



Presents

THE LEAGUE

A film by Sam Pollard

103 mins, USA, 2023

Language: English

Distribution

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SYNOPSIS

Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Sam Pollard (MLK/FBI), executive produced by Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson (Oscar-winning SUMMER OF SOUL), Tariq Trotter (DESCENDANT), and produced by RadicalMedia, THE LEAGUE celebrates the dynamic journey of Negro League baseball's triumphs and challenges through the first half of the twentieth century. The story is told through previously unearthed archival footage and never-before-seen interviews with legendary players like Satchel Paige and Buck O’Neil – whose early careers paved the way for the Jackie Robinson era – as well as celebrated Hall of Famers Willie Mays and Hank Aaron who started out in the Negro Leagues. From entrepreneurial titans Cumberland Posey and Gus Greenlee, whose intense rivalry fueled the rise of two of the best baseball teams ever to play the game, to Effa Manley, the activist owner of the Newark Eagles and the only woman ever admitted to the National Baseball Hall of Fame, THE LEAGUE explores Black baseball as an economic and social pillar of Black communities and a stage for some of the greatest athletes to ever play the game, while also examining the unintended consequences of integration.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Baseball – I grew up in the 1960s being a huge baseball fan. My dad's favorite team was the St. Louis Cardinals, so that became my favorite team. They had a roster of great players, many of whom happened to be Black or Latino, like Bill White, Curt Flood, Orlando Cepeda, Lou Brock. They were a team that excited ball fans during that decade and would go on to win the 1964 and 1967 World Series. Now I knew who Jackie Robinson was and that it was because of him Blacks had integrated the Major Leagues in 1947. But what I did not know much about in 1964 at the age of 14 was that he had come out of the Negro Leagues and that the Negro Leagues had been home to Black and Latino ballplayers who had to play segregated baseball during the height of the Jim Crow era. But being the curious young man that I was, I began to do research about the Negro Leagues and some of the teams: the Kansas City Monarchs, the Homestead Greys, the Pittsburgh Crawfords, and the phenomenal players like the legendary Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, Cool Papa Bell, Monte Irvin, and Rube Foster, who helped create the first iteration of the Negro Leagues in the 1920s. Back then, I did not know that almost 60 years later I would direct a documentary about the rich legacy of the Negro Leagues.

My vision was simple. Find voices of those who played the game, surround them with historians and fans of the Negro Leagues, use as much archival footage and stills I could find and, to add drama, shoot period recreations and create animation that would add another level of cinematic texture to the film. Fortunately, I was able to find the voices of former Negro League players because Byron Motley (whose dad, Bob Motley, had been a Negro League Umpire) had interviewed and recorded many former players years ago. It was a treasure trove of wonderful voices and added immensely to the telling of the story. Also, fortunately many of the die-hard Negro League historians had access or knew where to find footage that I had never seen, which added enormously to visualizing the story.

As a filmmaker and director, I could not have been better served in having all the above elements to tell such a rich and powerful story.

Sam Pollard – Director

ABOUT THE FILM

THE LEAGUE is a feature-length documentary, directed by acclaimed filmmaker Sam Pollard, executive produced by Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson (Oscar-winning SUMMER OF SOUL), Tariq Trotter (DESCENDANT), and produced by RadicalMedia, which recounts the dramatic rise and fall of the Negro Leagues – providing a lens on the dazzling parallel world of Black baseball which was created by African Americans during the Jim Crow years.

In the American popular imagination, the story of African Americans in baseball begins on April 15th, 1947, when Jackie Robinson first strode onto Ebbets’ field in a Dodger’s uniform. But, as THE LEAGUE reveals, the true story of Black baseball is far more complex and intriguing than the commonly accepted narrative of Jackie Robinson’s triumphant rise. We learn that the integration of the national pastime – while a moral necessity – came at a cost, in that it led to the demise of a revered and consequential Black institution, the Negro Leagues.

The story of Black baseball begins a century before the Jackie Robinson era. Black people have been playing baseball as long as white people have been playing baseball – since as far back as the Civil War. And while some segregation in the sport always existed, the color line on the ball field was not rigidly enforced until the end of the nineteenth century, as racial lines hardened in all aspects of American life.

In the early 1900s, spurred on by a talented pitcher, manager and ball-club owner named Andrew Rube Foster, African Americans developed a uniquely aggressive and entertaining style of play. In 1920, inspired by the Black nationalist fervor of the Harlem Renaissance, Foster persuaded his fellow team owners to join together in the first Negro National League. He sought to build a self-sustaining league, created by and for African Americans. Borrowing from abolitionist Frederick Douglass, Foster adopted the motto: “We are the Ship, All Else The Sea.” By 1924, Negro National League teams faced off against teams from the rival Eastern Colored League in a thrilling and glamorous event called the Colored World Series.

Black baseball teams came to provide social cohesion, entertainment, and economic sustenance across segregated America. Tragically, after ushering in this prosperous era of Black baseball, Rube Foster suffered carbon monoxide poisoning from a leaky gas pipe and spent the final years of his life in a sanatorium. Two years into the Great Depression, the first Negro National league fell apart.

Meanwhile, the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural south to the industrial Northeast was well underway. And as the urban populations grew, baseball became a central feature of Black life in cities like Dayton, OH, Chicago, IL, and Pittsburgh PA. In Pittsburgh, an intense rivalry fueled the rise of two of the best baseball teams ever to play the game. Cumberland Posey, the son of the wealthiest Black man in Pittsburgh, built the Homestead Grays in the 1920s. But in the following decade, his dominance was challenged by a charismatic number runner/entrepreneur/banker named Gus Greenlee, who poured his money into the Pittsburgh Crawfords. In Pittsburgh, legendary players like Josh Gibson and Satchel Paige captivated audiences and provided a joyful diversion during the depths of America’s Great Depression.

In 1933, Greenlee and others created Black baseball's all-star game – the East-West Classic – which drew 50,000 fans to Chicago's Comiskey Park, becoming a seminal event for Black America in the 30s and 40s. The success of the East-West Classic signaled that the aggressive, up-tempo and entertaining style of ball played in the Negro Leagues could bring enthusiastic crowds to the ballpark.

For many years, Black and white teams had barnstormed against one another in the off season, although they were barred from competing in any official league games. But in the mid-1930s, a series of good-natured public face-offs between star Major League pitcher “Dizzy” Dean and Satchel Paige broadened public awareness of Paige's enormous talent and charisma. Satchel Paige's all-star team beat Dizzy Dean's team in the majority of the matchups, and Dean told the press that Paige was the best pitcher in all of baseball.

During World War II, African Americans – including nearly 120 Black ballplayers – embraced the opportunity to fight for their country. The war highlighted America's racial contradictions, where African Americans could fight and die for their country but couldn't play integrated baseball in America. Led by the influential Black newspaper, the Pittsburgh Courier, African Americans and their allies waged a “Double V” campaign, fighting for victory against fascism abroad and racial injustice at home. Seeing an opportunity for change, activists invited celebrated actor Paul Robeson to a meeting of white baseball club owners, where Robeson implored the baseball establishment to allow for integration on the field. Longtime baseball Commissioner Kennesaw Mountain Landis publicly denied that any official impediments existed for the signing of Black players, but behind the scenes, Landis's resistance had always halted racial progress.

Meanwhile, the specter of Black sacrifice during the war – along with the death of Commissioner Landis in 1944 – provided the perfect opening for the dismantling of racial apartheid on the ballfield. Brooklyn Dodgers owner Branch Rickey signed Jackie Robinson to an organized baseball contract in 1945, making it possible for Robinson to step on the field as a Brooklyn Dodger in 1947.

Robinson's spectacular success in game after game, and his dignified bearing in the face of taunts and on-field violence, inspired Black and white fans who flocked to Dodgers games in record numbers. After Robinson, other star Black players like Larry Doby, Roy Campanella and Monte Irvin were lured away by the Majors. In response, Effa Manley, the activist owner of the Newark Eagles, began speaking out. She criticized Branch Rickey for poaching players without respecting the legitimacy of the Negro Leagues. She demanded that Rickey – and Cleveland Indians owner Bill Veeck – provide compensation for the players they acquire. (Rickey refused, but Bill Veeck provided a modest payment for Larry Doby's contract.)

As Manley predicted, the precipitous drop in Black attendance at Negro League baseball games ultimately sounded the death knell for the venerable African American institution. By 1960, the Negro Leagues were done. Black businesses – concessionaires, barbershops, hotels and clubs – which drew sustenance from African American patronage during the baseball season – also began to decline. In general, the independent Black economy which was born of segregation, took a hit following integration. In an on-camera interview, Bob Kendrick reflects, “What was right ethically, what was right morally, was devastating economically.”

The Negro Leagues were a vibrant example of Black enterprise, self-determination and excellence behind the color line which flourished in a time of overwhelming racism and oppression. Although the difficult march towards equality was marked by tragedy,

disappointment and pyrrhic victories, these sixty years of “Black ball” are both a reminder of our horrifying history and a tremendous point of pride. But THE LEAGUE is not just a story about sports. It is a story about exclusion... about a community coming together to triumph over adversity... about the ironies of inclusion in America. It is our collective history.

To tell this compelling story, THE LEAGUE draws from the recollections of Bob Motley, former umpire of the Negro Leagues, whose eye-witness accounts are interwoven with moving and insightful on-camera commentary by Negro League ballplayers like Hank Aaron, Satchel Paige, Buck O’Neil and Monte Irvin, as well as dedicated historians and scholars of the Negro Leagues.

LIST OF INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

Larry Lester

Larry Hogan

Mark Whitaker

Bob Kendrick

Phil Dixon

Shakeia Taylor

Gerald Early

Jim Overmyer

Donald Spivey

Leslie Heaphy

Andrea Williams

Layton Revel

James Brunson

Rob Ruck

BIOGRAPHIES

SAM POLLARD – Director

SAM POLLARD is an accomplished feature film and television video editor, and documentary producer/director. Between 1990 and 2010, Mr. Pollard edited a number of Spike Lee's films: *Mo' Better Blues*, *Jungle Fever*, *Girl 6*, *Clockers*, and *Bamboozled*. Mr. Pollard and Mr. Lee co-produced a number of documentary productions for the small and big screen, *Four Little Girls*, a feature-length documentary about the 1963 Birmingham church bombings which was nominated for an Academy Award and *When The Levees Broke*, a four part documentary that won numerous awards, including a Peabody and three Emmy Awards. Five years later in 2010 he co-produced and supervised the edit on the follow up to *Levees If God Is Willing And Da Creek Don't Rise*. Since 2012 Mr. Pollard has completed as a producer/director *Slavery By Another Name* a 90-minute documentary for PBS that was in competition at the Sundance Festival, *August Wilson: The Ground On Which I Stand* a 90-minute documentary in 2015 for American Masters, *Two Trains Runnin'* a feature length documentary in 2016 that premiered at the Full Frame Film Festival. *Sammy Davis Jr., I've Gotta Be Me* for American Masters premiered at the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival. In 2019 Mr. Pollard co-directed the Six Part Series *Why We Hate* that premiered on The Discovery Channel. In 2020 he was one of the directors on the 2020 HBO Series *Atlanta's Missing and Murdered: The Lost Children*. He also completed in 2020 *MLK/FBI* that premiered at the 2020 Toronto Film Festival and the New York Film Festival.

ROBIN ESPINOLA – Producer

Robin Espinola is a documentary filmmaker, producer and writer. Her work has appeared on HBO, ABC, PBS, Lifetime and Investigation Discovery. Prior to producing *The League*, Espinola served as a story producer for two premium HBO series: *The Vow (Part 2)* and *Murder on Middle Beach*. In 2019, Espinola received the Eric Barnouw Award from the Organization of American Historians for *The Chinese Exclusion Act*, a documentary she produced and co-wrote with Ric Burns and Li-Shin Yu for PBS. With Ric Burns and Steeplechase Films, she produced numerous historical documentaries for the American Experience series on PBS, including *The Pilgrims*, *Death and the Civil War*, *Into the Deep: America, Whaling & the World* and *Eugene O'Neill*. While at Steeplechase, she also produced *Nueva York*, a film for museum exhibition on the history of Latinos in New York; and served as a co-producer for *Andy Warhol* on American Masters. For Detour.com, Espinola wrote and directed an immersive audio documentary about Harlem cuisine and culture, curated by chef Marcus Samuelsson. Espinola's work has been recognized with two Primetime Emmy Award nominations and a News and Documentary Emmy Award for research. She began her career at Blackside, Inc. in Boston, the company best-known for producing *Eyes on the Prize*, the seminal television series on the history of the civil rights movement. She received a Bachelor of Arts in American civilization and semiotics from Brown University in Providence, RI.

DAVE SIRULNICK – Producer, President of Entertainment, RadicalMedia

Award-winning producer Dave Sirulnick, President of Entertainment at RadicalMedia, lends his extensive industry expertise towards creating and producing premium films, series, documentaries, specials, and live events. Sirulnick has served as creative executive producer on a wide range of RadicalMedia projects, including the Academy Award, Grammy, and BAFTA Award-Winning documentary *Summer of Soul* which has been recognized as one of the most awarded documentaries in history; the Emmy-winning film, *Hamilton* on Disney+; the Emmy-nominated film, David Byrne's *American Utopia* on HBO directed by Spike Lee; Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt* on History Channel, as well as GRANT, the network's highest performing mini-series of all time; the documentary *Spring Awakening: Those You've Known* for HBO; *Hamilton's America* with Lin-Manuel Miranda for PBS; the film of the Broadway show *Oh, Hello* on Broadway for Netflix; IDA Documentary Award winning series *Bobby Kennedy for President* and *My Next Guest Needs No Introduction* with David Letterman on Netflix; *Lebron James More Than an Athlete* for ESPN+; and PBS *American Portrait*, a series for PBS. Sirulnick is currently serving as an Executive Producer on *Rainn Wilson and the Geography of Bliss* for Peacock. Prior to joining RadicalMedia, Sirulnick served as Executive Vice President of News, Docs & Production at MTV for 28 years, in which he created, led, and/or produced some the channels most iconic series including the MTV Video Music Awards; the Emmy award-winning documentary series *Made*; the Emmy Award-winning series *True Life*; *TRL: Total Request Live*; *MTV News Week in Rock*; and developed and produced MTV's Peabody Award winning Choose or Lose programming to inform and register young voters. Sirulnick also helmed the creation of award-winning music documentaries for the network that featured the likes of superstars such as Miley Cyrus, Kanye West, Lady Gaga, Drake, Ed Sheeran, Nicki Minaj, and Demi Lovato.

JEN ISAACSON – Producer, Executive Producer, RadicalMedia

Jen Isaacson is an award-winning producer with over a decade dedicated to the craft of making premium film and television. She has worked on narrative and documentary films, as well as non-scripted series, for Netflix, Hulu, Apple TV+, NatGeo, CNN, Apple TV+, Peacock, HBO, YouTube, PBS, BBC, and OWN. Jen is currently an Executive Producer at RadicalMedia where she produced Questlove's Academy Award-winning documentary, *Summer of Soul (...Or, When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)* about the Harlem Cultural Festival in 1969. Her other recent projects include Oprah and Prince Harry helmed *The Me You Can't See*, the non-scripted series on mental health for Apple TV+, *Shadowland* on Peacock; as well as Joe Berlinger's entire slate of true-crime projects for Netflix, including *Crime Scene: The Times Square Killer*, *Crime: Scene: The Texas Killing Fields*, *Conversations with a Killer: The Jeffery Dahmer Tapes*, *Conversations with a Killer: The John Wayne Gacy Tapes*, *Ghislaine Maxwell: Filthy Rich*, *Madoff: The Monster of Wall Street*, and more. Jen is currently serving as an Executive Producer on *Rainn Wilson and the Geography of Bliss*.

BYRON MOTLEY – Producer

Byron Motley is a modern-day Renaissance man; a producer, documentarian, author, lecturer, singer/songwriter and photographer.

A native of Kansas City, MO., Byron has had a long fascination and appreciation of Negro League history having heard many tales about the leagues from his father Bob Motley, who was a chief umpire in the leagues for over a decade. When his father help to found the Negro League Baseball Museum in Kansas City, Byron made it his life's mission to keep this little known chapter of American history alive and pass it on to younger generations by documenting the stories of former Negro League ball players. In the past 24 years, Byron has personally conducted over 100+ interviews with former players, players' family members, and MLB Hall of Famers.

Byron co-authored his father's memoir *The Negro Baseball Leagues* (Skyhorse Publishing, Inc, 2020). The book chronicles his father's journey growing up in a segregated America, becoming one of the first African-American Marines (the Montfort Point Marines) and his experiences in Negro baseball.

Byron's extensive interview archives and his father's story were the foundation of his pitch to getting a comprehensive documentary about the Negro Leagues finally made. As a producer, his life's work of honoring the legacy of his father and the men and women of the Negro Leagues has become realized with *THE LEAGUE*.

Byron has also co-written a television series pilot about famed Negro League team owner and baseball Hall of Famer Effa Manley, which is currently in development with Alcon Entertainment.

As a photographer, his work has been featured at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, in *Vanity Fair*, *The Advocate*, *New York Daily News*, *Los Angeles Times*, and has shown in galleries, libraries and museums in the United States, Europe, Puerto Rico and Cuba. Byron's award-winning photographic book *Embracing Cuba* (University Press of Florida, 2015) contains 200 images and his essays exploring the island's history and culture.

As a singer, Byron has performed with Barbra Streisand, Natalie Cole, Dionne Warwick, Celine Dion, Donna Summer, Kelly Clarkson, John Legend, Barry Manilow and composer John Williams with the Boston Pops Orchestra. He also performed on Broadway alongside Patti LuPone in the acclaimed show "Patti LuPone on Broadway". His song "It Meant the World To Me" is featured as a closing credits composition in *THE LEAGUE*.

AHMIR "QUESTLOVE" THOMPSON – Executive Producer

Academy Award-winning filmmaker, drummer, DJ, producer, director, culinary entrepreneur, *New York Times* best-selling author, and member of The Roots—Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson—is the unmistakable heartbeat of Philadelphia's most influential hip-hop group. He is the Musical Director for [The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon](#), where his beloved Roots crew serves as house band. Beyond that, this 6-time GRAMMY Award winning artist has an indisputable reputation, which has landed him an additional 18-GRAMMY nominations and musical directing positions for everyone from D'Angelo to Jay-Z.

In 2021, Questlove made his directorial debut with the Academy Award-winning feature documentary Summer of Soul, which explores the legendary 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival. The film premiered on the opening night of the 2021 Sundance Film Festival where it was awarded the “Grand Jury Prize” and “Audience Award for Best U.S. Documentary.” The movie broke the record for the highest-selling documentary to come out of Sundance when it was acquired by Searchlight/Hulu. It went on to win “Best Feature Documentary” at the 2022 Academy Awards, “Best Documentary” at the 2022 British Academy Film Awards (BAFTA), and “Best Music Film” at the 2022 Grammy Awards as well as a Peabody Award. The film was hailed as “Best Documentary” by The National Board of Review, “Documentary of the Year” by the London Critics Circle Awards, “Best Music Documentary” by the International Documentary Association, and notably received six Critics Choice Documentary Awards in the categories of “Best Documentary Feature,” “Best Director,” “Best First Documentary Feature,” “Best Editing,” “Best Archival Documentary” and “Best Music Documentary.” Questlove was named “Best Director” by the International Documentary Association and received a nomination for “Best Director” by the Directors Guild of America. In addition, Summer of Soul was crowned the “Best Movie of 2021” by *The New York Times* and was included among the “best of the year” by *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *The Washington Post*, *TIME Magazine*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Rolling Stone*, *Forbes*, *The Guardian*, *The Wrap* and *People Magazine*. President Barack Obama highlighted Summer of Soul as one of his “Favorite Movies of 2021.” The Summer Of Soul (...Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised) Original Motion Picture Soundtrack was released via Legacy Recordings on January 28, 2022.

Outside of Summer of Soul, Questlove partnered with Black Thought of The Roots to Executive Produce the acclaimed documentary series, Hip-Hop: The Songs That Shook America on AMC under their production company, Two One Five Entertainment. In 2020, the pair announced a first-look deal with Universal Television to develop scripted and non-scripted programming. In 2022, the company executive produced Descendant, a feature documentary on the historic discovery of The Clotilda—the last known slave ship to arrive in America illegally transporting enslaved Africans. The documentary, which made its world premiere at Sundance in 2022, was acquired by Netflix and Higher Ground—President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama’s production company. The film earned an impressive three nominations for “Best Documentary Feature,” “Best Director,” and “Best Historical Documentary” and took home the award for “Best Historical Documentary” at the 2022 Critics Choice Documentary Awards. Descendant received a nomination for “Outstanding Documentary” for the 2023 NAACP Image Awards and was also named one of the “Top 5 Documentaries” of 2022 by the National Board of Review. Moreover, it received positive reviews from the New York Times, the LA Times, The Guardian, Variety, and more. Most recently, Questlove and Black Thought, under their Two One Five banner, executive produced “Rise Up, Sing Out,” a collection of animated musical shorts for Disney Junior, which earned a nomination for “Outstanding Short Form Series” for the 2023 NAACP Image Awards. Questlove’s web series, Quest for Craft, produced by Two One Five and launched in partnership with the single malt whiskey brand, The Balvenie, took home a Webby Award in 2023.

Two One Five Entertainment is set to executive produce Sam Pollard’s The League—a documentary centered on the tumultuous journey of the Negro league baseball. It will also produce an upcoming documentary on the legendary Sly Stone as well as various projects with partners such as Disney Jr. Up next, Questlove will make his feature film directing debut with a live-action hybrid reimagining of The Aristocats for Walt Disney Studios. Two One Five is set to produce the film alongside Olive Bridge.

Beyond his film and TV work, Questlove continues to cement himself as one of the most sought-after DJs in pop-culture with a resume that includes gigs for The Academy Awards, The White House, Cartier, and hotels and nightclubs around the world. After streaming nearly 300 virtual DJ sets during the Pandemic, he used this momentum to launch his own Twitch show called GO DJ, which champions sets from renowned international peers.

Questlove has written multiple books, including the New York Times bestsellers Mo' Meta Blues, Creative Quest, Music is History, and The Rhythm of Time, as well as the GRAMMY nominated audio books Music Is History and Creative Quest. Expanding his literary endeavors, in 2023 he launched his own book imprint, AUWA Books, within MCD Books, a publishing division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux. The imprint will publish both nonfiction and fiction on a wide range of topics.

Questlove remains a voice in the culinary world as the author of Mixtape Potluck and the James Beard Award-nominated somethingtofoodabout, the host of a series of Food Salons with world-renowned and innovative chefs, and the launch of Questlove's Cheesesteak made with Impossible meat sold nationwide. Questlove's interest in food, his investments in food and ag tech, and his own culinary endeavors have been featured on the cover of New York Magazine, in Forbes, Vogue, Food & Wine, Bon Appetit, People, the New York Times, Rolling Stone, and seen on The View and TODAY,

Questlove is a board member of the Food Education Fund—an independent nonprofit organization that serves students and alumni from culinary and hospitality focused career and technical education (CTE) public high school programs in New York City. He cofounded the Future of Food Entrepreneurship Program, a Summer program that provides historically disenfranchised high school students insight into the emerging food tech and ag tech industries.

Adding to his multitude of multi-hyphenates, Questlove served as the Executive Music Producer and Composer on the A&E Miniseries Roots. He also scored Chris Rock's film, Top Five and co-produced the GRAMMY Award winning Original Broadway Cast Recording of Hamilton. Questlove hosts his own acclaimed podcast Questlove Supreme on iHeart. In 2020, Questlove co-starred in Disney Pixar's Academy Award-winning animated feature Soul, which landed him an NAACP Image Award nomination for "Outstanding Character Voice-Over Performance." Most recently, Questlove was named one of "The 100 Most Influential People of 2022" by TIME.

TARIQ TROTTER – Executive Producer

As Co-Founder of The Roots, a critically acclaimed solo artist, actor, writer, activist, producer, and creator, Tariq Trotter—aka Black Thought—has quietly affirmed himself as one of the most prolific, prescient, and powerful voices in hip-hop.

Over the course of his career, he has won three GRAMMY® Awards and three NAACP Image Awards. Not only did he deliver eleven applauded albums with The Roots, but the group also joined *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* as the house band and beloved mainstay of late-night television for over a decade.

Black Thought's solo music career has accelerated at full speed with his *Streams of Thought* series. Pairing him with a legendary producer for each release, the *Streams of Thought* series has generated millions of streams as *Pitchfork* proclaimed Trotter "*is somehow still improving decades after his peers' primes, which in hip-hop sounds almost as crazy as a professional athlete*

doing the same.” *The Guardian* awarded the series “4-out-of-5 stars,” and meanwhile, *HYPEBEAST* crowned him “one of the best lyricists in hip-hop history.” In 2022, Black Thought teamed up with Danger Mouse for their acclaimed collaborative album, *Cheat Codes*. The acclaimed release topped many year-end “best of” lists in 2022.

Maintaining this momentum, he continued his creative renaissance as the main composer and lyricist of the 2022 Off-Broadway production *Black No More*. In addition, he also made his Off-Broadway debut starring in the production, stretching the boundaries of his creativity once more. *Black No More* earned a nomination for “Best Musical” at the 2022 Lucile Lortell Awards. His presence has also seamlessly translated into roles in film and television such as HBO’s *The Deuce* amongst other productions. He most recently appeared in Lin-Manuel Miranda’s feature directorial debut, *Tick, Tick... Boom!*.

Beyond collaborations with everyone from Eminem, John Legend, J Dilla, and Big Pun to Linkin Park, Logic, and Fall Out Boy, Trotter co-produced the multiplatinum GRAMMY® Award-winning Original Broadway Cast Recording of *Hamilton*.

Alongside fellow The Roots co-founder Questlove, he launched the production company Two One Five Entertainment, executive producing the AMC documentary series, *Hip-Hop: The Songs That Shook America*. Together, in 2020, the pair announced a first-look deal with Universal Television to develop scripted and non-scripted programming. Questlove and Black Thought, under Two One Five, executive produced “Rise Up, Sing Out,” a collection of animated musical shorts for Disney Junior, which earned a nomination for “Outstanding Short Form Series” for the 2023 NAACP Image Awards. Most recently, the company executive produced *Descendant*, a feature documentary on the historic discovery of *The Clotilda*—the last known slave ship to arrive in America illegally transporting enslaved Africans. The documentary, which made its world premiere at Sundance in 2022, was acquired by *Netflix* and *Higher Ground*—President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama’s production company. The film earned an impressive three nominations for “Best Documentary Feature,” “Best Director” and “Best Historical Documentary” and took home the award for “Best Historical Documentary” at the 2022 Critics Choice Documentary Awards. *Descendant* received a nomination for “Outstanding Documentary” for the 2023 NAACP Image Awards and was also named one of the “Top 5 Documentaries” of 2022 by the National Board of Review. Moreover, it received positive reviews from the New York Times,

the LA Times, The Guardian, Variety and more. Next up, Two One Five Entertainment is set to executive produce Sam Pollard’s *The League*, a documentary centered on the tumultuous journey of Negro league baseball and also produce an upcoming documentary on the legendary Sly Stone as well as various projects with partners such as Disney Jr.

Lyrically dexterous, politically provocative, and consciously incisive, Black Thought continually encourages the game to move forward with him again and again.

SHAWN GEE – Executive Producer

Shawn Gee has led and influenced the culture from multiple angles. As an artist manager and Founding Partner at Maverick, he has shepherded the careers of iconic GRAMMY® Award-winning artists such as The Roots and Jill Scott for over two decades. He has not only sustained, but also expanded their respective legacies beyond music and across media, film, and television with Questlove notably earning an Academy® Award for his directorial debut *Summer of Soul*.

An established film and television producer, he curated and produced *Juneteenth: A Global Celebration of Freedom*—a program exclusively broadcasted by CNN featuring a diverse lineup of thoughtful, impactful, and essential black artists. He also executive-produced AMC’s *Hip Hop: The Songs That Shook America* and The Food Network’s *Mixtape Potluck* TV special, as well as upcoming feature documentaries on Sly Stone and the Negro League baseball, *The League*—all for Two One Five Entertainment (founded by clients Questlove and Black Thought).

As President of Live Nation Urban, a company he founded in 2018, Gee has redefined the live space for hip-hop, R&B, and soul artists with essential festival brands and experiences such as *Broccoli City Festival*, *The Roots Picnic*, *Summer Block Party* Series, and more. He has personally ideated and introduced over ten festivals to the marketplace and collaborated with legendary creative partners to produce landmark events, bolstering black festival ownership in the artist community. Recognized as a leader, Gee was also selected to be part of the WMG Blavatnik Family Foundation Social Justice Fund Board of Directors. He has been featured on *Variety*’s annual “Dealmakers” list, the *Billboard* “Power 100” and “R&B/Hip-Hop Power Players” list multiple times, graced *Rolling Stone*’s “Future 25,” and landed on *Pollstar*’s “Impact 50,” among others. He was also honored as a 2021 recipient of the Black Music Coalition’s Social Impact Award.

He is based in Los Angeles.

ZARAH ZOHLMAN – Executive Producer

As Director of Development & Production at Two One Five Entertainment, Zarah Zohlman facilitates the creation, production, acquisition, and distribution of documentaries, feature films, television series, and podcasts. She joined the company at its inception in 2019 and has activated a string of successful projects alongside founders Ahmir “*Questlove*” Thompson and Tariq “*Black Thought*” Trotter. She served as associate producer on the critically acclaimed documentary *Summer of Soul (...Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised)*. It notably won the Academy Award for “*Best Documentary*” in 2022, the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival, “*Best Documentary*” and “*Best Editing*” at the BAFTA Awards, a coveted Peabody Award, and six *Critic’s Choice Awards*, including “*Best Documentary*.” She was an Executive Producer for the acclaimed documentary *Descendant*,

which Higher Ground—the production company founded by Former President Barack and First Lady Michelle Obama—acquired and set for debut on NETFLIX. As an Executive Producer, she is also spearheading a dynamic slate, including Sam Pollard’s *The League*, a documentary on the legendary Sly Stone, and various projects with partners such as A&E, Amazon, Freevee, Disney Jr., and Universal TV.

Additionally, she is an Executive Producer on the digital series *Quest for Craft* and a consulting producer for *Questlove’s Potluck* on Food Network. Prior to joining the team at Two One Five Entertainment, she logged a decade at NBC’s *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, rising through the ranks to associate producer on the late-night staple.

NINA DOBREV – Executive Producer

Actress, writer, and producer Nina Dobrev has established herself as one of the fastest rising leading ladies in Hollywood, amassing an impressive resume of diverse and memorable television and film roles.

Nina recently starred as the female lead in action thriller *THE BRICKLAYER* alongside Aaron Eckhart. The film will be released later in 2023.

Nina can currently be seen as the female lead in the Netflix romantic comedy *LOVE HARD*, which debuted as the #1 film in the world on Netflix. The film is about a dating blogger who falls for a catfishing scheme and enlists the perpetrator's help in winning over the man whose image was used to reel her in.

Nina will next be seen starring as the female lead in the Netflix comedy *THE OUT-LAWS*, for producer Adam Sandler, to be released on July 7th. She he also recently wrapped production on the dark comedy *SICK GIRL* in which serves as both star and executive producer. The film will be going to market this year at the Cannes Film Festival. Nina will then follow that with *REUNION*, a comedy for Lionsgate about a murder that takes place during a snowstorm at a high-school reunion party, which leaves the guests trapped in an isolated mansion trying to piece together clues.

Nina also executive produced the documentary *THE LEAGUE*, which will premiere in this year's Tribeca Film Festival about the history of the Negro baseball and its success in a country plagued by racism. She is also developing an adaptation of Greer Macallister's novel, "Woman 99" for television, in which she will star and executive produce with Bruna Papandrea's *Made Up Stories*. "Woman 99" follows a young woman whose quest to free her sister from an infamous insane asylum risks her sanity, her safety, and her life.

In the fall of 2020, she was seen in Roger Avary's *LUCKY DAY* opposite Luke Bracey and Crispin Glover. In *LUCKY DAY*, Nina portrays Chloe, the French-speaking female lead in this thriller that takes place over a single day. In 2019, she starred in feature film *RUN THIS TOWN* opposite Ben Platt, which premiered at SXSW Film Festival. Other film credits for Nina include in the Voltage Picture comedy *THEN CAME YOU*, *DOG DAYS*, Sony's *FLATLINERS*, *CRASHPAD*, *XXX: THE RETURN OF XANDER CAGE*, Groundswell Productions' *THE FINAL GIRLS*, Twentieth Century Fox comedy *LET'S BE COPS*, and Summit Entertainment film, *PERKS OF A WALLFLOWER*, written and directed by Stephen Chbosky. Nina also appeared in Screen Gems' *THE ROOMMATE* with Leighton Meester and Minka Kelly, Montecito Pictures' *CHLOE* with Julianne Moore, Amanda Seyfried and Liam Neeson, *FUGITIVE PIECES* with Ayelet Zurer and Rosamund Pike, and *AWAY FROM HER* with Julie Christie. For six seasons, Nina starred as fan favorite doppel-gangers "Elena Gilbert" and "Katherine Pierce" on the highly successful CW drama *THE VAMPIRE DIARIES* from creators Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec. Her other television credits include lead roles on the CBS multicamcomedy *FAM*, *DEGRASSI: THE NEXT GENERATION*, and MTV's *THE AMERICAN MALL*. In March 2021, Dobrev joined as co-owner of Fresh Vine Wine with best friend Julianne Hough, creating premium wines for health-conscious individuals, available nationwide.

Born in Bulgaria, Dobrev moved to Canada at the age of two and currently resides in Los Angeles.

JOSH GREEN – Executive Producer

Founder of LA-based Jagman Productions, Josh has produced, represented, or distributed more than 60 films in a near 20 year time span with ten years spent as the Head of Sales & Distribution for Ira Deutchman's Emerging Pictures. His recent production credits include documentary *By Sidney Lumet*; music documentaries *Don't Stop Believin': Everyman's Journey* and *I Want My Name Back* on seminal bands Journey and The Sugarhill Gang, respectively; and Lifetime movie *Seasons of Love* produced alongside Taraji P. Henson. He's further an Executive Producer on the South African western, *Five Fingers for Marseilles*, which was released theatrically in the US to critical acclaim in Fall 2018. Josh's latest scripted film, the US/China co-production *Confetti*, a mother daughter immigrant story centered around dyslexia, was released theatrically in the US in Summer 2021 by Dada Films and will be released digitally in 2023. He is producing two documentaries currently in development/production: *The Great China Baseball Hunt* and the search for China's first MLB player and a documentary on the Negro Baseball Leagues, directed by Sam Pollard and produced alongside Radical Media and Questlove. He is further executive producing a scripted limited series with Alcon TV on the Negro Baseball Leagues and the first and only woman elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame, Effa Manley. And he's executive producing a film adaptation of the Reginald Lewis biography with MACRO, *Why Should White Guys Have All The Fun*, on Reginald's achievement on Wall Street as the first black billionaire. Lastly, he is in development on a scripted narrative on the Journey and Arnel Pineda musical story with Warner Brothers, Temple Hill, and Jon Chu, and he's developing projects based on on gay activist and musical icon, Archbishop Carl Bean, the Ukraine/Russia crisis, musician Joss Stone, Brexit whistleblower Shahmir Sanni and Harvey Weinstein victim and model/activist Ambra Gutierrez.

JEFFREY LURIE – Executive Producer

Jeffrey Lurie is a three-time, Academy Award-winning Executive Producer, who also serves as Chairman and CEO of the Philadelphia Eagles. Jeffrey formed Play/Action Pictures, a documentary feature production company, in 2019. Headed by acclaimed producer Marie Therese Guirgis, Play/Action Pictures focuses on director-driven films that engage with the most important questions and challenges of our time.

Under Lurie's direction, Play/Action Pictures has produced four films including *Totally Under Control* by Alex Gibney, Ophelia Harutyunyan and Suzanne Hillinger; *MLK/FBI* by Sam Pollard; *The Meaning Of Hitler* by Petra Epperlein and Mike Tucker; and *Summer of Soul (...Or, When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)* by Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, which earned an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 2022.

Play/Action Pictures has also earned three NAACP Image Award nominations for Outstanding Breakthrough Creative in a Motion Picture (Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson – *Summer of Soul (...Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised)*), Outstanding Documentary in Film (*Summer of Soul (...Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised)*), and Outstanding Directing in a Documentary Television or Motion Picture (Sam Pollard – *MLK/FBI*).

MARIE THERESE GUIRGIS – Executive Producer

Marie Therese Guirgis is Head of Documentary at Play/Action Pictures. Recent documentary producing and executive producing credits include 2022 Academy Award-winner "Summer Of Soul" by Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, "MLK/FBI" by Sam Pollard, "Totally Under Control" by Alex Gibney, Ophelia Harutyunyan, and Suzanne Hillinger, and "The Brink" by Alison Klayman. Other documentary feature and series producing credits include "Author: The JT LeRoy Story" by Jeff Feuerzeig, "On Her Shoulders" by Alexandria Bombach, and "Cocaine Cowboys: The Kings Of Miami" by Billy Corben. Guirgis also produced the narrative features "Keep The Lights On" by Ira Sachs and "The Loneliest Planet" by Julia Loktev.

Prior to working in production, Marie Therese worked in film distribution for a number of years, acquiring and releasing hundreds of highly acclaimed and award-winning foreign language and American independent films by leading directors from all over the world.

CREDITS

Directed By:
SAM POLLARD

Produced By:
ROBIN ESPINOLA, DAVE SIRULNICK, JEN ISAACSON, BYRON MOTLEY

Executive Producers:
JON KAMEN, TODD WAGNER, MARK CUBAN, HALEY JONES, EAMONN
BOWLES, DORI BEGLEY, AHMIR "QUESTLOVE" THOMPSON, SHAWN GEE,
TARIQ TROTTER, ZARAH ZOHLMAN,
JEFFREY LURIE, MARIE THERESE GUIRGIS, JOSH GREEN, NINA DOBREV

Editor:
DAVE MARCUS

Director of Photography:
HENRY ADEBONOJO and ANGEL BARROETA

Music:
KATHRYN BOSTIC

Based on the Book:
'THE NEGRO BASEBALL LEAGUES' BY BOB MOTLEY AND BYRON MOTLEY