Digital Underground headlines benefit for Richmond schools viate the statewide financial They're very experienced and

Bv Karen Sulkis Tribune Staff Writer

Digital Underground will headline a concert to benefit the financially strapped Richmond Unified School District's sports programs on Jan. 31 at the Warfield in San Francisco.

Tickets for the biggest rap show of the new year go on sale tomorrow.

Proceeds from ticket sales will supplement the district's "less than bare-bones" sports programs. The extravaganza is being taped for Pay-Per-View.

Rap diva Queen Latifah, the East Coast group Naughty by Nature and local sophisticated rapper Paris, all of whom re-

cently finished touring with Public Enemy, will provide opening support.

Oakland's Tupac Shakur, Digital Underground associate known as "2 Pac" and a star of the new film "Juice," Gold Money (which includes Kennedy High janitor Otis Brackens) and Raw Fusion are also slated to perform.

The idea for the benefit came not from the school district, but from the Bill Graham organization.

The late impresario held a summit meeting this past summer at his home, attended by state school superintendent Bill Honig, to find ways to alle-

crisis in the schools.

"What Bill and Melissa Gold (his companion who also died in an October helicopter crash) did was to look at some different kinds of solutions to help with the schools," said Jean Catino of the AKG wing of BGP.

Richmond school district spokesman Paul Ehara expressed gratitude to the Graham organization and little concern that a rap show might provoke violence, such as the recent melee at the Geto Boys concert at Richmond Auditorium.

"The district has confidence in Bill Graham Presents.

professional," said Ehara.

Like Ehara, and most serious hip-hop and rap fans, Alameda has no problem with the lineup. He sees it "more as former Richmond Unified School District students" (members of DU, Brackens and others) doing something to help, rather than a raucous rap show.

"If it was Public Enemy and Chuck D, I'd have a problem," he chuckled.

Tickets for the benefit are \$18.50 each and available by calling 762-BASS. For more information, call the Warfield at (415) 775-7722.



Humpty Hump

Paris



EASTBAY RAPPERS LAND 'JUICE'-Y ROLES IN LATEST URBAN DRAMA

BY LARRY KELP/TRIBUNE MUSIC CRITIC

WENTY-YEAR-OLD OAKLAND rapper Tupac Shakur makes his debut as a major film star in "Juice" as a thug who gets out of control when he has a gun in his hand.

He appears on screen as the soundtrack pumps out Oakland rapper Too Short's: "So you want to be a gangster."

It's one of many powerful moments in this latest urban action film, which boasts a soundtrack featuring more than a dozen rappers, including Queen Latifah, in small parts and cameo roles.

"Juice" opens Friday with an impressive cast of newcomers, including Shakur, known as 2 Pac in the hugely <u>successful Oakland-Berkeley rap act</u> Digital Underground. It also stars Cindy Herron, of Oakland-based female singing quartet En Vogue, as Yolanda, the biggest female role in the film.

The title, "Juice," comes from the street term for power, respect. For the four teen buddies growing up on Harlem streets without parental guidance, the way to get it is through small-time crime. Small, that is, until Shakur, as Roland Bishop, introduces a gun, and the four decide to get even more juice by committing armed robbery.

"How far will you go to get (juice)?" ask the ads for "Juice," created by the movie's distributor, Paramount Fictures Corp. And the promotions for the film, including spots featuring the gun scene, are creating a controvrsy about whether the film will become a magnet for violence.

"I'veleard complaints about the violence," aid Herron, a San Francisco native wo lives in Los Angeles. "... but ther's a message. Violence is a part of uman life, and films reflect that."

For Sakur, who grew up in New York, plaing the street character was like goin home — in fact, too much like it. "I was getting old enough to get into trouble. I had all the hook-ups, my connections to the gangster scene," he said of his youth. "Then my mom stepped in and moved me south to Baltimore."

There he attended the city's High School for Performing Arts. "They took a street thug like me," he explained, "and gave me an appreciation for Shakespeare and the stage."

When Baltimore "got too hectic," the family moved west to Oakland where his talents as a rapper moved Digital Underground's Shock G to say, "You're with us."

It was in New York, while he was doing promotions for Digital Underground, that he landed the "Juice" role.

"I always wanted to act, that's what I studied. But due to racial conditions and other blocks, I thought I'd never make it. I went to the 'Juice' audition

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"But I had somewhere to go. The Mayor's Summer Youth Program auditioned us and if we got parts, we worked, and were paid, doing shows at Bayview Opera House and the Western Addition Cultural Center.

"It was a place where young black people could go and use their talents, not just be on the streets."

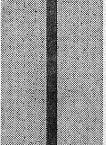
Herron was acting in commercials and television pilots when she was chosen by Oakland hit record producers Denzil Foster and Thomas McElroy to be one of the singers in En Vogue. As with Shakur, Herron claims acting won't get in the way of her musical career. En Vogue's second album is due out in March.

"The audition for 'Juice' was a fluke," Herron said. "I was in New York, and my agent called actors who are forgotten. The few who made it as a career are the ones who could do everything in entertainment.

"I want to touch people and hopefully, not get cast as a thug," Shakur said. "I appreciate the current black films, but everyone's doing the same thing. Films show that all black people do is suffer. Which is true. But I want to do Shakespeare, 'Les Miserables.' There's not really much opportunity out there, but there will be if I believe there is and I create it.

"The character's name doesn't have to be Leroy for it to be a black film," Shakur added. "And you don't have to have a rap soundtrack. We're already black, so anything we do will be black."

"Juice" opens throughout the Bay Area



Continued from Page B-1

with a friend and asked if I could read, too. They said the part I wanted was taken, but I read the script and got the part."

Shakur cited actors Robert De Niro and Al Pacino as models for his approach. "Pacino goes through a metamorphosis for his roles," Tupac said, "where he changes his hair or grows his fingernails, or whatever. So I did that for this film. I hung out on the streets and with the gangsters, and became like Bishop."

Like Shakur, Herron pursued acting before her music career took off in Oakland-based En Vogue, the million-selling female vocal quartet.

"I didn't grow up in New York," Herron said, "so it's not my life. But in San Francisco if there hadn't been outlets to put my energy and talent into, my life could have been different. I have friends who fell to peer pressure and got into trouble.

"But I had somewhere to go. The Mayor's Summer Youth Program auditioned us and if we got parts, we worked, and were paid, doing shows at Bayview Opera House and the Western Addition Cultural Center.

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She plays Yolanda, a woman slightly older than the male leads, who has just dumped her husband to live on her own. In the role, which is the only real female acting part in "Juice," she starts an affair with Bishop's friend Q (played by Omar Epps), "someone younger so he couldn't tell her how to live her life," Herron explained.

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Herron had high praise for Shakur, but is less confident of her own ability. "To be honest, I don't feel I'm that great an actress. I'm still developing," she said. "My favorite actresses are mostly older, like Cicely Tyson, Bette Davis, Barbara Stanwyck. And, although she never does acting anymore, I love Diana Ross, she's a natural."

Herron added that, "America is still black and white, and until you see that erased, you're not going to see it in movies. I live for the time that race isn't the issue."

Shakur took a similar position. "We have enough black actors who are good, but look at the past lists and you'll find great actors who are forgotten. The few who made it as a career are the ones who could do everything in entertainment.

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"Juice" opens throughout the Bay Area on Friday. Shakur, known as 2 Pac, Queen Latifah, Digital Underground, Naughty by Nature, Paris, Raw Fusion and Gold Money perform Friday, Jan. 31, in a benefit concert for the Richmond Unified School District sports program, 7 p.m., Warfield Theater, 982 Market St., San Francisco. \$18.50. Call BASS, 762-2277. with disabilities, truss Katz

Rap concert to benefit Richmond school sports

By Marina Gottschalk Tribune staff writer

Some the best rap groups in the Bay Area are giving a benefit concert Friday to aid the Richmond Unified School District Boosters Club so that high school students will have an opportunity to participate in sports programs which have been cut because of the district's budget problems.

Digital Underground will headline the show at 7 p.m. at the Warfield Theater in San Francisco. Also performing will be Queen Latifah, Naughty By Nature, Paris, 2 Pac, Gold Money and Raw Fusion.

The concert is being presented by AKG, the night club division of Bill Graham Presents.

"The band (Digital Underground) came to us and said they would like to do a benefit," said Jean Catino of AKG, who for almost two years has been a Richmond resident.

"Other members of the band also have Richmond connections," she said.

"We wanted to do something in the spirit of the things that Bill Graham cared about."

Catino suggested the Boosters Club, a nonprofit organization which raises money for extra-curricular sports activities.

The band approved.

"The net proceeds will go to the boosters," said Catino, adding that the district has requested that the funds be evenly divided among the five high schools in the district.

"Sports is really important for kids. Some kids only care about sports and its the only reason they go to school. Basketball, football and baseball have been eliminated for the freshman and sophomore boys and volleyball for the girls," Catino noted.

Tickets, at \$18.50 each, may be purchased through BASS outlets.

The Warfield Theater is located at 982 Market St., San Francisco.

BY LARRY KELP/TRIBUNE MUSIC CRITIC

MON FEB 3-- 1992

n the biggest rap concert in nearly a year, the sold-out crowd of 2,200 fans at (San Francisco's Warfield caught most of New York rap label Tommy Boy's roster, including three acts connected with the film "Juice."

Headlining Oakland-Berkeley rap group Digital Underground and its various off-shoots (2Pac, 4 Gold Money, Raw Fusion) teamed with militant 1 San Franciscan Paris (whose stage show included assassinating President Bush), New Jersey 1 trio Naughty by Nature and New York's Queen 5 Latifah. New Richmond student group Nothing 1 Gold (produced by 2Pac) opened. 5 The five-hour concert was a benefit for the 5

The five-hour concert was a benefit for the Richmond Unified School District's hard-hit high school sports programs, and after production costs raised at least \$13,000.

The concert came about when D.U. wanted to do a pay-per-view video taping at the Warfield, and Warfield manager Jean Catino, a Richmond resident, was looking for an appropriate act to help fundraise for the schools. She combined the two elements into one show. Perfect.

There were no problems (other than the delays with all the set changes), and the audience, h culturally diverse and ranging from pre-teens to parents, saw a hefty chunk of the cutting edge of today's rap scene — no traditional instruments, just D.J.s with drum machines, samples and turntables, plus rappers and hip-hop dancers.

"Peace is the word," show host Davey D proclaimed. "We're going to try to put the priorities B back where they belong. He added, "This is our chance to show folks out there who are messing u things up for you that we're on track."

More than one act, much as '60s rock stars a did, put the blame on the government and police for today's problems suffered by black people, r with blunt and pointed raps often dramatically illustrated.

Everything was mellow, except when the music got to pumping and the crowd began jumping. Which happened somewhere in nearly every set. No alcohol was sold for a change, and house lights remained on, not for security, but so the video cameras could catch the crowd.

The headliners were taped for the two-hour, y pay-per-view cable television broadcast, "The Monsters of Rap," to be aired 7 p.m., Feb. 13, for \$20, with repeats Feb. 20 and 27.

The most amazing part of the video screening will be the first-time appearance together of D.U.'s rap leader Shock G (Greg Jacobs) and his alter ego, Humpty Hump. In real life, it was achieved by having the band perform "Same Song," first with Humpty, then miming along to a

See RAP, Page B-3

ver pitch. He sets the group's direction in "Ghetto Bastard" by rapping about his East Orange, N.J., neighborhood: "You want me to rap and say something positive, well positive ain't where I live," but the group weakened its otherwise impressive performance by digressing into sexual bravura that didn't even impress my 10-year-old junior critic, Berkeley fifth grader Cameron Leader-Picone. Cameron pre-

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is over? Through? Finished with? The lights h Can it be true? CitiArts/Theater Concord

Pray a miracle! 'Nunsense ever

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tape of the first performance, the second time with Shock G leading. On television the two will be spliced together to give the illusion of Humpty and Shock G next to each other, shades of Haley Mills in "The Parent

Where none of the other acts performed more than 30 minutes, the large D.U. troupe was onstage an hour, taking its time to swing into high gear. Which was a problem for the audience, already worn out by four hours of rap when D.U. hit the stage with its less hard-hitting, jazzfunk approach.

It was the group's first local appearance since last October's fire destroyed Humpty's wardrobe, the act's stage banners and curtains and a lot of the music "samples" used on its new tunes. The accent was on newer material, "Sons of the P," "No Nose Job' and "Kiss You Back." But, of course, the band did "Humpty Dance," rhythmically revamped, as Humpty in a new, less obtrusive nose, jumped around, followed by 2Pac (Tupac Shakur, who stars in 'Juice''), Money B., Pee Wee and Big Money Otis (the latter two are yet another D.U. spinoff act, Gold Money), and various dancers.

A "Who's the Rap Star" game featured cartoon blowups of various rappers, which the band then imitated, including Hammer and his "Too Legit to Quit."

Where D.U. was drenched in good fun backed by Parliament-Funkadelic riffs and attitudes, the rest of the show was heavy on black politics.

Naughty by Nature had the crowd on its feet with more traditional-style hard-line rapping, with "Uptown Anthem" (from the "Juice" soundtrack), "Everything's Gonna Be Alright" and their first big hit, "O.P.P.," with rapper Treach (Anthony Criss) inciting the crowd to fever pitch. He sets the group's direction in "Ghetto Bastard" by rapping about his East Orange, N.J., neighborhood: "You want me to rap and say something positive, well positive ain't where I live," but the group weakened its otherwise impressive performance by digressing into sexual bravura that didn't even impress my 10-year-old junior critic, Berkeley fifth grader Cameron Leader-Picone. Cameron pre-

ferred D.U., Queen Latifah and Raw Fusion, although he did cheer with the rest of the crowd when Paris offed Bush.

For sheer audacity and pointed delivery of his message, Paris, in his rapping Black Panther approach, was the most impressive. With his backing group, four militant dancers dressed as political terrorists with guns, he opened with the Bush-death scene, later was tossed into jail by men in police uniforms and rubber pig masks. The "police" then mock-brutalized a woman before being routed by the terrorists.

Explaining that "black people are in a state of emergency, Paris finished with the hit that put him on the rap map, "Break the Grip of Shame.

A crowd pleaser, New York's

Queen Latifah had even the balcony on its feet throughout her half hour. She entered through doors in a giant size crown backdrop, used both a D.J. and a live drummer, but no dancers, as she paced the stage floor in short top hat and bright green blazer over a black top and tights outfit. The beats mixed funk, reggae and straight hip-hop in her short. fairly melodic and focused raps: "Nature of a Sista'," "Ladies

First," "Fly Girl."

In a 10-minute set, 2Pac was plagued by technical problems, so did one rap a cappella. Considering his on-camera charisma starring in "Juice," his rap show

The racially mixed Raw Fusion didn't fare much better. Like 2Pac, they're the backbone of D.U., but were a Berkeley High School duo even before

joining the Underground. With

D.J. Fuze firing off hard-driving rhythms (when the power failures didn't cut him off), rapper

Money B. worked the crowd. Overall it was an impressive show - too long, too much talent on one stage, too many set

changes - and definitely worth the \$18.50 ticket price.

Now that rappers are reaching a culturally mixed crowd. there are white ears tuned into the message as well as the beats. And, like the nature of the show itself - a benefit for sports programs that to many black kids could be the only way out of the poverty trap - the message is no longer a matter of racial survival, it is one that touches all Americans, especially the

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