

FILM INDEPENDENT'S

LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL

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**DON CHEADLE TO RECEIVE SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE AWARD
AT 2008 LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL**

HONORARY CO-CHAIRS ALSO ANNOUNCED:

Antonio Banderas, Jada Pinkett Smith, Rob Reiner

LOS ANGELES (June 10, 2008) – The Los Angeles Film Festival announced today that **Don Cheadle** will receive this year's **Spirit of Independence Award** for his outstanding work and contributions to the film industry. The Spirit of Independence Award will be presented to the actor, activist, author and producer at the Festival Awards Ceremony on Sunday, June 29 at 7:00 p.m.

The Spirit of Independence Award was created in 2005 to recognize an individual for his or her commitment to artistic independence in film. The award recognizes and honors an individual who has remained true to his work and vision; someone who has consistently made and continues to make artistic choices regardless of difficulty; someone who has dared to think differently; and someone who stays true to his independent spirit through his work in the independent and studio worlds. Don Cheadle's unusual and varied choices reinforce his commitment to groundbreaking and innovative films. He exemplifies a true independent spirit.

"Don Cheadle has created extraordinary work in his career as an actor and producer." This honorary award is a gesture of our appreciation for his diligence and determination to produce consistently brilliant work for the film world," said Dawn Hudson, Executive Director of Film Independent.

Cheadle's merit comes not just from the challenging projects he chooses to tackle as an actor and producer in films like *Devil in a Blue Dress*, *Boogie Nights*, *Hotel Rwanda* and *Crash*, but also for how he works to raise awareness of urgent causes — specifically, genocide in Darfur. At the award ceremony Festival filmmakers will have the opportunity to hear Cheadle speak about his work, his creative process, and his influences.

The inaugural Spirit of Independence Award was presented to George Clooney in 2005, with Charlize Theron receiving the honor in 2006, and Clint Eastwood in 2007. The Festival is proud to add Don Cheadle to this list of immensely talented and deserving artists. Winners of the Festival's audience awards and short film juried prizes will also be announced.

The Festival also announced that **Antonio Banderas**, **Jada Pinkett Smith**, and **Rob Reiner** will serve as **Honorary Co-Chairs** for the 2008 Los Angeles Film Festival. The Honorary Chair is presented to those who exemplify outstanding artistic achievement in film.

In his role as Honorary Co-Chair, Antonio Banderas will participate in a Festival conversation entitled "Una Noche Con Antonio Banderas." Taking place on Tuesday, June 24, at 8:00 p.m. at the Billy Wilder Theater and sponsored by *People en Español*, Banderas will be hosting a special conversation that will take place in both Spanish and English. Banderas' career spans stage and screen, from Spain to the United States, and he'll discuss his eclectic body of work.

In her role as Honorary Co-Chair, Jada Pinkett Smith will host the Festival's Filmmaker Reception, sponsored by the Maryland Film Office, Technicolor, and American Express OPEN. The reception will take Monday, June 23 at 7:00 p.m. at the W – Los Angeles. The reception is an excellent networking opportunity for Festival filmmakers and industry experts to join forces for the future of filmmaking.

In his role as Honorary Co-Chair, director Rob Reiner will participate in a Festival conversation entitled an "Evening with Rob Reiner" and screening of his film, *The American President* – starring Michael Douglas and Annette Bening – on Thursday, June 26, at 8 p.m. at the Billy Wilder Theater at the Hammer Museum. Prior to the screening, Reiner will take the stage for an in-depth conversation about his career. After the film, he will return, along with select cast and crew, for a post-screening, on-stage, election-year conversation about the movie and its portrait of modern politics. The event is sponsored by *People Magazine*.

ABOUT THE SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE AWARD RECIPIENT

Since being named the Best Supporting Actor by the Los Angeles Film Critics for his breakout performance opposite Denzel Washington in *Devil in a Blue Dress*, **Don Cheadle** has consistently turned in powerful performances on the stage and screen.

Cheadle can currently be seen in *Talk to Me*, a film directed by Kasi Lemmons and co-starring Chiwetel Ejiofor, about the Washington D.C. radio personality Ralph "Petey" Greene, an ex-con who became a popular talk show host and community activist in the 1960s. He is currently shooting the film *Traitor*, an international thriller set in the world

of covert counter-terrorism operations, in which he will star opposite Guy Pearce. Cheadle, who was honored this year at ShoWest as Male Star of the Year, is also set to produce, direct and star in a biopic of jazz legend Miles Davis.

Additional film credits include the following: the 2006 Oscar-winning Best Picture, *Crash*, which Cheadle also produced; *Hotel Rwanda*, for which his performance garnered Cheadle Academy Award, Golden Globe Award, Broadcast Film Critics Award and Screen Actors Guild Award nominations for Best Actor; *Ocean's Eleven*, *Ocean's Twelve* and *Ocean's Thirteen*, directed by Steven Soderbergh and starring Brad Pitt and George Clooney; Mike Binder's *Reign Over Me* with Adam Sandler; Brett Ratner's *After the Sunset* with Pierce Brosnan and Salma Hayek; *The Assassination of Richard Nixon* with Naomi Watts and Sean Penn; the Academy Award-winning film *Traffic* and the George Clooney/Jennifer Lopez-starrer *Out of Sight*, both also directed by Soderbergh; Paul Thomas Anderson's critically acclaimed *Boogie Nights* with Julianne Moore and Mark Wahlberg; *Volcano* with Tommy Lee Jones; *Bulworth*, directed by and starring Warren Beatty; *Swordfish* co-starring John Travolta and Halle Berry; MISSION TO MARS with Tim Robbins and Gary Sinise; John Singleton's *Rosewood*, for which Cheadle earned an NAACP Image Award nomination; *Family Man*, also directed by Brett Ratner and starring Nicolas Cage; and the independent features *Manic*, *The United States of Leland*, also starring Ryan Gosling and Kevin Spacey, and Allison Anders' *Things Behind the Sun*.

Cheadle is also well-recognized for his television work. He received a Golden Globe Award for his remarkable portrayal of Sammy Davis Jr. in HBO's *The Rat Pack*, a performance which was also nominated for a Best Supporting Actor Emmy. That same year, he received a Emmy nomination for his starring role in HBO's adaptation of the critically-acclaimed, best selling novel *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest J. Gaines, in which Cheadle starred opposite Cicely Tyson and Mekhi Phifer. He also starred for HBO in *Rebound: The Legend of Earl "The Goat" Manigault*, directed by Eriq La Salle.

Well known for his two-year stint in the role of 'District Attorney John Littleton' on David E. Kelley's critically-acclaimed series "Picket Fences," Cheadle's other series credits include a guest starring role on "ER" (a performance that earned him yet another Emmy nomination), a series regular role on "The Golden Palace" and a recurring role on "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air." Cheadle was also part of the stellar cast of the thrilling live CBS television broadcast of *Fail Safe* in which he starred opposite George Clooney, James Cromwell, Brain Dennehy, Richard Dreyfuss and Harvey Keitel.

An accomplished stage actor, Cheadle originated the role of "Booth" in Suzan-Lori Parks' Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Top Dog Underdog* at New York's Public Theatre under the direction of George C. Wolfe. His other stage credits include *Leon, Lena and Lenz* at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis; *The Grapes of Wrath and Liquid Skin* at the Mixed Blood Theater in Minneapolis; *Cymbeline* at The New York Shakespeare Festival; *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore* at Chicago's Goodman Theater; and Athol Fugard's South African play *Blood Knot* at The Complex Theater in Hollywood.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, Cheadle later relocated to Lincoln, Nebraska and Denver, Colorado before he finally settled in Los Angeles. He attended the prestigious California Institute of the Arts ("CAL ARTS") in Valencia, California, where he received his Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts. With the encouragement of his college friends,

Cheadle auditioned for a variety of and television roles while attending school and landed a recurring role on the hit series “Fame.” This led to feature film roles in *Colors* directed by Dennis Hopper, the John Irvin-directed *Hamburger Hill*, opposite Dylan McDermott, and *Meteor Man* directed by Robert Townsend.

A talented musician who plays saxophone, writes music and sings, Don Cheadle is also an accomplished director with the stage productions of *Cincinnati Man* at the Attic Theater, the critically-acclaimed *The Trip* at Friends and Artists Theater in Hollywood and *Three, True, One* at the electric Lodge in Venice, California on an already impressive resume.

In addition to his many acting honors, Cheadle was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2004 for Best Spoken Word Album for his narration/dramatization of the Walter Mosley novel, *Fear Itself*.

ABOUT THE HONORARY CO-CHAIRS

Since his introduction to American cinema in the highly acclaimed Mambo Kings, **Antonio Banderas** is irrefutably one of the leading international actors of his generation. He has received critical praise for his performances in film, television and theater, as well as behind the scenes as a feature film director. In 2005, he was honored with a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Banderas made his directorial debut with *Crazy in Alabama* starring his wife Melanie Griffith. His second directorial feature is the Spanish film *El Camino De Los Ingleses* (titled *Summer Rain* in the U.S.). In the 2004, Banderas stole the show in the animated blockbuster film *Shrek 2* as the voice of “Puss in Boots.” He reprised this role in the widely anticipated sequel *Shrek the Third* and the ABC Christmas special *Shrek the Halls*. He will next be seen starring opposite Morgan Freeman in the crime drama *The Code*, and in *The Other Man*, directed by Richard Eyre (Notes on a Scandal) and also starring Laura Linney and Liam Neeson.

In 2003, Banderas earned a Tony nomination for Best Actor in a Musical for his Broadway debut in the Roundabout Theater Company production of *NINE*, a musical inspired by Fellini’s *8 ½*. He also received a Best Actor Drama Desk Award, Outer Critics Circle Award, Drama League Award and Theatre World Award.

Recent films include *Take the Lead*, in which he portrayed ballroom dancer Pierre Dulaine, and the long-awaited sequel *The Legend of Zorro* opposite Catherine Zeta-Jones. Banderas has worked with some of Hollywood’s best directors and leading actors including Robert Rodriguez’s *Desperado* opposite Salma Hayek and the sequel *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* opposite Johnny Depp; *Original Sin* opposite Angelina Jolie; Alan Parker’s *Evita* opposite Madonna, in which he received his first Best Actor Golden Globe nomination; Martin Campbell’s *The Mask of Zorro* opposite Catherine Zeta-Jones, in which he received his second Best Actor Golden Globe nomination; Neil Jordan’s *Interview with a Vampire* with Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt; Jonathan Demme’s *Philadelphia* opposite Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington; Bille August’s *House of the Spirits* with Meryl Streep and Glenn Close; and Brian de Palma’s *Femme Fatale*. Other film credits include the *Spy Kids* trilogy, *Miami Rhapsody*, *Four Rooms*, *Assassins*,

Never Talk to Strangers, Two Much, The 13th Warrior, Play it to the Bone and Ballistic: Ecks vs. Sever.

He was nominated for his third Best Actor Golden Globe for his performance as the infamous Pancho Villa in HBO's 2003 release of *And Starring Pancho Villa as Himself*.

Born in Malaga, Spain, Banderas attended the School of Dramatic Arts in his hometown, and upon graduation he began his acting career working in a small theater company based there. He later moved to Madrid and became an ensemble member of the prestigious National Theater of Spain.

In 1982, Banderas was cast by writer/director Pedro Almodovar in *Labyrinth of Passion*. It was the first of five films Banderas would do with Almodovar, the others being *Matador, Law of Desire, Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown and Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* The international success of these films introduced to him to Hollywood.

Jada Pinkett Smith has proven herself to be one of today's most versatile and talented stars both on and off the screen. Prior to making her upcoming feature directorial debut with *The Human Contract*, Jada was most recently seen on the big screen teaming with box office superstars, Adam Sandler and Don Cheadle in *Reign Over Me* for Columbia Pictures. As an actress Jada has amassed an impressive list of film credits including a pivotal role, opposite Will Smith, in *Ali* for Columbia Pictures. But she is perhaps best known as the take-charge Niobe in the hugely successful sequels *Matrix Reloaded* and *Matrix Revolutions*. Jada also left a memorable impression on audiences starring opposite Tom Cruise & Academy Award winner Jamie Foxx in Michael Mann's *Collateral*.

Jada returns to the big screen this fall in two highly anticipated films. She will be seen first in the long-awaited remake of *The Women* from writer-director Diane English. And kids will hear Jada as she reprises her role of Gloria, the Hippo, in the animated feature *Madagascar II* for DreamWorks. Jada re-teams with Ben Stiller and Chris Rock in this sequel to international blockbuster *Madagascar*.

Just as she does on screen, off screen Jada continually challenges herself with new and exciting projects. *The Human Contract* is one of several projects being produced through her production company, 100% Woman. Jada co-stars with leads Jason Clarke and Paz Vega in the film for which she also wrote the screenplay. Jada's previous effort at putting pen to paper resulted in the New York Times bestseller [Girls Hold Up This World](#) published in 2005.

As producers, Jada and her husband Will Smith were the creators and executive producers of the CW Network's *All of Us*. They are currently in development on several television and film projects slated for production in 2008.

Fans can also find Jada rocking stages worldwide as the lead singer of the "progressive/aggressive" rock/metal band Wicked Wisdom. The band has a strong grass roots following and in 2005 joined the bill on the highly coveted Ozzfest tour. Their self-titled debut album was released in 2006. They are currently working on their next CD.

A native of Maryland, Pinkett Smith studied dance and acting at the Baltimore School of Arts and the North Carolina School of the Arts. Her big break came when she landed a role on the long-running NBC series *A Different World*.

Rob Reiner has directed some of the most popular and influential motion pictures of the past two decades, deftly moving among many styles. He has created films that win both audience enthusiasm and critical acclaim.

The versatile filmmaker has been immersed in the entertainment business for much of his life, succeeding first as an actor, then as a director and producer. Prior to his directorial debut, Reiner acted in many television and feature productions. It was, however, his Emmy Award-winning work as the son-in-law of Archie Bunker in the hit series *All in the Family* that made him a household name.

Reiner's credits as a director of feature films include, among others, the now-legendary *This is Spinal Tap*, a parody documentary about a mythical heavy metal group; *Stand By Me*, about four boys coming of age in the fifties, for which he received Best Director nominations from the Directors Guild of America and the Hollywood Foreign Press Association; the much loved fantasy *The Princess Bride*, adapted for the screen by Academy Award winner William Goldman from his original novel.

Reiner is a principal and co-founder of Castle Rock Entertainment, and under that banner produced and directed *When Harry Met Sally...* (Directors Guild nomination), *Misery*, *A Few Good Men* (Directors Guild nomination and Academy Award nomination for Best Picture), *The American President*, and *Ghosts of Mississippi*. His recent films include *The Story of Us*, *Alex & Emma*, *Rumor Has It...*, and 2008's hit, *The Bucket List*, starring Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman.

In 1997, Reiner and his wife Michele Singer Reiner founded the I Am Your Child Foundation, now Parents' Action for Children (www.parentsaction.org), a national non-profit promoting early childhood development and providing parents with quality educational materials.

In 1998, Reiner chaired the campaign to pass Prop 10, the California Children and Families Initiative, which created First 5 California, an integrated program of early childhood development services, including health care, preschool, and intervention programs for families at risk. He served as chairman of First 5 California from 1999 to 2006.

Reiner is also a committed environmentalist who has championed open space preservation in the Los Angeles region; in 2003, he successfully led the effort to save Ahmanson Ranch. He supports the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), a national non-profit organization that works to preserve and protect the public health, ensure the conservation and wise management of land and natural resources, and reverse the effects of global warming.

ABOUT THE 2008 LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL

Westwood Village is home to Film Independent's Los Angeles Film Festival, which runs from Thursday, June 19 – Sunday, June 29. Festival-goers will experience the

best of American and international cinema, enjoying more than 230 feature films, shorts, and music videos, as well as Coffee Talks, Poolside Chats, and other special star-studded events. Westwood Village will showcase films and events among various venues, all within walking distance of each other, with ample, convenient parking and easy access to shopping and dining, setting the stage for the biggest Festival yet.

Over the course of 10 days and 11 nights, the public is invited to take advantage of world premieres including independent films and major studio releases, as well as tribute screenings, outdoor movies, celebrity-filled red carpets, and more. Screenings and special events will be held in Westwood at the following locations: Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater At The Geffen Playhouse, AMC Avco 4, The Italian Cultural Institute, The Landmark, Landmark's Regent Theatre, Majestic Crest Theatre, Mann Festival Theatre, Mann Village Theatre, Hammer Museum, Billy Wilder Theater at the Hammer Museum, and W Los Angeles – Westwood. Additional offsite event screenings will take place at the John Anson Ford Amphitheatre in Hollywood and the California Plaza on Grand Avenue in downtown Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles Film Festival is presented by the *Los Angeles Times* and is supported by Premier Sponsors – Target, American Express OPEN and Netflix – and by Principal Sponsors – Kodak and IFC. Promotional support is provided by Schawk. Special support is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Academy Foundation of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and the Argyros Foundation. American Airlines is the Official Airline Partner; Movado is the Official Timekeeper; WireImage is the Official Photography Agency of Film Independent; P.R. Newswire is the Official fast breaking news service of Film Independent. The W Los Angeles – Westwood and the Hotel Palomar are the Official hotel partners of the Festival.

Festival passes are available for the general public beginning May 21. Individual tickets are available through phone and online sales beginning June 2. The Festival Ticket Office, located at 1020 Westwood Boulevard, will be open to the public beginning Sunday, June 8, selling both passes and individual tickets.

For event information and tickets, call 866.FILM.FEST (866.345.6337) or visit LAFilmFest.com. Film notes, images, and trailers will be available for viewing at LAFilmFest.com now.

ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT

Film Independent is a non-profit membership organization that champions independent film and supports a community of artists who embody diversity, innovation, and uniqueness of vision. Film Independent helps filmmakers make their movies, builds the audience for their projects, and works to diversify the film industry. Anyone passionate about film can become a member, whether you are a filmmaker, film industry leader, or a film lover.

With over 250 annual screenings and events, Film Independent provides access to a network of like-minded artists who are driving creativity in the film industry. Film Independent also offers free Filmmaker Labs for selected writers, directors, and producers; provides cut-rate services for filmmakers; and presents year-round networking opportunities. Film Independent's mentorship and job placement program,

Project:Involve, pairs emerging culturally diverse filmmakers with film industry professionals.

Film Independent produces the Los Angeles Film Festival, celebrating the best of American and international cinema, and the Spirit Awards, a celebration honoring films and filmmakers that embody independence and dare to challenge the status quo.

For more information or to become a member, visit FilmIndependent.org

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