**

*“A raw, gutsy performance ” – The Hollywood Reporter*

***BESSIE***

**Starring Academy Award® Nominee Queen Latifah**

**Available September 1, 2015 on Blu-ray™ and DVD**

**Early Digital HD Release Set for July 13, 2015**

Toronto, ON, June 11, 2015 – HBO Home Entertainment® announces the release of ***Bessie*** the stunning HBO Films® drama starring Academy Award® nominee Queen Latifah (*Chicago*) as legendary blues singer Bessie Smith. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Dee Rees (*Pariah*) from a screenplay by Dee Rees and Christopher Cleveland & Bettina Gilois and with a story by Dee Rees and Horton Foote, the film focuses on Smith’s transformation from a struggling young singer into “The Empress of the Blues,” one of the most successful recording artists of the 1920s and an enduring icon today. ***Bessie*** debuts on Blu-ray on September 1, 2015. Both sets include a Digital HD copy of the film along with the featurette “Bessie: A Creative Journey.” The film will also be released early on Digital HD on July 13, 2015 – three days before Emmy® nominations are revealed.

***Bessie*** offers an intimate look at the determined woman whose immense talent and love for music took her from anonymity in the rough-and-tumble world of vaudeville to the 1920s blues scene and international fame. Capturing Bessie’s professional highs and personal lows, the film paints a portrait of a tenacious spirit who, despite her own demons, became a celebrated legend. Throughout the years, Bessie Smith has served as an inspiration for such illustrious singers as Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin, Janis Joplin and Nina Simone, among others.

The talented cast includes Michael Kenneth Williams (HBO’s *Boardwalk Empire*®) as Bessie’s husband, Jack; Khandi Alexander (HBO’s *Treme*®) as Bessie’s older sister, Viola; Mike Epps (*The Hangover*) as Richard, a bootlegger and romantic interest; Tory Kittles (HBO’s *True Detective*®) as Bessie’s older brother, Clarence; Tika Sumpter (*Ride Along*) as Lucille, a performer and romantic interest; Oliver Platt (*X-Men: First Class*) as famed photographer and writer Carl Van Vechten; Bryan Greenberg (*Friends with Benefits*) as renowned record producer and music critic John Hammond; with Charles S. Dutton (*Longmire*) as Ma Rainey’s husband, William “Pa” Rainey; and Academy Award® winner Mo’Nique (*Precious*) as blues legend Ma Rainey.

***Bessie***

**Blu-rayTM & DVD**

 Street Date: September 1, 2015

 Order Date: July 28, 2015

 Rating: TV-MA

 Runtime: Approx. 135 minutes

**About HBO Home Entertainment**®

HBO Home Entertainment develops, distributes and markets an extensive array of critically-acclaimed and groundbreaking programs in three formats—Blu-ray, DVD, and Digital HD—throughout the world. Releases include the global hit Game of Thrones®, the #1 selling TV on DVD/Blu-ray title in major territories throughout the world over the past four years, in addition to current hits and classic favourites including True Detective®, Girls®, The Sopranos®, Sex and the City® True Blood®, The Wire® and Entourage®. The company’s catalog contains hundreds of titles including multiple Emmy® Award-winning mini-series The Pacific® and Band of Brothers®, which holds the record through 2014 as the all-time best selling TV on DVD/Blu-ray title in the US; the Peabody Award-winning children’s program Classical Baby; provocative programs from HBO Documentary Films including The Jinx: The Life & Deaths of Robert Durst and The Case Against 8; innovative movies from HBO Films including Game Change and The Normal Heart; hit Cinemax® original series including BansheeSM and Strike Back®; and comedy specials featuring stand-up performers like Bill Maher and Billy Crystal. Launched in 1984, HBO Home Entertainment has offices in New York, London and Toronto. The company’s releases are sold in more than 70 territories around the world and are digitally distributed on a transactional basis across an expanding number of territories and platforms. Currently the digital offering is available in 8 territories and on major global platforms including iTunes, Amazon Instant Video, Google Play, Xbox Video and PlayStation Video.

**For more information or artwork, please contact:**

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