

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Voleine Amilcar, ITVS

Mary Lugo

Cara White

415-356-8383 x 244

770-623-8190

843-881-1480

voleine_amilcar@itvs.org

lugo@negia.net

cara.white@mac.com

For downloadable images, visit pbs.org/pressroom/

For the program companion website, visit pbs.org/independentlens/copyrightcriminals

**COPYRIGHT CRIMINALS, AN EXPLORATION OF THE CREATIVE AND LEGAL
RAMIFICATIONS OF MUSIC SAMPLING IN HIP-HOP,
PREMIERES TUESDAY, JANUARY 19
ON THE PBS DOCUMENTARY SERIES *INDEPENDENT LENS***

*As New Technologies Emerge, Enabling Everyone
to Be a Music Producer, Can Anyone Really Own a Sound?*

(San Francisco, CA) — Computers, software and even cell phones have radically altered our relationship to mass culture and technology, providing consumers with the tools to become producers, or “remixers,” of their own media. But long before everyday people began posting their video mash-ups on the Web, hip-hop musicians perfected the art of audio montage through a sport they called “sampling.” **COPYRIGHT CRIMINALS**, a documentary produced by Benjamin Franzen and Kembrew McLeod, examines the creative and commercial value of musical sampling, including the ongoing debates about artistic expression, copyright law and (of course) money. The film will premiere nationally on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS documentary series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Maggie Gyllenhaal, on Tuesday, January 19 at 10 p.m. (check local listings).

For more than 30 years, as hip-hop evolved from the urban streets of New York to its current status as a multibillion-dollar industry, performers and producers have been reusing portions of previously recorded music in new, otherwise original compositions. But when lawyers and record companies got involved, what was once referred to as a “borrowed melody” became a “copyright infringement.” **COPYRIGHT CRIMINALS** illuminates both sides of the debate through interviews with those who view sampling as pillaging, to those who argue that the practice of borrowing is by no means new nor is it unique to music.



Scenes from COPYRIGHT CRIMINALS, coming to Independent Lens January 2010.

-More-



COPYRIGHT CRIMINALS showcases many of hip-hop music's founding figures like Public Enemy, De La Soul, and Digital Underground along with emerging artists such as audiovisual remixers Eclectic Method. The film also provides an in-depth look at artists who have been sampled, such as renowned drummer Clyde Stubblefield, the world's most sampled musician, best known for his work with James Brown, as well as commentary by funk legend George Clinton, another highly sampled musician.

As **COPYRIGHT CRIMINALS** reveals, music making “came out of the professional recording studios,” says Coldcut's Matt Black, “and into the bedrooms. That changed the music industry, and the reverberations are still being felt today.” Computers, mobile phones and other interactive technologies are changing our relationship with media, blurring the line between producer and consumer, and radically changing what it means to be creative. As artists find ever more inventive ways to insert old influences into new material, the documentary asks a critical question: Can anyone really own a sound?

To learn more about the film and the issues involved with it, visit the companion site for **COPYRIGHT CRIMINALS** at www.pbs.org/independentlens/copyright-criminals. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section where viewers can share their ideas and opinions.

On-Screen Participants

Public Enemy—represented in this film by vocalist Chuck D, producer Hank Shocklee, and hip-hop activist and journalist Harry Allen (the “Media Assassin”)—is among the most important hip-hop groups that have emerged in the past 30 years.

Jeff Chang author and commentator, wrote the award-winning history of hip-hop culture *Can't Stop Won't Stop* and co-founded the indie record company SoleSides, which launched the career of DJ Shadow, among others.

George Clinton helped invent the genre of funk with his groups Parliament and Funkadelic.

De La Soul, a Long Island hip-hop group, helped set a high bar for sampling artistry with their debut album *3 Feet High and Rising*, released in 1989.

DJ Qbert, widely recognized as one of the world's best DJs and a member of the Invisibl Skratch Piklz, had to retire from DJ battles because no one could beat him.

Eclectic Method — featuring London natives Jonny Wilson, Ian Edgar and Geoff Gamlen — helped pioneer the emerging art of audio-visual mixing in the early-2000s. The trio's audio-visual mash-ups feature television, film, music and video game footage sliced and diced into blistering, post-modern dance floor events.

Miho Hatori was half of the inventive duo Cibo Matto, who artfully integrated samples into live instrumentation in the 1990s with the album *Viva! La Woman*, among others.

El-P was one-third of the defunct underground hip-hop group Company Flow; producer El-P has since released several solo albums and founded the indie hip-hop label Definitive Jux.

Paul D. Miller, aka DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid, is a conceptual artist, writer and musician living and working in New York City; his work has appeared in the Whitney Biennial, the Andy Warhol Museum and many other venues.

Clyde Stubblefield is perhaps the world's most sampled drummer; his work with James Brown helped create the blueprint for hip-hop.

-More-

About the Filmmakers

Benjamin Franzen (Director, Producer, Editor and Cinematographer) is an Atlanta-based photographer and video producer. He owns and operates the independent production company Changing Images, which provides expertise in a variety of media, ranging from large format photography to HD video production. Franzen earned a B.F.A. in photography and a B.A. in communication studies production from the University of Iowa. Franzen's specialty is providing solutions for media needs—from the production of interactive Web videos for the National Library of Medicine's Diabetes Project to editing the animated television show *Squidbillies* for Cartoon Network. Clients such as BlackBerry, Home Depot, Oracle and Symantec have hired Franzen's production company, and his reputation has drawn video commissions from many artists, including jazz artist Bobby Previte. Most recently, Franzen produced a big-budget three-screen HD industrial video for 24-Hour Fitness that involved interviews with sports legends Andre Agassi, Yao Ming and Magic Johnson. Franzen's personal work has been screened at film festivals, and he has received awards and grants from the Iowa Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Kembrew McLeod (Executive Producer, Researcher and Writer) is an independent documentary filmmaker and an associate professor of communication studies at the University of Iowa. His books and films focus on both popular music and the cultural impact of intellectual property law. His book *Freedom of Expression®: Resistance and Repression in the Age of Intellectual Property* received a book award from the American Library Association in 2006. His co-authored book with Peter DiCola, *Creative License: The Law and Culture of Digital Sampling*, and co-edited book with Rudolf Kuenzli, *Cutting Across Media: Interventionist Collage, Appropriation Art and Copyright Law*, will both be published by Duke University Press in mid-2010. McLeod's documentary *Money for Nothing: Behind the Business of Pop Music*, was screened at the 2002 South by Southwest Film Festival and the 2002 New England Film and Video Festival, where it received the Rosa Luxemburg Award for Social Consciousness. McLeod's second documentary, *Freedom of Expression®: Resistance and Repression in the Age of Intellectual Property*, is a companion to his book of the same name. He is also an occasional music journalist whose pieces have appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *Mojo*, *Spin*, *Village Voice* and the *New Rolling Stone Album Guide*.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities and moments in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens.

###