

THE BLUES™



CONGRESS DECLARES 2003 “YEAR OF THE BLUES”

Martin Scorsese’s THE BLUES™ on PBS to Anchor Year-Long Celebration of Influential Art Form and its Contributions to American Culture and Music Worldwide. Components Include February Concert, Education Initiatives, Exhibit, Charitable Support, Web Site, Radio Series, Book, CDs and Video

Seven Interpretive Films Directed by Martin Scorsese, Charles Burnett, Clint Eastwood, Mike Figgis, Marc Levin, Richard Pearce, Wim Wenders to Air on PBS in Fall 2003

(New York, NY) – December 16, 2002 – The much anticipated series, **THE BLUES™**, executive produced by filmmaker Martin Scorsese and scheduled to air on PBS in the fall of 2003, will anchor a year-long celebration of events to help raise awareness of the blues and its contribution to American culture and music worldwide, an unprecedented coalition of film, music, literature and education partners announced today. Volkswagen is the original and exclusive national sponsor of the series and many of the related events.

To honor this uniquely American creation, the United States Senate has declared **2003-YEAR OF THE BLUES** (YOTB). Senators Blanche Lincoln, (D-AR), Bill Frist, (R-TN) Maria Cantwell, (D-WA) and Fred Thompson (R-TN) led this congressional effort, which was initiated by Seattle-based Experience Music Project and the Memphis-based Blues Foundation, to bring long overdue recognition to one of America’s most important music forms. 2003 also marks the 100th anniversary of African-American composer W. C. Handy’s first encounter with blues music.

The Blues series on PBS is the cornerstone of this integrated multi-media project that will include: a comprehensive Web site and education program designed by Experience Music Project; a companion book published by HarperCollins; and value-added DVDs, a CD box set, individual soundtracks for each show, a single “Best of” album and individual artist recordings released collaboratively by SONY Music and Universal Music Enterprises. Other components include a 13-part series on public radio and a traveling blues exhibit produced by Experience Music Project as well as numerous public events celebrating the blues throughout the year.



A benefit concert at Radio City Music Hall in New York City on February 7, 2003 will kickoff the year-long campaign. A new non-profit organization, the Blues Music Foundation, has been created as part of the overall project to distribute proceeds from the concert and associated components to new and existing blues-related programs throughout the country. The concert will also be filmed for later distribution. Martin Scorsese will executive produce; Antoine Fuqua (*Training Day*) has agreed to direct the film.

THE BLUES

Under the guiding hand of Executive Producer Martin Scorsese, *The Blues* consists of seven, ninety-minute impressionistic and iconoclastic films that capture the essence of the blues while exploring how this art form so deeply influenced people the world over.

The series begins with the journey from Africa to the Mississippi Delta — where the music grew from field hollers, work songs and church choirs — travels up the Mississippi to the juke joints, house parties and recording studios of Memphis and Chicago, and culminates with the emotional embrace of this African-American creation by musicians and people throughout the world.

“The blues is at once American and worldly,” said Martin Scorsese, who began work on the project six years ago. “It’s a form of storytelling that is so universal that it has inspired people beyond our borders and continues to influence music here and abroad. We’re hopeful that the series and YEAR OF THE BLUES will introduce new audiences worldwide to this music and also inspire kids, whether they like rock or hip hop, to better understand the struggles and genius that gave birth to what they listen to today.”

“Our goal was never to produce the definitive work on the blues,” Scorsese added. “It was, from the start, to create highly personal and impressionistic films as seen through the eyes of the most creative directors around with a passion for this music.”

The Blues is the culmination of a great ambition for Scorsese — to honor the music he loves, to preserve its legacy and to work closely with talented feature film directors united in their desire to celebrate this art. A brief description of each film follows:

From Mali to Mississippi — Director Martin Scorsese (*Taxi Driver, The Last Waltz, Raging Bull*) winds his way from the banks of the Niger River in Mali to the cotton fields and juke joints of the Mississippi Delta to trace the origins of the blues in a lyrical combination of original performances (including Ali Farka Touré, Salif Keita, Habib Koité, Taj Mahal, Corey Harris, Othar Turner) and rare archival footage.

Warming by the Devil’s Fire — Director Charles Burnett (*Killer of Sheep, My Brother’s Wedding, To Sleep with Anger*) presents a tale about a young boy’s encounter with his family in Mississippi in 1955, and intergenerational tensions between the heavenly strains of gospel and the devilish moans of the blues.

The Road to Memphis — Director Richard Pearce (*The Long Walk Home, Leap of Faith, A Family Thing*) traces the musical odyssey of blues legend B.B. King in a film that pays tribute to the city that gave birth to a new style of blues. Pearce's homage to Memphis features original performances by B.B. King, Bobby Rush, Rosco Gordon and Ike Turner, as well as historical footage of Howlin' Wolf and Fats Domino.

The Soul of a Man — Director Wim Wenders (*Buena Vista Social Club; Wings of Desire; Paris, Texas*) explores the lives of his favorite blues artists — Skip James, Blind Willie Johnson and J. B. Lenoir — in a film that is part history and part personal pilgrimage. The film tells the story of these lives in music through a fictional film-within-a-film, rare archival footage, and covers of their songs by contemporary musicians, including Bonnie Raitt, Lucinda Williams, Lou Reed, Eagle Eye Cherry, Nick Cave, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Cassandra Wilson, Los Lobos and others.

Piano Blues — Director — and piano player — Clint Eastwood (*Play Misty for Me, The Outlaw Josey Wales, Unforgiven*) explores his life-long passion for the piano blues, using a treasure of rare historical acts as well as interviews and performances by such living legends as Ray Charles, Fats Domino, Little Richard and Dr. John.

Godfathers and Sons — Director Marc Levin (*Slam, Whiteboys, Brooklyn Babylon*) travels to Chicago with hip-hop legend Chuck D (of Public Enemy) and Marshall Chess (son of Leonard Chess and heir to the Chess Records legacy) to explore the heyday of Chicago blues as they unite to produce an album that seeks to bring veteran blues players together with contemporary hip-hop musicians. Along with never-before-seen archival footage of Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, are original performances by Koko Taylor, Otis Rush, Magic Slim, Ike Turner and Sam Lay.

Red, White and Blues — Director Mike Figgis (*Leaving Las Vegas, Timecode*) joins musicians such as Van Morrison, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Tom Jones performing and talking about the music of the early 60's British invasion that reintroduced the blues sound to America.

Alex Gibney, the series producer, said, "*The Blues* is a kind of film festival — with each film building on the one before it — that celebrates that authenticity of the blues and tells a powerful story of how that music has come to influence the world. Through the artistry and passion of these filmmakers, *The Blues* hopes to link the present and the past by engaging a new generation of viewers and listeners to seek out the music in clubs, festivals and concerts, even as they look back — through books, CDs and archival images — at the origins of the blues. In this way, *The Blues* will not be the last word on the subject; it will be the 'first word' of a new, more free-wheeling conversation."

The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) will broadcast *The Blues* in fall 2003. PBS will also host the official companion Web site for the series at www.pbs.org (will be on-line late this year) and coordinate station and community outreach in key cities around the country.

"*The Blues* is another example of PBS's distinctive commitment to telling the American story through the backdrop of music," said PBS President and CEO Pat Mitchell. "We remain dedicated to American culture. And we are honored to host Martin Scorsese and the great directors he's assembled who have made *The Blues* an engaging series that will bring music to life on the screen and have value long after broadcast on the Web, in schools and as a historical document."

EXPERIENCE MUSIC PROJECT & YEAR OF THE BLUES

YEAR OF THE BLUES, spearheaded by Experience Music Project (EMP), a one-of-a-kind music museum that combines interactive and interpretive exhibits to tell the story of American popular music, will provide a central source that highlights blues festivals, performances, literature and recordings of interest to both new and long-time fans to add to their awareness and appreciation for the blues, its history and innovators. A special advisory board has been created for the effort consisting of, among others, the artists B.B. King and Bonnie Rait, author Peter Guralnick and former National Endowment of Humanities Chairman Bill Ferris.

Robert Santelli, noted blues historian and Director of EMP, expressed hope that "the unprecedented outreach of YEAR OF THE BLUES taps into America's love of music and creates greater interest in and support for programs that work to further this most American of art forms."

EMP is producing a number of programs to celebrate YOTB, including: a comprehensive Web site detailing YOTB events, partners and blues music resources at www.yearoftheblues.org; a traveling interactive blues exhibit — "Sweet Home Chicago" — focusing on blues styles from 1946 to 1966 (debuting at EMP in the fall of 2003 and traveling through 2005); classroom educational materials in conjunction with the series to be distributed to over five million students in grades 9 to 12 and over 75,000 teachers in classrooms around the nation; and a thirteen part blues-based radio series produced in conjunction with Ben Manilla Productions and set to air on public radio in the fall of 2003.

Beyond the efforts of EMP and the other partners behind YOTB and *The Blues*, a wide range of participants have pledged their support to make sure that 2003 is truly a celebration of this art form that involves as many people as possible, including: National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, Chicago Blues Festival, Alligator Records, Delta Blues Museum, *Living Blues* and *Blues Revue* magazines and other organizations, labels and festivals around the country.

VOLKSWAGEN ORIGINAL AND EXCLUSIVE NATIONAL SPONSOR FOR SERIES

The project's partners also announced today that Volkswagen will be the sole national underwriter for the series and many of the related events, citing the company's long-term commitment to music and alternative art forms.

Karen Marderosian, Volkswagen's Director of Marketing North America, said, "At VW, we pride ourselves on creativity and innovation. We are extremely proud to join what we believe is a remarkable opportunity for this music as well as a celebration of the men and women who created a truly inspirational art form. Our goal is to help introduce as many people as possible to this music through our support for YEAR OF THE BLUES and *The Blues*."

COMPANION PRODUCTS

SONY Music and Universal Music Enterprises Join Forces to Produce CDs and DVDs

SONY Music and Universal Music Enterprises have formed a unique partnership, sharing catalogues and all associated costs, to create a series of CDs and value-added DVDs to complement *The Blues*. They will produce and distribute in the States and abroad a four CD box set, a "Best of" CD and seven individual soundtrack CDs with tracks selected by the directors to accompany each film. In addition, SONY Music and Universal Music Enterprises will produce value-added DVDs — both as a box set featuring all seven films and individual DVDs — that will be available for sale when the series airs this coming fall.

HarperCollins to Publish Volume on the Blues

Amistad, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, is publishing a distinctive appreciation of the blues. This hardcover volume is both a complement to the series and a stand-alone for the general reader — part history, part celebration — that includes a sweeping historical essay by Robert Santelli, illuminating archival materials from Peter Guralnick; captivating interviews with the series' directors by Christopher Farley; and numerous original "personal essays" from literary and music luminaries like Elmore Leonard, Studs Terkel, Nick Cave, Hilton Als, Luc Sante, and many others.

ABOUT *THE BLUES*[™]

Martin Scorsese's *The Blues* is a seven-part series of personal and impressionistic films viewed through the lens of seven world-famous directors who share a passion for the music. In addition to Scorsese's film, Charles Burnett, Clint Eastwood, Marc Levin, Mike Figgis, Richard Pearce, and Wim Wenders capture the essence of blues music and delve into its global influence — from its roots in Africa to its inspirational role with today's top artists. Airing nationally on PBS in the fall 2003, the series anchors a multi-media initiative that celebrates the power and influence of the genre and educates the public on its profound impact on all forms of contemporary music. *The Blues* series is the cornerstone of a national campaign to celebrate the blues, kicking off with a congressional proclamation declaring 2003 YEAR OF THE BLUES. The campaign includes a comprehensive Web site on pbs.org, educational materials, a companion book published by HarperCollins, and a CD box set by SONY Music/Universal Music Enterprises. Experience Music Project, the interactive music museum in Seattle, will produce a traveling blues exhibit, a YOTB Web site and a national public radio program. *The Blues* is a presentation of Road Movies and Vulcan Productions; WGBH Boston presents the series on PBS; Volkswagen is the original and exclusive national sponsor of the project. Along with Scorsese, Paul G. Allen and Jody Patton of Vulcan Productions and Ulrich Felsberg of Road Movies will co-executive produce the series; Alex Gibney is the series producer and Margaret Bodde is the producer.

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