All Eyez on Me

Preliminary Production Notes

Short Synopsis

The feature film *All Eyez on Me* sheds new light on the events behind the meteoric rise and tragic fall of charismatic rapper Tupac Shakur (Demetrius Shipp Jr.). Inspired by his activist mother (Danai Gurira) and close high-school friend Jada Pinkett (Kat Graham), Tupac embarks on a prolific and turbulent career marked by hit records, film roles, violence, imprisonment, bitter rivalries and a complex relationship with music mogul Suge Knight (Dominic Santana). Packed with Shakur's incendiary music, *All Eyez on Me* tells the untold story of a prodigiously gifted artist cut down in the prime of life.

Long Synopsis

Raised in the Bronx by his outspoken mother Afeni (Danai Gurira), a member of the Black Panther Party, Tupac Shakur (Demetrius Shipp Jr.) confronts police brutality at an early age when FBI agents raid his home on Christmas Eve in search of his activist stepfather. Moving to Maryland in his teens, Tupac attends Baltimore School for the Performing Arts, where he befriends a young Jada Pinkett (Kat Graham). But just as Shakur begins thriving in this creative environment, his now- drug-addicted mother ships him off to live with relatives in Oakland, California.

Discovered at a Bay Area poetry workshop, Tupac joins Digital Underground and tours with outlandish leader Shock G (Chris Clarke) during the group's "Humpty Dance" heyday. Tupac soon lands a solo deal with Interscope Records and his first movie role, in *Juice*. Despite the breakout success of his second album "Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z...," Tupac's personal life becomes entangled in a string of arrests, financial problems, and gunfights. The problems culminate in November 1994, when Tupac is shot five times in the lobby of New York City's Quad Recording Studios. The next day he checks himself out of the hospital and goes to court in a wheelchair. Imprisoned in February 1995, Tupac became the first inmate to score a No. 1 album when "Me Against the World" soars to the top of the charts.

Released after eight months, Tupac teams with volatile Death Row Records mogul Suge Knight (Dominic Santana) and artist-producer Dr. Dre (Harold House Moore) in Los Angeles, where he records the world's first hip-hop double album, "All Eyez on Me." But he is also embroiled in a bitter feud with East Coast rival Biggie Smalls (Jamal Woolard),

Amid the escalating war, Tupac falls in love with Quincy Jones' daughter Kidada Jones (Annie Ilonzeh). A few weeks after a now-legendary House of Blues concert in West Hollywood, Tupac travels with Kidada to Las Vegas for a Mike Tyson fight. Stopped at a red light after the match, with Knight at the wheel, Tupac is shot on September 7, 1996 by unknown assailants and dies six days later. Simultaneously triumphant and tragic, *All Eyez on Me* tells the untold story of incendiary talent Tupac Shakur, dead at 25, who has sold more than 75 million records worldwide.

All Eyez on Me stars Demetrius Shipp Jr., with Danai Gurira ("The Walking Dead," *The Visitor*), Kat Graham ("The Vampire Diaries"), Dominic Santana (*Dead Heist*, *Love for Sale*), Annie Ilonzeh ("Person of Interest," "Empire"), Grace Gibson (*Black Nativity*) and Chris Clarke.

All Eyez on Me is directed by Benny Boom (*S.W.A.T.: Firefight*, *Next Day Air*). Written by Jeremy Haft & Eddie Gonzalez ("Empire") and Steven Bagatourian (*American Gun*). Director of photography is Peter Menzies Jr. (*Die Hard with a Vengeance, The Incredible Hulk*). Music is composed by John Paesano (*The Maze Runner*, "Daredevil"). Production designer is Derek R. Hill (*The Magnificent Seven, Into the Wild, Olympus Has Fallen*). Produced by James G Robinson, David Robinson and L.T. Hutton. Executive producer is Wayne Morris ("Blood and Oil," *Miami Vice*).

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Filming on *All Eyez on Me* began in late 2015 after a lengthy development process spearheaded by producer L.T. Hutton. A former music producer who worked with Tupac at Death Row Records, Hutton shifted his focus to movies nine years ago when he launched Program Pictures in partnership with Morgan Creek.

Determined to let Shakur tell his own story, Hutton drew on his personal relationship with the rapper as the foundation for a massive database he calls "The Tupac Bible." "I created this system where you could ask any question about Tupac and you could find the answers directly from what Tupac said in multiple interviews," Hutton explains. "Why was Tupac mad at Notorious B.I.G.? How did Tupac feel about his natural father? Anything you wanted to know, we were going to stick with what Tupac said and put his own words into the movie. That's why it took such a long time to make. I needed people to understand the vision."

The fundamental mystery explored in *All Eyez on Me*, says Hutton, is "What made Tupac Tupac?" "That question gave me a trajectory where you get to see all sides, not just the one side that everybody thinks they know," the producer adds. "Tupac wasn't always angry. He was happy a lot of the time. He had issues with the world, like we all do, and this young black man spoke out about them. I call *All Eyez on Me* the untold story because it's not stuff you see on YouTube. It's not rumors. It's not other people telling the story. It's about following Tupac's voice."

Tupac on the Page

At the invitation of producers David Robinson and L.T. Hutton, the writing team of Eddie Gonzalez and Jeremy Haft ("Empire") came on board in August 2013 to write a new and original screenplay. Prior to them Steven Bagatourian had written a draft of the script. "Our take was that everybody knows the big imprisonment and Death Row moments," the big tent-pole moments of Tupac's life – joining Digital Underground, his imprisonment, the Death Row days, etc.," says Gonzalez. "We wanted to focus on what made Tupac the man he became and that meant showing his turbulent childhood and adolescence. We also wanted to include what he suffered through when he was a kid."

Gonzalez and Haft researched every detail of Tupac's life before he became famous, in order to better understand the artist's work, true character and how he changed. "We start with Tupac's childhood and the fact that his mother Afeni was a Black Panther," Haft says. "We establish that he was raised to not only be educated, but to also be socially active and to question authority. For example, Tupac read *The New York Times* every day and rest assured Afeni quizzed him on it. He endured a very oppressive environment because the police and the FBI constantly harassed his family and his stepfather, Mutulu Shakur. All of these difficult situations – poverty, racism, and police abuse -- shaped his worldview. And with that firmly established, we then take Tupac on a frenetic journey through the ups and downs of his life. And in that life, we wanted

to show both sides of the coin, warts and all."

The writers studied the reams of interview material compiled by Hutton, spent months doing their own research, and read all of Tupac's work, including his book of poems, The Rose That Grew from Concrete. "We then went out and L.T. made sure we spoke to people like the Outlawz, the guys who hung out and performed with Tupac back in the day," Gonzalez says. "E.D.I. and Mean and Noble were fantastic because they gave us all these little tidbits, jewels we used to make the story as authentic as possible. How Tupac smoked his cigarette, how he wore his pants, rubbed his face, how he called his sister Setch, where and when he'd take a pause in speaking – all these details helped us create a more authentic character. And authenticity was paramount in making this movie." For Gonzalez, Tupac's struggles resonated on a personal level. "I was born in Compton and grew up in neighboring Lynwood," he says. "I know what it's like to grow up poor. I know what it's like to deal with drug addiction. I know what it's like to live with police oppression."

Gonzalez and Haft spent almost the entire shoot on set where they were able to adjust scenes and dialogue to not only complement the actors, but to give L.T. and Benny exactly what they needed in the moment. Over the course of three years on the project, Haft and Gonzalez wrote 22 drafts of the story, which ultimately blended both of their perspectives to craft an accessible story about such an iconic character. "Eddie lived and breathed this life, is a huge rap fan," Haft says. "He saw Public Enemy, saw Ice Cube, saw all these bands in his environment bought rap tapes out of trunks, so he was really able to feel that tapped into that visceral feeling you get when listening to music with powerful lyrics. I grew up in Chicago and New Jersey, far away from Los Angeles, so I have more of a an airplane 30,000 foot view of what happened, and I think this balance really enabled us to speak to the huge Tupac fan and the casual fan at the same time."

Gonzalez agrees: "Our story shows how poverty and an urgency to take care of his family drove Tupac and how Tupac was at times an outcast early on. While *All Eyez on Me* is a specific story about Tupac, it also deals with universal themes that are relatable. Whether you're growing up in Compton, Chicago or even Tokyo, Tupac was speaking for you. His words were relevant then and are arguably even more relevant now in these turbulent times. A Mexican kid who grew up in Compton can relate to, a Jewish kid who grew up in Skokie can relate to."

A Director Shares the Vision

The producers' extensive search for a director who shared their vision for *All Eyez on Me* ended on Thanksgiving weekend 2015, shortly before filming was set to start in Atlanta. Hutton reached out to Benny Boom, a two-time winner of B.E.T.'s Video Director of the Year Award who had helmed videos for hip-hop superstars including Nicki Minaj, Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, Keyshia Cole, Akon and 50 Cent. Boom remembers getting the call on the Wednesday before the holiday. "L.T. said, 'Man, I'm at my wits' end.' At the end of the call he asked me if I wanted to direct the movie. I had not read the full draft of the script, so he sent it over. I printed it out, read it and told him, 'I'm in.' By Sunday I was in Atlanta."

"Benny has a great eye and he's a great partner," says Hutton. "I had a responsibility to make sure that everything is portrayed in a real way for *All Eyez on Me*. Benny knew how to capture Tupac and the message he was trying to convey because this movie needed to be like a window into Tupac's world. We want people to leave the theaters saying, 'I enjoyed my look into that window.'"

Boom was impressed by Hutton's commitment to authenticity and his encyclopedic knowledge of the rapper's life. "L.T. really knew the minutiae," the director recalls. "Even before we shot a frame of film, he told me exactly what tattoo Pac had and what year he got it, how much facial hair he had on his face when he was killed, where the bullet holes were, which side he wore his nose ring on. You don't always get to work with a producer who's so locked in."

Finding Tupac

A key turning point in *All Eyez on Me*'s lengthy pre-production process took place at Hutton's Los Angeles office in 2011. The producer recalls, "My assistant came into my office and said, 'I don't know how to tell you this but, Tupac is in the lobby.' I said, 'I don't have time for your games today.' She goes 'I'm telling you, Tupac is in the lobby.' I decide to see what this girl is talking about, so I walk out and see Demetrius Shipp sitting in the lobby. I'm like, 'Lo and behold, this is crazy. It *is* Tupac!' He was so shy, just like Pac was shy sometimes. I saw the innocence in his eyes; I saw the charm and personality that made all the women love Tupac. And when Demetrius smiled, I thought, 'This guy even has the same dental work. Demetrius and Tupac have the same teeth!"

While it was true that Shipp Jr. (whose music-producer father worked with Hutton on Shakur tracks back in the '90s) bore a striking physical resemblance to Tupac, there was one problem: He had no acting experience. Still, Hutton says, "I knew from his background and upbringing that Demetrius had the makings of becoming Tupac all the way. If I'd cast any one of the actors Hollywood was pushing me to use, people would have spent the first hour of the movie wondering, 'Why is this guy trying to be Tupac?' It would have taken you out of the film. For our message to land, we had to have someone on the screen where you're locked in from the start. Demetrius had a certain spirit that these other guys just didn't have."

To prepare for the role, Shipp immersed himself in every aspect of his character's life. "I read all the books Tupac read, watched *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* documentary. At home, all I'd watch were Tupac interviews. Before I went to sleep, it was Tupac. In the shower, I'm listening to Tupac. I wanted to take on Tupac's mannerisms within my own self every day. It got to the point where my grandfather asked me, 'Why are you talking with your hands so much now, all of a sudden?' For months straight, I literally ate, slept and breathed Tupac."

Shipp also trained with acting coach Angela Gibbs, who even had him study Shakespeare because Shakur starred in a high school production of "Hamlet" at the Baltimore School of Performing Arts.

Casting the Inner Circle

Tupac's mother, Afeni Shakur, was the most influential woman in the rapper's life and the inspiration for his signature hit "Dear Momma." To play this pivotal role, the filmmakers cast Danai Gurira, beloved by fans of the hit series "The Walking Dead" for her role as the samurai-sword- wielding heroine Michonne. In preparing for the role of Afeni, Gurira delved deep into the intense mother-son relationship. "When Tupac was a child, Afeni treated him like an adult," says the actress. "She taught Tupac to think about political things and encouraged him to speak with his own voice. She had him performing on stage in 'A Raisin in the Sun' when he was 11 years old. And all of that affected who Tupac became as an artist.

His lyrics definitely came out of this global understanding and having an original voice and caring about your people."

Gurira did not shy away from portraying Afeni's flaws, however, including her period of addiction to crack cocaine. "She openly calls herself an addict," Gurira says. "Afeni shared that information with the world when she spoke to Jasmine Guy for the book Afeni Shakur: Evolution of a Revolutionary. To me, that was a courageous thing to do."

Years before Jada Pinkett (portrayed in the film by Kat Graham) starred in the sitcom "A Different World" and married Will Smith, she forged a deep bond with her high-school classmate Tupac Shakur. "Jada's such a force just as a human being, it was inspiring to put myself in her shoes," says Graham, who never spoke directly with Pinkett Smith until after filming wrapped. Instead, she huddled with acting coach Ivana Chubbuck and immersed herself in the story.

The role took on a new life when Shipp showed up on set. "The first time I saw Demetrius as Tupac, I got chills," Graham says. "It's not just that he resembles Pac. It was more about the energy we had together. I realized Demetrius and I could bring that relationship back to life on screen. He and I became instant friends."

Newcomer Chris Clarke plays witty "Humpty Dance" creator Shock G, who essentially discovered Tupac and invited the rapper to join his Digital Underground group. "I had to key into Shock G's frequency like you'd tune into a frequency on the radio," says Clarke, who spent time with the hip-hop maestro before filming began.

Clarke notes that the scenes featuring his character dramatically chronicle Tupac's rapidly growing confidence as a star in the making. "When Tupac comes into the room to see Shock G for the first time, I listen to him do some humble auditioning stuff. A little later, Tupac's restless and demanding more opportunity from me. And then it goes to the scene in the studio where Tupac's controlling the session. He's dealing with the engineer and I'm just in the background. It was beautiful to watch the way Demetrius approached those scenes.

Actor Dominic Santana plays the shrewd but violence-prone Death Row Records mogul Suge Knight. Santana's agent had submitted him for the role, unbeknownst to the actor. "It never dawned on me that I could play Suge Knight," Santana says. "Suge did things in the '90s as a label owner that weren't being done by anyone else. He had an ear for talent. He brought us iconic music legends. You can't amass that kind of an empire and make that kind of impact on the music business if you're just some Neanderthal. I felt the media probably left out things about Suge Knight just to paint a certain picture. I came into *All Eyez on Me* with the attitude, 'I want to know the other side of Suge Knight.'"

In one of the film's most riveting sequences, Knight invites Shakur to a banquet where he physically tortures an underling in front of his other guests. "One thing kept coming up from people who hung out at Death Row: with Suge, you never really knew where his mind was. In this scene, he's like a snake playing with the prey before he eats it. The guy gets stomped because he stole money from Suge. He broke the Death Row rule."

Toward the end of his short life, Tupac fell in love with Quincy Jones' daughter Kidada, portrayed in *All Eyez on Me* by Annie Ilonzeh**.** "Kidada is a woman who tells it like it is and doesn't back down from Tupac," says the actress. In the film, she is initially resistant to Tupac's advances, citing public remarks he made about her father's relationships with white women. "Kidada got upset with Tupac, which I get because I have a white mother and a black father. Growing up with four sisters in

Dallas, Texas, I have strong opinions about interracial relationships, so I really loved the scene where I tell Tupac, 'You can't get away with that.' In that moment, Tupac and Kidada find their bond. She wants him to be a better person. She expects more from him. Tupac realizes Kidada's right and he melts. We both melt."

Bringing a Legendary Concert Back to Life

Musically, *All Eyez on Me* peaks with a rousing re-creation of Tupac's famed House of Blues concert. The show took place on July 4, 1996 in the now-shuttered Sunset Strip nightclub, after Shakur completed the sessions at Death Row Records that would cement his legacy as a titan of American music. The filmmakers re-staged the performance in an abandoned Kawasaki motorcycle plant outside of Atlanta, dressed for the occasion by production designer Derek R. Hill and his team.

"We basically had this huge empty shell and built the House of Blues from scratch," says director Boom.

Utilizing his expertise in music-video production, Boom choreographed the sequence to achieve maximum emotional impact. "We had several hundred extras on set," says the director. "I came out on stage before we started rolling camera and told everybody, 'Forget that we're filming a movie, this is Pac. You guys know the songs. You guys know the music. Feel free to sing along.'"

Boom made sure that none of the audience members saw Demetrius ahead of time. "I told them, 'I don't want any fake applause. I don't want fake nothing. I want real honesty. I want real excitement.' So then we roll camera, start the music, Demetrius comes out with 'Ambitionz Az a Ridah' playing, and you could see people in the audience crying. Girls, especially, were in tears when he jumped out on stage. More than any other moment in the movie, that was the turning point where everybody realized, 'we've really got something special here.' I don't know any other way to describe it except to say Pac's spirit was in Demetrius during that performance. It was incredible."

The performance was a turning point for Shipp as well. "Shooting that scene was amazing," says the young actor. "I'd be happy to redo that scene every day for the rest of my life, because the energy in the room, from everyone — the cast, the crew, the extras — it was like a thousand percent crazy. Everyone was hyped."

Producer L.T. Hutton notes that Tupac planned to tour the world but never got the chance. "After Tupac got out of prison he didn't really do many shows, so most people never got to see him perform these songs. The added value in *All Eyez on Me* is that we give people a chance to go to a Tupac concert within the movie."

Recreating a Murder on the Las Vegas Strip

By eerie coincidence, director Boom used Las Vegas as the setting for a previous project when he directed the rapper Nas performing dual roles as both Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls in the 2003 music video for "Got Yourself a Gun." Before wrapping production on *All Eyez on Me* in April 2016, Boom revisited the Nevada gambling mecca to recreate the night Tupac was fatally attacked in a drive-by shooting.

"Shooting in Las Vegas again, 13 years later, it all came together in a very emotional way for me," says Boom. "I knew we had done something great, and I also knew we were just beginning the journey. We finished shooting, but still had to edit it and get the movie out to the world."

Las Vegas locals and tourists alike were shocked to see Shipp appearing as Tupac. "When we took that ride on the Strip and I'm hanging out the Beamer, we literally shut down Las Vegas from the Flamingo to the Tropicana. We shut all that down, with all these people taking pictures and staring at us going, 'Oh my God, what's going on?' The energy was incredible."

An Untold Story

A riveting blend of music, sex, violence, betrayal, family turmoil, politics, drama and poetry, *All Eyez on Me* sheds fresh light on Tupac Shakur's meteoric rise and tragic fall. "I feel like Tupac wrote his own movie," producer Hutton says. "Tupac wanted to be the light that shined. He wanted to be the person who gave hope. This movie, it's not just a bunch of partying; it's not just a bunch of rhetoric and buffoonery. Of course it's entertainment, but there's also this undertone of wanting to change society and solve problems. This film is not just for black audiences. It's for all people in showing that we're all connected at so many different levels. *All Eyez on Me* is a journey that walks through all of it."

The young man who plays Tupac Shakur onscreen hopes *All Eyez on Me* gives audiences a richer understanding of the gifted rapper. "I want people to get a broader view of who Tupac really was," Shipp Jr. says. "Everybody loves Pac the 'thug,' but there's so much more. I love the 'Thug Life' Pac but I also love the poetic Pac, I love the philosopher Pac and the lover Pac. I want audiences to see all of those aspects in a way they've never seen before."

ABOUT THE CAST

DEMETRIUS SHIPP JR. (Tupac Shakur) makes his acting debut in this ***All Eyez on Me***, beating out 4,000 hopefuls to land the role. In addition to his uncanny resemblance to the real-life Shakur, Shipp has an interesting connection to the film as his father, Demetrius Shipp Sr., worked with the artist on the album "The Don Killuminati: The 7 Day Theory." Shipp Sr. also produced songs for the *Juice* soundtrack, the feature film that launched Shakur's acting career.

Before becoming an actor, Shipp was working at Target in Long Beach. Upon getting the role, "Meech," as he's affectionately known, spent his time preparing by immersing himself in Shakur's world. He pored over his performances and interviews to learn the rapper's nuances. In addition to spending time with many of Shakur's closest friends and family, he also enrolled in acting classes to train under the guidance of renowned Hollywood acting coach Angela Gibbs.

Shipp still works as a music producer alongside his father. With their label, Push the Line, the producers are currently grooming a newcomer, Caro, to become the next big thing.

A native of Carson, California, Shipp currently resides in Long Beach. He plays the drums in churches owned by his grandfathers, both of whom are local pastors.

KAT GRAHAM (Jada Pinkett) was born in Geneva and stepped into the entertainment industry at the age of six. From then until she was 14, she could be found in commercials for brands including Barbie, K-Mart, Pop-Tarts, Old Navy and Edison, as well as television shows such as "Like Family," "Grounded for Life," and "Lizzie McGuire." Her first big break came when she replaced a young Christina Milian as the host of the Disney channel's popular series "Movie Surfers."

A diligent student of the arts, she began to further her natural acting talents with vocal training, piano lessons and dance classes. At the age of 15 she was chosen by renowned choreographer Fatima to perform at the BET Awards as a background dancer for Bow-Wow. That experience led to other stints as a background dancer for Missy Elliott, Pharell and choreographers Hi Hat and Michael Rooney.

In addition to being a professional actress and dancer, Graham also began to pursue a career as a musical artist. One of the first songs she wrote and sang ("Derailed") was featured in a Jean-Claude Van Damme movie. Completing that song inspired her to purchase her own studio equipment and add producer to her list of talents. Although she had no formal production training, she soon mastered the techniques and developed her own unique style. "When I first got my equipment I had no one to guide me. I taught myself. I realized there was no other teenage, female producer in the world, so I was forced to look within myself for motivation." she recalls.

A year later she met superstar producer Damon Elliott (Pink, Mya, Destiny's Child), who turned out to be an influential mentor. While the two worked on perfecting Graham's skills as a musician and producer, she continued to work as an actress, starring on television shows "CSI," "The O.C.," "Malcolm In The Middle," "Joan of Arcadia," "Strong Medicine," and "Hannah Montana." She even forayed into music videos, appearing in Akon's "Mr. Lonely," 112's "What If," John Legend's "Used to Love U," B2K's "Why I Love You" and Musiq Soulchild's "Buddy."

At 17, Graham was selected by the Coca-Cola Company as part of an international campaign to market their soft drink Fanta. While promoting the campaign as a member of the "Fantanas" (as Capri/Strawberry), Graham simultaneously completed her degree in recording engineering. The daughter of a Liberian father and Russian Jewish mother, Graham, who speaks four languages, was exposed to different cultures and societies from an early age. She believes this is what has greatly influenced her artistically and personally and fosters her intense motivation to be a success.

A true triple threat, she did a world tour with The Black Eyed Peas; her voice is featured on two songs on Will.I.Am's solo release "Songs About Girls" ("I Got It From My Mama" and "The Donque Song" feat. Snoop Dogg) and she was featured in the film *17 Again* which stars Zac Efron and Matthew Perry.

Graham can currently be seen as Bonnie Bennett on the CW hit "The Vampire Diaries" and she stars with Logan Paul and Andrew Bachelor in the upcoming comedy *Where's the Money*. Recent work includes the film *Addicted*, directed by Bille Woodruff, and *The Roommate*, starring Minka Kelly, Leighton Meester, and Cam Gigandet. Other projects include the 2008 Hallmark Christmas film "Our First Christmas," an arc on "Hannah Montana," the modern-day *Breakfast Club* remake "Bleachers," and the film *Dance Fu*, which was the directorial debut for comedian Cedric the Entertainer.

DOMINIC SANTANA (Suge Knight) has, through talent and persistence, found his way to a rapidly burgeoning career. After booking several episodes of the long-running CW series "One Tree Hill," Santana co-starred in what would become a cult hit and the most-played movie ever on BET, "Love for Sale." It premiered to over 10 million viewers and quickly became a fan favorite. Then, in 2013, Santana guest-starred on BET's popular series "The Game."

Santana was born in Fayetteville, North Carolina, to an Army officer father and a popular singer/songwriter, Tracey Santana. Upon moving down to Wilmington, he began to seek out information on the local film scene and met the playwright

and screenwriter Samm-Art Williams, a producer of the classic sitcom "Martin." Santana began working as an extra on films such as *Black Knight*, starring Martin Lawrence. Hired as an extra on the WB's "Dawson's Creek," Santana landed his first speaking role. A last-minute script change called for a tall actor and a casting staffer suggested Santana; he auditioned on the spot and was given the role.

Santana was then called by longtime friend Micah Noble to audition at Screen Gems Studio for the new company Swirl Films. Within 20 minutes he was cast in their first production, *20 Funerals*. Although it was a small role, Santana delivered such a strong performance that he was cast as the lead in *Dead Heist* in 2006 and then again in *Furnace*, opposite Tom Sizemore and Ja Rule.

Since then, he has appeared in TV projects such as "Whittaker Bay," "Palmetto Pointe," "Little Britain USA" and "Bolden," as well as the features *Mr. Right* and *The Dempsey Sisters*.

CORY HARDRICT (Nigel) has shone in supporting roles in numerous high-profile features, including *Lovelace*, opposite Amanda Seyfried; *Warm Bodies*, with Nicholas Hoult; *Transcendence*, opposite Johnny Depp; and Oscar nominee *American Sniper*, alongside Bradley Cooper and Sienna Miller. Additionally, he was one of the leads in the indie sleeper *Brotherly Love*. Hardrict will next be seen in the comedy *Naked*, from Netflix.

Born and raised in Chicago, Hardrict immersed himself in the arts at a young age. In his teens local film and television projects were on the rise as productions moved from Los Angeles to Chicago. This gave Hardrict the opportunity to book regional print ads, commercials and TV movies. He began his professional acting career when he landed a role at an open call for the Oprah Winfrey film *There Are No Children Here*. Hardrict loved every moment of the experience and knew that to pursue a career in acting he needed to move to Los Angeles. With $75 in his pocket, he packed his bags and made the move out west.

Hardrict got his first big break when he landed a role in *Never Been Kissed*. From there his career flourished and he appeared in a multitude of films from drama to comedy, including *Crazy/Beautiful*, *Gran Torino* and *He's Just Not That Into You*. In 2011 Hardrict landed his biggest role up to that point, playing Corporal Jason Lockett in the sci-fi-action film *Battle Los Angeles*.

Hardrict currently lives in the Los Angeles area with his wife and son. In addition to working in film and television, he loves to spend time with his family, play basketball, travel to exotic places and explore new cultures.

ANNIE ILONZEH (Kidada Jones) will next star in independent film *Til Death Do Us Part* opposite Taye Diggs and Stephen Bishop set for October 2017 release.

Ilonzeh has had recurring roles on Fox's hit "Empire," as Harper Scott, CBS' "Person of Interest," USA Network's "Graceland," Lifetime's "Drop Dead Diva," CW's "Arrow" and ABC Family's "Switched at Birth." She is known for her starring role on ABC's revamp of "Charlie's Angels" and as Maya Ward on "General Hospital." Ilonzo has also guest starred on several episodes of HBO's "Entourage," USA's "Rush," CW's "Beauty and The Beast," Fox's "Melrose Place" and BET's "The Game."

Born and raised in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area of Texas, Ilonzeh is the eldest of five sisters. Her father is Nigerian and her mother is of Polish and English descent. She began taking dance lessons at a young age but quickly learned she was better suited for sports: basketball, soccer and track. "Our house was crazy and loud; there were five of us and we were all involved

in sports." In high school, Ilonzeh discovered her passion for basketball and it earned her a college scholarship to the University of Texas.

Ilonzeh visited Los Angeles in 2006 and the idea of an acting career suddenly appealed to her. Without looking back she moved to Los Angeles and gave herself one year to explore show business. After booking a few high profile advertising campaigns, she decided to stay. Many more commercials and small TV and movie roles followed. In March 2010 she got her big break and was cast on "General Hospital."

Ilonzeh spends most of her free time in the gym and considers it her "happy place." She creates her own routines, incorporating moves from her favorite sports such as boxing and mixed martial arts. Fitness is a major part of her life, and she also spends time with her Chihuahuas Capone and Pacino.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

BENNY BOOM (Director) is a pioneering music video and feature film director. After graduating from Temple University in his hometown of Philadelphia, he relocated to New York where he began his career, interning for Spike Lee's production company and working as a production assistant on several Woody Allen films.

He began crewing on commercial shoots and later began working as a first assistant director on various popular music videos. Since then, Boom has regularly collaborated with top-selling artists, directing multiple music videos for R&B singer Keyshia Cole, 50 Cent, LL Cool J, Nas, Nicky Minaj, P Diddy, and Busta Rhymes. Boom's fresh perspective and edge has heavily influenced the landscape of popular music as he helmed over 200 music videos. He's also directed commercial spots for major brands, including Jeep, Honda, Gatorade, and others.

In 2009, Boom made his feature film directorial debut with the action-comedy *Next Day Air*. His next action-thriller *S.W.A.T.: Firefight* was released in 2011. He made his television directorial debut in 2013, with an episode of The CW Network's popular "90210." Since then he has also directed episodes of "NCIS: Los Angeles" and "Empire." Boom also has his own consultancy, Groundwurk Media, specializing in digital distribution.

L.T. HUTTON (Producer) L.T. Hutton, born Lenton Terrell Hutton, is an American record producer, movie director and entrepreneur that hails from Beacon Hill on the Southside of Chicago. L.T. moved to Los Angeles, CA in the 90's with big dreams and aspirations. He made his debut in the entertainment industry as a background dancer for En Vogue, Da Brat amongst others before joining a music group that got signed by Death Row Records. L.T. worked closely with Snoop Dogg and Suge Knight and was the only member of his dissipated group that was kept on the label. L.T. went on to sign a deal with Universal where he produced throughout the years and collected several awards and plaques for his contribution to hip-hop.

L.T. is the founder of the film production company Program Pictures (in conjunction with Morgan Creek Pictures). He has long been a force and mainstay in the music industry and continues to make strides in the celebration and cultivation of hip-hop culture. Hutton's extensive background in music goes far beyond production. He has worked on many projects with legendary hip-hop label Death Row Records and also served as head of A&R at Ruthless Records and Interscope Records.

With an eye towards true storytellers and entertainers, Hutton's impact on the music game is undeniable. Collectively, his work has sold over a staggering 50 million albums, including work with Snoop Dogg, 2Pac, Mariah Carey, Da Brat, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, N.W.A, Omarion, Bow Wow and Ashanti. In addition, he has had songs placed in staple movies in pop culture, including A Thin Line Between Love and Hate and Juwanna Mann. Hutton's music productions have appeared on a wide variety of albums, including Tupac Shakur's Pac's Life, Bone Thugs-n-Harmony's and a host of others.

Hutton's music and stories are a fixture in an ever-changing landscape. With an awe-inspiring hustle and talent, the trailblazing entepreneur continues to find ways to create content that truly matters. L.T. has been married to his wife Sabrina Hutton for 18 years. They have four children and currently reside in Los Angeles, California