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, Chris Rock, Mario Van Peebles, Travis Tritt and Martin Sheen.

Elvin Ross (Composer)

NAACP nominated composer ELVIN ROSS (Music Score, Original Songs, Musical Director) has composed music for an extraordinary number of hugely successful urban theatrical productions, including Tyler Perry's "I Know I've Been Changed," "I Can Do Bad All By Myself," "Diary Of A Mad Black Woman," "Madea's Family Reunion," "Meet The Browns," "Madea Goes To Jail," Bishop T.D. Jakes' "Woman Thou Art Loosed" and NAACP-nominated "Behind Closed Doors."

With in the last few years, Elvin has added several more mega accomplishments to his resume: Creator and Executive Producer of the Telly Award Winning "Gospel Dream" Talent Search. "Gospel Dream" is the gospel music industry answer to "American Idol." The television special broke a household viewer ship record on Black Entertainment Television (BET) in 2003 garnering over two million viewers. He produced the "Gospel Dream" special in association with his company, SONHO Entertainment in which he is the CEO. Elvin has recently composed a memorably melodic movie score for Tyler Perry's "Diary Of A Mad Black Woman" for Lions Gate Films.

Working on a vast array of projects, Elvin has been achieving success and winning industry awards for over ten years. Some of his honors and achievements include but are not limited to: 2001 NAACP Urban Theatre Award Nominee for "Best Musical Director" for Bishop T.D. Jakes' "Behind Closed Doors"; Winner of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation, Inc. award for outstanding musical contributions, accompanied a

guest on the "Oprah Winfrey" show in April 2001; and received two proclamations recognized by St. Charles Parish, LA for outstanding musical achievement.

Raised just on the outskirts of New Orleans, Louisiana, Elvin was surrounded by the influence of the city's great history of music that encompassed jazz, gospel and rhythm and blues. He contributes the nurturing of his musical gift to his mother, Frozine Francis, who is a classically trained pianist.

A resident of Atlanta/New Orleans, Elvin is married to the lovely Jasmine Ross, the proud father of Elvin Ross, Jr. and cherish the memory of his beloved daughter, Kai L'ani Ross.

Camara Kambon (Music Supervisor)

Emmy Award winning composer /producer Camara Kambon has works featured in motion pictures, on network television and cable. Although recognized for writing Mary J. Blige's #1 hit, *Family Affair*, Mr. Kambon has also written with Dr. Dre, Eminem, Xzibit, Macy Gray, just to name a few. He's composed and produced music for *Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights*, Oliver Stone's, *Any Given Sunday*, *Citizen King* and Dreamwork's *Biker Boyz*. In addition to his film work, Camara also composed the themes for UPN's *Girlfriends*, now in it's fifth season and Lion's Gate Films' *The Cookout* featuring Queen Latifah, Danny Glover and Farah Fawcett.

Mr. Kambon received a BA degree with honors from Berklee College of Music's prestigious Film Scoring and music production/engineering program. During high school, in Baltimore he earned an advanced diploma in jazz piano, classical piano and musical theory at the Peabody Preparatory, attended the Eastern Music Festival in Greensboro, NC, and the Walden School for Young Composers in Dublin, NH. Camara has performed professionally since age 12, including appearances with Dizzy Gillespie, Roberta Flack, Roy Hargrove, Will Downing, Dennis Chambers and Chuck Rainey.

ABOUT THE CAST

Kimberly Elise (Helen McCarter)

Kimberly Elise has been a respected actress in Hollywood since her star-making role as Denver in Oprah Winfrey's 1998 film *BELOVED*, a role for which she received the Chicago Film Critics "Best Newcomer" award and a Golden Satellite award for "Best Supporting Actress."

Elise was most recently seen alongside Denzel Washington in the remake of *THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE*, in which she was directed by Jonathan Demme. She also starred in the award-winning film *WOMAN THOU ART LOOSED* based on the best selling book by T.D. Jakes. Her lead performance in the film earned mass critical praise, including an "Independent Spirit Award" nomination for "Best Actress."

Her other film credits include the drama *JOHN Q.*, in which she again co-starred with

Denzel Washington; Gary Gray's drama SET IT OFF, co-starring Queen Latifah; and Antoine Fuqua's comedy BAIT with Jamie Foxx.

Elise's TV credits include co-starring with Gregory Hines in Showtime's BOJANGLES and the title role in THE LORETTA CLAIRBORNE STORY for ABC. She won a Cable ACE award for her performance in the Family Channel's THE DITCHDIGGER'S DAUGHTER. She has also appeared on the series "Soul Food" and "Girlfriends."

She is a four-time Image Award nominee for her roles in BELOVED, JOHN Q, BOJANGLES, and "Soul Food."

Steve Harris (Charles McCarter)

Steve Harris is a veteran actor whose career includes respected work in film, TV and the stage.

Following a college football career-ending ankle ligament injury at Northern Illinois University, Harris went to the University of Delaware where he completed his studies with a degree in theater.

He has appeared on several TV shows such as "Homicide: Life on the Street," "New York Undercover," "Chicago Hope," "Ally McBeal," and "Celebrity Poker Showdown"; and in the TV mini-series "Heaven & Hell: North & South, Book III," but Harris is most recognized for his portrayal of the character Eugene Young on the TV series "The Practice." For this role Harris received two Emmy nominations for the Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series award; and five nominations and one win from the Image Awards in the category of Outstanding Actor in a Drama Series.

In addition to this year's THE UNSEEN, Harris' other film credits include BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE with Steve Martin and Queen Latifah, Steven Spielberg's MINORITY REPORT, THE SKULLS and THE ROCK.

Harris received critical acclaim for his off-Broadway performance in "Heliotrope Bouquet." He has also appeared on stage in "The Great White Hope," "Macbeth" and "Julius Caesar."

Tyler Perry (Madea, Uncle Joe, Brian)

Please see About the Filmmakers

Cicely Tyson (Myrtle)

In addition to being one of America's most respected actresses, Cicely Tyson is also a well-known lecturer, activist and humanitarian.

Tyson got her first TV break in 1963 on the TV series "East Side/West Side" with George C. Scott. Since then she has performed some of the most memorable roles on television including the title character in THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MISS JANE PITTMAN, for which she received an unprecedented two Emmys as Best Actress and Actress of the Year; Castralia in THE OLDEST CONFEDERATE WIDOW TELLS ALL, for which she won an Emmy for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Miniseries or Special. Tyson received Emmy nominations for her performances as Harriett Tubman in

A WOMAN CALLED MOSES; Binta, the mother of Kunta Kinte in ROOTS; Marva Collins in WELCOME TO SUCCESS: THE MARVA COLLINS STORY; Coretta Scott King in KING; and Carrie Grace Battle in the TV series “Sweet Justice.”

Her critically acclaimed role as Rebecca in the film SOUNDER garnered Tyson a Best Actress in a Leading Role Oscar nomination, a Best Motion Picture Actress – Drama Golden Globe nomination and won her the Best Actress award from the National Board of Review and the National Society of Film Critics. She will next be seen in the upcoming BECAUSE OF WINN DIXIE. She has also appeared in the films FRIED GREEN TOMATOES, HOODLUM and BUSTIN’ LOOSE.

Tyson, along with Arthur Mitchell, founded the Dance Theater of Harlem. She also serves on the Board of the DTH, as well as the American Film Institute, Urban Gateways, and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

She holds a record twelve Image Awards as Best Actress and has received awards from such civil rights organizations as PUSH, CORE, the SCLS and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center.

Based on her desire to communicate with young people Tyson sets aside one month out of every year to speak to college students across the country on topics ranging from human rights, education, race relations and teen pregnancy.

Shemar Moore (Orlando)

Winner of a Daytime Emmy award and 5 NAACP awards, Shemar Moore’s career has included modeling and work on TV, film and stage.

While on a scholarship at Santa Clara University in Northern California, Moore suffered a shoulder injury that ended his dreams of becoming a professional baseball player. He turned his attention to his other dream – acting. Following graduation, Moore moved to New York where he worked as a model while looking for his big acting break.

That break came when Moore received the invitation to audition against 370 other actors for a role on the daytime TV series “The Young and the Restless.” Moore walked away with the coveted role of Malcolm Winters, for which he won a Supporting Actor Emmy and was nominated for three other nominations during the character’s eight-year run. It was also for this role that Moore was awarded 5 NAACP Image Awards. He returned to “The Young and the Restless” in November of 2004.

Moore just ended his five-year run as the host of TV’s longest running dance show, “Soul Train.” His other TV appearances include “Birds of Prey,” “How to Marry a Billionaire,” and host of the 1999 Miss USA Pageant. He most recently appeared opposite Tom Selleck and William H. Macy in the CBS miniseries “Scott Turow’s Reversible Errors.”

On film, Moore can be seen opposite Morris Chestnutt, Bill Bellamy and DL Hughley in THE BROTHERS, in NEVER 2 BIG with Nia Long, MOTIVES opposite Vivica A. Fox and the independent THE SEAT FILLER with Duane Martin and Kelly Rowland.

In 2001, Moore made his theatrical debut in the national tour of the gospel musical "Fabric of a Man."

Tamara Taylor (Debrah)

After moving to Los Angeles from her hometown of Toronto, Taylor landed a guest part on the TV show "A Different World" thanks to a friend who was co-starring on the sitcom. That was followed up with the role of Grace in "Party of Five." Taylor originally signed on for two episodes but ended up remaining on the show for almost the entire season. She has also played the recurring part of Dr. Ana Syphax on the TV drama "City of Angels." Taylor has also made guest appearances on numerous TV shows including "Dawson's Creek," "Providence," "Everwood," "Becker," "The District," and "Six Feet Under." She also appeared in HBO's INTRODUCING DOROTHY DANDRIDGE with Halle Berry.

Her film roles include the comedy SENSELESS with Marlon Wayans and David Spade and the upcoming film adaptation of Joss Whedon's TV series SERENITY.

Taylor has also appeared on stage in "For Coloured Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf."

Lisa Marcos (Brenda)

Lisa Marcos has segued her impressive modeling career into appearances on the small and big screen. Following a various string of TV guest roles in her native Canada and in the US on such shows as "Wonderfalls," "Street Time," and "Soul Food," Marcos landed a recurring role in the new UPN drama "Kevin Hill" on which she will play the love interest of the title character played by Taye Diggs.

Marcos has recently wrapped production on New Line Cinema's KING RANSOM starring Anthony Anderson. She also appeared in 2003's THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.