

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THE INSPIRATIONAL AND ACCLAIMED DOCUMENTARY  
“BALLOU”  
MAKES ITS PASSIONATE PREMIERE AT NEW YORK’S  
URBAN WORLD FESTIVAL SEPTEMBER 11-12<sup>TH</sup>, 2008**

*“You have got to see this documentary, it is an incredible story!”*

- Ellen DeGeneres, **The Ellen DeGeneres Show**

New York, NY (August 27, 2008) - Filmmakers Michael Patrei and Casey Callister proudly present the nationally recognized and highly applauded story about a Washington, DC urban youth high school marching band overcoming adversity with the direction and guidance of their band leader. The documentary feature “**BALLOU**” was selected to screen at this year’s **Urban World Festival**, located at the Tribeca Film Center September 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:45 am and September 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:15 pm.

“The Urban World Film Festival is the perfect place to premiere the **BALLOU** documentary in New York City, and it is an honor to be part of this great event,” states a proud Patrei. “I think the audiences at the festival will be surprised by the film...and I can’t wait to be a part of it!”

Ballou High School is located just three miles away from both the White House and the Department of Education Building in Washington, D.C. – in a neighborhood rocked by crime, poverty, drugs and despair. Ballou High School has the highest crime and poverty rates in the country with an over 50% drop-out rate.

But Ballou High School also has the *Majestic Marching Knights* and its band leader, Darrell Watson. In an effort to repay the community and the school’s music program for saving his own life, Watson returned to Ballou from college. It was through his dedication and compassion that he was able to eradicate the negativity from the students’ hearts. Together, they brought a positive change to their school and their community with music, dedication, hard work, discipline and a bit of pride – and it changed their lives as well.

It is often said that truth is stranger than fiction. In the case of the *Majestic Marching Knights* and the film **BALLOU**, truth is also stronger, more uplifting and more inspirational. This is their story.

**BALLOU** follows the talented marching band and leader for a year as they overcome adversity and head for the National High Stepping Marching Band Competition in Alabama. There are special appearances in the film from such noteworthy urban community leaders Rev. Jesse Jackson, Gen (ret.) Colin Powell, DC Mayor Adrian Fenty and Congressman John Lewis.

The life story of Ballou High School *Majestic Marching Knights* so moved the entire D.C. community, that the film was given a special screening at **The White House** by First Lady and former teacher Laura Bush. The life stories of the students were shared nationwide when they appeared on **Good Morning America** and **The Ellen DeGeneres Show**, and **ABC World News** honored them as the *Persons of the Year* (2007).

The Mayor of Washington, DC Adrian Fenty, recently declared June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 as *Ballou Band Day* in the District of Columbia.

Now, the story of **BALLOU** is about to take the nation by storm. The critics have already weighed in: "... a lively and affecting documentary," wrote Ann Hornaday of *The Washington Post*. "Overall, the *Ballou* documentary is an entertaining and inspiring tribute to the hard work of those trying to make a difference," raved T.M. Eddins Jr. of *On Tap Magazine*. "Moviegoers are sure to leave the theater with a warm heart and a renewed sense of confidence in the most important element of the future: our children."

"We wanted to show that if you give students an outlet, they can achieve anything. Ballou can represent any inner-city school that has struggled" Callister told the *Washington Examiner*.

Within the last three years, the *Majestic Marching Knights* competed throughout the nation and were placed in the Top 5. All 14 senior band members from the movie **BALLOU** graduated and went on to college.

In addition, the legend of the *Majestic Marching Knights* continues to grow and expand. They were chosen out of hundreds of applicants to perform with 18 other marching bands at the annual Tournament of Roses Parade on January 1, 2009, and will play again in New York City during the annual Macy's Parade on Thanksgiving Day 2009, when only 11 bands from the country are selected.

The DVD of **BALLOU** will be released nationwide by Patrei and Callister's *Garden Thieves Pictures* on November 18, 2008, giving the viewer a more in-depth insight to the band members; deleted scenes; extended interviews with Chuck Brown and Denyce Graves; additional interview footage with Rev. Jesse Jackson, Gen. Colin Powell and Marion Barry; and a commentary featuring director and producer. A CD Soundtrack is also available at iTunes and Amazon.

Patrei and Callister have teamed up with writer /producer Michael Gozzard (Pride) to co-produce a feature filmed based on the life story of Darrell Watson. They are currently in negotiations with a major Hollywood Studio.

**Garden Thieves Pictures** is an independent film company based in Washington, DC. Garden Thieves Pictures continues to produce award winning quality short films and full-length featured documentaries played for a wide-range of audiences.

[www.gardenthieves.com](http://www.gardenthieves.com)

For more information on **BALLOU, documentary film**, go to: [www.balloumovie.com](http://www.balloumovie.com)

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