

SAT JAN 1 1992

# Digital Underground headlines benefit for Richmond schools

By 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-

viate the statewide financial 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.

They're very experienced and 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

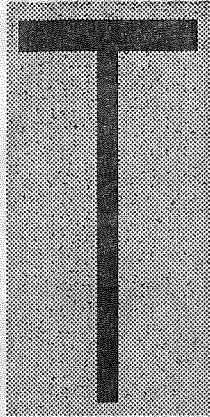


Paris

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

TUE JAN 14 1992

BY LARRY KELP/TRIBUNE MUSIC CRITIC



**T**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 successful Oakland-Berkeley rap act 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 Har-

lem 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 Pictures Corp. And the promotions for the film, including spots featuring the gun scene, are creating a controversy about whether the film will become a magnet for violence.

"I've heard complaints about the violence," said Herron, a San Francisco native who lives in Los Angeles. "... but there's a message. Violence is a part of human life, and films reflect that."

For Sakur, who grew up in New York, playing the street character was like going 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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... 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.

"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

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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."

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"The audition for 'Juice' was a fluke," Herron said. "I was in New York, and my agent called and told me to go down and audition, so I did."

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.

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.

Juice

with disabilities.  
practicing artists in the large  
Katz



# Rap concert to benefit Richmond school sports

WED JAN 29 1992

By Marina Gottschalk  
Tribune staff writer

Some of 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 connec-

tions," 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

In 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, Gold Money, Raw Fusion) teamed with militant San Franciscan Paris (whose stage show included assassinating President Bush), New Jersey trio Naughty by Nature and New York's Queen Latifah. New Richmond student group Nothing Gold (produced by 2Pac) opened.

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, 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 back where they belong. He added, "This is our chance to show folks out there who are messing things up for you that we're on track."

More than one act, much as '60s rock stars did, put the blame on the government and police for today's problems suffered by black people, 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, 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

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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-

