

Focus

COCA-COLA PRESENTS The Essence Music Festival

ANNOUNCING 1999 CELEBRITY HOSTS

Coca-Cola Presents The Essence Music Festival, has added the legendary R&B group The O'Jays, with special guest Gerald Levert, to the lineup of artists scheduled to perform in New Orleans at the Superdome during this year's Fourth of July weekend celebration. This completes the 1999 concert bill, which also includes Grammy sensations Lauryn Hill, R. Kelly, Patti LaBelle and Monica, along with many other chart-topping favorites such as Erykah Badu, Brian McKnight, Deborah Cox, Dru Hill, Maze featuring Frankie Beverly, The Temptations and Will Downing and Gerald Albright.

Ensuring that each evening is filled with nonstop entertainment, the ce-



Patti LaBelle

lebrity hosts this year are comedians Mark Curry, A.J. Jamal and Tommy Davidson.

Coca-Cola Presents The Essence Music Festival, will also offer the series of Empowerment Seminars that consistently draw large crowds to the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. Other features that make the

event unique will again be presented including the Essence Marketplace and Book Center with author signings.

For additional information on Coca-Cola Presents The Essence Music Festival, see current and future issues of Essence Web site at www.essence.com.



Lauren Hill

CHRIS ROCK

BIGGER & BLACKER

Chris Rock will unveil his all-new stand-up act in an exclusive HBO comedy event shot June 17-19 at the legendary Apollo Theatre in Harlem. Chris Rock: Bigger & Blacker debuts Saturday, July 10 (11:15 p.m. - 12:15 a.m. ET), on HBO.

"The Apollo is the only place to play," says Rock of the famed venue. He plans to cover a wide range of topics in his new material, including race and relationships. Rock selected the title of the special, he says, as "a knock-off on LL Cool J's second album, 'Bigger & Deffer.' It's a title that puts pressure on myself."

Chris Rock: Bigger & Blacker is his third comedy special for HBO, and follows his groundbreaking 1996 Emmy winner "Bring the pain."

The New York Times described Chris Rock as "probably the funniest and smartest comedian working today," while Vanity Fair called him "young, gifted and the funniest man in America." The Washington Post championed him as "a brilliant comic, a cheering presence, a humble star," noting, "his comedy is full of intelligence, impudence and take-no-prisoners social comment."

His hit late-night show, "the Chris rock show," will return to HBO for its fourth season this September. Presented from New York, the weekly show features Rock's signature high-energy blend of comedy, music and talk, with guests from entertainment, politics and other fields. "The Best of The Chris Rock

Show" will be released on HBO Home video in late summer.



Chris Rock

Dmitri Matheny

Dmitri Matheny has just been named "Best New Artist" in the Jazzz Readers Poll (along with Brad Mahldau, Ravi Coltrane and Stefon Harris) and "Talent Deserving Wider Recognition" in the Down BEAt International Critics Poll. A rising star celebrated for his "warm romantic tone," "soaring lyricism" and "masterful technique," Matheny is a jazz artist whose inimitable sound has been described as "so cool it'll run a shiver through your martini."

Born on Christmas Day in Nashville, Tennessee, and raised in Georgia and Arizona, Dmitri began playing the trumpet at age 9. He is an honors graduate of the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan and of the Berklee College of Music in Boston. While in college, the young trumpeter led his own bands while working professionally with the Temptations, Martha Reeves, the True Colors Big Band and Sam Rivers. In 1989 he graduated magna cum laude from Berklee and relocated to the San Francisco Bay Area.

Inspired by his teacher and mentor the legendary flugelhornist Art Farmer, Matheny set aside the trumpet a decade ago and has since become identified with the more lyrical flugelhorn. Today, Matheny performs over 100 concerts annually on tour with the Dmitri Matheny Group, Dmitri Matheny Jazz Orchestra and Dmitri Matheny & Darrell Grant Duo. He has appeared at the Monterey,



Dmitri Matheny

Telluride, and San Francisco jazz festivals, in night clubs from Portland to Poland, and in prestigious concert halls worldwide, including regular appearances in New York at the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall.

Matheny has released three critically-acclaimed CDs as a leader on the Monarch Records label: Red Reflections (1995), Penumbra: The Moon Sessions (1997), and Starlight Café (1998).

Wild Wild Will

In his latest film, the comedy-adventure "Wild Wild West," Will Smith plays a character who is, like the actor himself, long on charm and style. He's James T. West, a special government agent assigned to protect the president of the United States (circa 1869) from a brilliantly diabolical assassin whose arsenal of weapons includes an 80-foot mechanical tarantula. It was a role that Smith thoroughly enjoyed.

"James West is the coolest man around," says Smith. "He's straightforward and direct. There's a certain way to do things - a code - and that's what he lives by." Which is not to say that West is always on top of the situation. "What I wanted to bring to the character was just a touch of uncertainty," he says, believing it's the uncertainty that humanizes the hero. "You know he's going to do everything in his power to win, but you're not completely sure how it's going to come out until it's done."

Smith credits much of the film's buoyancy to the relationship between his character and the Artemus Gordon character played by Kevin Kline, as two operatives working on the same but employing entirely different methods and not always in perfect communication.

"West is a man of action," Smith explains, "whereas Artemus relies on gadgets and disguises

to do his work." The trouble with Artemus is that he tends to fill up his partner's pockets with ingenious explosive devices and other useful contraptions without always letting him know. "I find out about 'em at really inopportune moments," says Smith. "It would be nice if he let me know before he slipped something into my pocket. But he means well, and it does make for great comedy."

It was partly the comic element that interested Smith when he was given the script by his

former "Men in Black" director, Barry Sonnenfeld. But he warned to "Wild Wild West" because of the whole range of elements it contained: "excitement, action, adventure, amazing visual effects," and what he calls "a brilliant interaction" between himself and his fellow stars, Kevin Kline, Kenneth Branagh and Salma Hayek.

Filming on location in Santa Fe, New Mexico, also gave Smith an opportunity to take a 3-week crash course on horseback riding, an experience about which he will only say, "You have to have a really good saddle."



Will Smith is James T. West and Kevin Kline's Artemus Gordon in the newly released *Wild, Wild West*. Smith decided to become involved with this movie project when he found it contained a whole range of elements: "excitement, action, adventure and amazing visual effects."

WILL SMITH "JAMES WEST" **KEVIN KLINE** "ARTEMUS GORDON"

WILD WILD WEST

IT'S A WHOLE NEW WEST.

KENNETH BRANAGH SALMA HAYEK

WARNER BROS. PRESENTS

A PETERS ENTERTAINMENT / SONNENFELD-JOSEPHSON PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH TODMAN, SIMON, LEMASTERS PRODUCTIONS

A BARRY SONNENFELD FILM WILL SMITH KEVIN KLINE KENNETH BRANAGH SALMA HAYEK "WILD WILD WEST" TED LEVINE

MUSIC BY ELMER BERNSTEIN CD BY GRAHAM PLACE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BILL TODMAN, JR., JOEL SIMON, KIM LEMASTERS, TRACY GLASER, BARRY JOSEPHSON

PRODUCED BY JON PETERS AND BARRY SONNENFELD DIRECTED BY BARRY SONNENFELD

PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED
Some Material May Be Inappropriate for Children Under 13

www.wildwildwest.net Soundtrack Album on Overbrook / Interscope Records

SOUNDTRACK ALBUM INCLUDES "WILD WILD WEST" BY WILL SMITH FEATURING DRU HILL AND KOOL MO DEE WITH NEW MUSIC BY ENRIQUE IGLESIAS - BLACKSTREET FAITH EVANS - GUY AND DR. ORE & EMINEM

MAKE SURE TO VISIT THE WARNER BROS. STORES. YOUR HEADQUARTERS FOR WILD WILD WEST GEAR