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Spike Lee Honored With Sixth Annual Chrysler Behind the Lens Award

- Lee's production company, 40 Acres and A Mule Filmworks, has produced more than 35 films since 1983 and opened entertainment industry doors to many actors, filmmakers and craftspeople of color
- Hollywood turns out to celebrate the Academy Award-nominated filmmaker behind such movies as "Jungle Fever," "Malcolm X," "Do The Right Thing" and the Emmy-winning 2007 miniseries "When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts," documenting the devastation of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina
- In addition to writing, producing, directing and acting, Lee teaches film at Columbia University and New York University, and is the author of nine books
- The Chrysler Foundation will donate \$25,000 in Lee's name to his alma mater, Morehouse College in Atlanta

March 27, 2008, Beverly Hills, Calif. -

Spike Lee, one of the most influential figures in contemporary cinema, became the sixth recipient Wednesday of the Chrysler LLC Behind the Lens Award. Some 400 guests attended the award ceremony at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills, California in recognition of the outstanding achievements of the director of such groundbreaking films as "Jungle Fever," "Do The Right Thing" and "Malcolm X"; who helped launch the big-screen careers of Halle Berry, Samuel L. Jackson and John Turturro, as well as numerous other actors, filmmakers and craftspeople.

"Spike Lee epitomizes the ideal of the Behind the Lens Award," Frank Fountain, Chrysler LLC Senior Vice President — External Affairs and Public Policy, said. "His thoughtful films and activism in Hollywood have inspired a generation of filmmakers, encouraged actors, challenged basic assumptions and expanded the field to include many more African-Americans in key roles behind the lens. We are thrilled to have him as the award's latest honoree and to celebrate his commitment and passion."

In addition to the award, The Chrysler Foundation will donate \$25,000 to Lee's alma mater, Morehouse College in Atlanta, in recognition of his accomplishments. The donation will benefit the Morehouse College School of Sports Journalism, a program created to expand the field of sports journalism for African-American students. The program, which began with seed money donated by Lee, launched its first course offerings in January 2007. Lee, who received his bachelor's degree in 1979, is a third-generation Morehouse graduate and now serves on the school's board of trustees. To date, his efforts have raised more than \$1 million to benefit the program.

Hosted by CNN anchor and special correspondent Soledad O'Brien, the evening paid tribute to Lee as Academy Award-nominated actress (Best Supporting actress 1993 for her role in "Fearless") Rosie Perez discussed her fond memories of working with Lee. Perez made her feature-film debut in "Do The Right Thing." The evening featured special performances by long-time friend and composer Terence Blanchard, which included a tribute to New Orleans and Lee's documentary "When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts," along with a Patti Austin collaboration "A Change is Going to Come." Tap dancer and choreographer Savion Glover performed a dance number to Public Enemy's "Fight the Power," a song that also was featured in "Do the Right Thing."

"It's an honor to join the group of trailblazing artists and professionals who have received this award before me," Lee

said. "I'm particularly thrilled to accept this award in the presence of so many of the family members, friends, mentors and collaborators without whom this recognition would not have been possible. I also want to thank Chrysler for sponsoring the Behind the Lens Award, which recognizes the creative individuals whose work affects our lives every day."

Video clips from some of Lee's earlier works were introduced by Delroy Lindo, who worked with Lee on three films including "Malcolm X," "Crooklyn" and "Clockers." Derek Luke, Michael Ealy, Laz Alonso and Omar Benson Miller thanked Lee for their recent experience in the upcoming "Miracle at St. Anna." Lee, during his acceptance speech, surprised the crowd with a 7-minute sneak peak from the film.

The Chrysler Foundation also announced it will donate \$10,000 in Soledad O'Brien's name to Ursuline Academy, an all-girl college-preparatory high school in Cincinnati founded in 1896 by the Ursuline Sisters.

In addition to Lee's family and friends, and Chrysler representatives, attendees at the star-studded event included many past cast members that have worked with Lee including Chiwetel Ejiofor, Laurence Fishburne, Rosario Dawson, Wendell Pierce, Rick Fox, Debi Mazer, costume designer Ruth Carter, Chuck D, director Ernest Dickerson, Roger Guenveur Smith along with friends Hill Harper, John Singleton, Elise Neal and many others who have collaborated with or were inspired by Lee's pioneering work behind the scenes in film and television.

Lee's film career began at New York University's prestigious Tisch School of the Arts, where he drew critical attention for his master's thesis, the short film "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads." He went on to write, produce, direct and edit his first feature film, "She's Gotta Have It," which earned him the Prix Jeunesse award at the 1986 Cannes Film Festival, the Independent Spirit Award for Best First Feature and the Los Angeles Film Critics' Association New Generation Award. Since then, Lee has directed 20 more feature films and feature-length documentaries including "Jungle Fever," "Malcolm X," "Inside Man," the Emmy-nominated "4 Little Girls" and Emmy-winning "When the Levees Broke," all under the banner of his production company, 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks. He has helped launch the careers of a who's who of film-industry talents, including director Ernest R. Dickerson ("The Wire," "Weeds"), costume designer Ruth Carter ("Four Brothers," "Daddy Day Care") and actors Halle Berry, Denzel Washington, Samuel L. Jackson, John Turturro, Wesley Snipes, Mos Def, Rosie Perez and Giancarlo Esposito. Lee also is known for producing commercials and directing numerous television spots, including an acclaimed series of Nike ads featuring Michael Jordan, and dozens of music videos for recording artists as diverse as Miles Davis, Public Enemy, Bruce Hornsby and Prince.

The consummate entrepreneur, Lee founded SpikeDDB in 1997, a minority-owned, full-service advertising agency in partnership with DDB Worldwide. SpikeDDB has created multilevel advertising campaigns for Pepsi, Ambi Skincare and Mountain Dew. Lee will mark his Broadway debut in 2008 when he directs a new production of "Stalag 17," the 1951 comedy-drama about American prisoners of war written by two former POWs. Lee's next feature film, "Miracle at St. Anna," starring Derek Luke, Michael Ealy, Laz Alonso and Omar Benson Miller, based on the bestselling author James McBride's novel, will be released in the fall of 2008.

Lee is the sixth entertainment trailblazer acknowledged by Chrysler. Previous honorees include pioneers such as producer and composer Quincy Jones ("The Color Purple"), directors Gordon Parks ("Shaft"), Melvin Van Peebles ("Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song"), John Singleton ("Boyz n the Hood") and Hollywood casting veteran and producer Reuben Cannon ("Madea's Family Reunion").

About Chrysler's Behind the Lens Award

The Behind the Lens Award was established in 2002 by Chrysler to recognize and celebrate the achievements of individuals who work behind the scenes in the entertainment industry. Since its inception, the star-studded awards event brings together each year guests to share in the recognition and the accomplishments of the honoree. Award recipients are chosen by a selection committee comprised of entertainment industry professionals and Chrysler representatives.

About Chrysler LLC

Chrysler LLC, headquartered in Auburn Hills, Mich., produces Chrysler, Jeep®, Dodge and Mopar® brand vehicles and products. Its product lineup features some of the world's most recognizable vehicles, including the Chrysler 300, Jeep Wrangler and Dodge Charger. The Company sells and services vehicles in more than 125 countries around the

world. The operations outside North America have been experiencing year-over-year sales increases since 2004, with a record number of vehicles sold in 2007. The Chrysler Foundation — the primary source of charitable grants made by Chrysler — annually supports hundreds of charitable organizations with an emphasis on community growth and enrichment, education, arts and culture, public policy, youth development and disaster relief programs throughout the United States and, increasingly, the world. Chrysler is a unit of Cerberus Capital Management.

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