



Office of Public Affairs

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**Media only:** Fleur Paysour (202) 610-3290, [paysourf@si.edu](mailto:paysourf@si.edu)

**Public only:** (202) 633-1000

### **An Evening with Melvin and Mario Van Peebles**

The father-and-son filmmakers take the stage together to discuss the highlights and the hurdles of a combined film career that spans more than 60 years as writers, producers, directors and actors. The program will take place Saturday, May 7 at 6 p.m. in the Ring Auditorium of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. It is free and open to the public. Reservations are required. Call (202) 287-3382 or send an e-mail to [AMRSVP@si.edu](mailto:AMRSVP@si.edu)

Anthony Gittens, executive director of the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities and founder and director of Filmfest D.C. will interview the Van Peebles. A screening of the 2004 docu-feature "BAADASSSSS!" precedes the discussion. Written, produced and directed by Mario Van Peebles, the film tells the story of the making of his father's 1971 classic "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song." Turned down by major studios, including Columbia where he had a three-movie deal, Melvin Van Peebles was forced to self-finance the project, putting himself in trouble with creditors and unions. Film historians say the movie broke new ground because of its unvarnished portrayal of African American rage. "Sweetback ..." became the top grossing independent hit of 1971, spawning a decade of similar screen stories such as "Shaft," "Superfly" and "Foxy Brown." The Mario Van Peebles film-behind-the film drew three IFP Independent Spirit Award nominations: Best Feature, Best Director and Best Screenplay. The film contains mature language and adult themes.

The event is held in conjunction with the exhibition "Close Up in Black: African American Film Posters," on view from May 7 through July 28 at the Smithsonian's International Gallery, 1100 Jefferson Drive, SW. Hours are 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. daily and admission is free.

"Close Up in Black: African American Film Posters" was organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) in collaboration with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the Smithsonian's Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture. The Washington, D.C. showing was made possible by the generous support of The Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

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