



For Immediate Release

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**Fathers, Sons and Family Secrets in P.O.V.'s "Hardwood"
– Encore Broadcast, Tuesday, Sept. 5 on PBS –**

Life of Harlem Globetrotter Poignantly Told by Filmmaker Son
In Academy Award®-Nominated Documentary

*"A moving Oscar-nominated documentary. SI's Pick of the Week."
- Amanda Cherrin, Sports Illustrated*

Hardwood is, first and foremost, the personal journey of director Hubert Davis. He sets out to find out why his father, former Harlem Globetrotter Mel Davis, made the decisions that so shaped Hubert's own life. And Hubert knows exactly whom to ask—Megan, his white mother who fell in love with Davis in the 1960s, when racism seemed to make a marriage impossible; Mary Etta, the black woman Davis eventually married; Hubert's older half-brother, Mawuli, whom he didn't know until he was 11; and, most importantly, the basketball-playing and -coaching old man himself.

No well-told family drama, however singular, is without wider social connotations. This is especially so in a time when the concept of family remains the bedrock of society, even as it faces unprecedented challenge and change. When the question of race enters the mix, the story is even more complex. The quiet surprise of **Hardwood** may be that the urge towards reconciliation on the part of Davis's son Hubert was strong enough to bring a new, extended family together for the first time—beyond prejudice and preconception.

Hubert Davis's short film **Hardwood**, nominated for an Academy Award®, will be rebroadcast on **Tuesday, Sept. 5, 2006** at 10:30 p.m. on PBS, as part of the 19th season of public television's P.O.V. series. P.O.V. continues on Tuesdays at 10 p.m., through October on PBS stations nationwide. (Check local listings.) American television's longest-running independent documentary series, P.O.V. is public television's premier showcase for point-of-view, nonfiction films.

In this his directorial debut, Hubert Davis is lucky enough to find two families ready to discuss things that were never before broached in the presence of the children on either side. He has skillfully woven interviews, archival footage and home movies into quiet, jazzy sequences that evoke a family's emotional ups and downs. The musicality is further suggested by the film's division into three movements—"love," "recollection," and "redemption."

The Davises are open, candid, and self-aware. No one is more ready to talk than Mel himself, and nothing is more key than the communication that has to occur between Mel and his two sons. In the manner of men, especially sports-playing men, they had been used to speaking obliquely about the most personal sides of their lives. Now the boys want answers and Mel wants to give them.

Whatever role racism played in his decisions, Mel admits basketball played as great a part as anything. Speaking of his young manhood, he admits he loved basketball before he ever loved a woman. These aren't the words of an obsessive hobbyist. Mel was the son of a 14-year-old inner-city mother, and it's difficult to overestimate basketball's role in forming his identity and offering him a way to succeed in the world. Beginning at Tennessee State, where he played and began coaching young kids, through his 18 years with the Harlem Globetrotters, to his later career as a youth basketball coach, the sport has defined not only Mel's life but also his philosophy of life.

Touring with the Globetrotters—"frail Mel" they called him because he was so skinny—would be heady stuff for any kid. When, on tour, he met Megan and the two fell in love. Mel's feeling that a marriage was "impossible" and that having children was "not a good idea" was more than the average 1960s black man's reluctance to defy convention. Such a course would likely have ended Mel's life as a Globetrotter—possibly ended any career he might have had in basketball or even in education. Still, Mel and Megan's on-again, off-again relationship—both abetted and excused by Mel's time on the road—never came to a real stop until the day Megan called after not hearing from Mel for some time, and Mary Etta answered the phone.

But Mel was to make a similar choice with Mary Etta and Mawuli. The Globetrotters toured constantly, and while the team afforded the family a better than average economic life, Mel's long absences proved disastrous for his marriage and especially hard on Mawuli. Mel's choice to stick with the Globetrotters, especially in the later years, was not merely a financial one—he loved the life. And perhaps he had never quite gotten over Megan, which may have helped fuel the conflicts he often found at home with Mary Etta.

Ultimately, Mel and Megan's love was not to be denied. Mel contacted Megan again—while he was on the road, of course—and both were curious to see if any of the old fire was there. It was. So Mel made another choice, soon living a life of two families: one official, one not. Before long, Hubert was on the way and Megan accepted raising him alone. Both boys, Hubert and Mawuli, suffered from their father's absence and both grew up sharing their respective mother's pain.

Hubert never met his father until he was eight years old. He was 11 when he went to live with Mel for the summer—a time that was confusing and difficult enough to have him begging his mother to come home. Nonetheless, shortly thereafter, Mel made another fateful decision: he came at last to live full-time with Hubert and his mother in Vancouver. While this decision no doubt caused more pain in Mary Etta's home, it seems, finally, to have set the stage for the reconciliation this extended family is intent on finding. In **Hardwood**, as in a well-played basketball game, everyone comes away with a sense of achievement.

"This was the film I had to make, and one only I could make," says director Hubert Davis. "I couldn't tell my own story without telling my dad's, and I couldn't tell his story without telling the story of my whole family."

Hardwood has been produced with the assistance of the Al Waxman Calling Card Program, an initiative of the Ontario Media Development Corporation, in partnership with TV Ontario and the National Film Board of Canada, with the participation of Canadian Independent Film Caucus, Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council, and Knowledge Network.

About the filmmaker:

Hubert Davis

Writer/Director/Editor

Hardwood is Hubert Davis's directorial debut. Previously, he worked as an assistant editor on Deepa Mehta's **Bollywood/Hollywood** and **The Republic of Love**. Since 2002, Davis has edited

more than 30 commercials and music videos at Toronto's Panic and Bob Editing. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Film and Communications from McGill University and studied creative writing at the University of British Columbia. Davis recently completed his first fictional short, **Aruba**, which had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in 2006.

Credits:

Writer/Director/Editor: Hubert Davis
Producer: Erin Faith Young
Co-producer: Peter Starr
Director of Photography: David Tennant

Running Time: 29:00

Awards & Festivals:

- CINE Golden Eagle Award, 2005

Official Selections, 2005:

- Cleveland International Film Festival – *Best Documentary, Short Film*
- Black Maria Film Festival, Jersey City, N.J. – *Jury's' Choice*
- Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, Durham, N.C. – *Honorable Mention - Filmmaker Award, Center for Documentary Studies*
- Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, Missoula, Mont.
- DocuFest Cinematique, Wilmington, N.C.
- 2005 Thousand Islands Film Festival, Brockville, Ontario, Canada
- 2005 London Canadian Film Festival, London, Ontario, Canada
- 2005 Film Festival, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada
- 2005 Moving Pictures Film Festival, Vancouver, BC, Canada
- 2005 Berlinale Film Festival - International Student's Conference, Berlin, Germany (Truth, Changing Strategies in Documentary Cinema)
- Kingston Canadian Film Festival, Kingston, Ontario, Canada
- Hamilton Film Festival, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Official Selections, 2004:

- Yorkton Short Film & Video Festival, Regina, Saskatchewan – *Best Film of the Festival, Best Documentary Short Subject, Best Direction Non-Dramatic, Best Editing*
- Canadian Film Centre's Worldwide Short Film Festival, Toronto – *Best Documentary Short, Honorable Mention - Kodak Award for Cinematography in a Canadian Short*
- Innoversity Creative Summit, Toronto – *Best Film, "Show and Tell" Competition*
- Hot Docs International Film Festival, Toronto
- InFact Theatrical Documentary Showcase, Los Angeles
- Vancouver International Film Festival, Vancouver, BC, Canada
- Calgary International Film Festival, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
- Cinefest Sudbury International Film Festival, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada
- Les Rencontres Internationales du Documentaire de Montreal, Canada
- Detroit Docs International Film Festival



Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and now in its 19th season on PBS, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running showcase on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through October, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought nearly 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide, and now has a Webby Award-winning online series, P.O.V.'s Borders. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V is available online at www.pbs.org/pov.

P.O.V. Interactive (www.pbs.org/pov)

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces our Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. It also produces a Web site for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of P.O.V. films through community-based and educational applications, focusing on involving viewers in activities, information and feedback on the issues. In addition, www.pbs.org/pov houses our unique *Talking Back* feature, filmmaker interviews and viewer resources, and information on the P.O.V. archives as well as myriad special sites for previous P.O.V. broadcasts.

P.O.V. Community Engagement and Education

P.O.V. provides Discussion Guides for all films as well as curriculum-based P.O.V. Lesson Plans for select films to promote the use of independent media among varied constituencies. Available free online, these originally produced materials ensure the ongoing use of P.O.V.'s documentaries with educators, community workers, opinion leaders and general audiences nationally. P.O.V. also works closely with local public television stations to partner with local museums, libraries, schools and community-based organizations to raise awareness of the issues in P.O.V.'s films. *Youth Views*, P.O.V.'s youth engagement program, expands these efforts by working directly with youth service organizations.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Ford Foundation, PBS and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s Community Engagement activities and the *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston, and Thirteen/WNET New York.

American Documentary, Inc. (www.americandocumentary.org)

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback, to educational opportunities and community participation. Cara Mertes is executive director of American Documentary | P.O.V.

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