

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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For downloadable images, visit [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pbs.org/pressroom)

For the program companion website, visit [pbs.org/independentlens/p-star-rising](http://pbs.org/independentlens/p-star-rising)

**A TALENTED AND AMBITIOUS YOUNG RAPPER  
AND HER STRUGGLING FAMILY HOPE TO BEAT THE ODDS IN  
GABRIEL NOBLE'S P-STAR RISING**

**Acclaimed Documentary Premieres Nationally on the PBS series *Independent Lens*  
on Tuesday, February 9, 2009 at 10 PM**

(San Francisco, CA)—The story of young Priscilla Star Diaz (a.k.a. P-Star), currently in her second season on PBS's hit *Electric Company*, is told in Gabriel Noble's gritty, intimate, and moving **P-STAR RISING**. The film will premiere nationally on the Emmy® award winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Maggie Gyllenhaal, on Tuesday, February 9, 2010 at 10 PM (check local listings.)

**P-STAR RISING** is the story of a talented young hip-hop performer who becomes the vehicle for her father's unfulfilled ambitions. In the early eighties, at the dawn of hip-hop's breakthrough into the mainstream, Jesse Diaz was poised for fame, success, and wealth, but drugs and a prison sentence soon quashed his dreams. Though Jesse managed to reclaim his life and regain custody of his two young daughters (lost to the foster care system while he was incarcerated, and after their mother succumbed to drug addiction), he struggles to support his family as a single dad. Broke, unemployed, and living in temporary housing, he pins his hopes for the family's fortunes on his youngest daughter, Priscilla.



*Scenes from P-STAR RISING, coming to Independent Lens February 2010.*

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Recognizing Priscilla's natural musical talent and precocious personality, Jesse sets out to realize his deferred dreams of hip-hop stardom by making the 9-year-old into the next rap phenomenon—"the youngest girl on the scene." Filmed over four years, **P-STAR RISING** follows Jesse and his daughters as they navigate the peaks and pitfalls of both the music business and family relationships. As P-Star starts to break through, Jesse struggles to balance his responsibilities as a father to Priscilla and her older sister Solsky with his music industry aspirations. Solsky, increasingly sidelined by Priscilla's career, does poorly in school and turns to the church for support. And as Priscilla matures, she comes increasingly into conflict with Jesse, and risks losing her childhood to satisfy his demands. From performances on the street corner to appearances on national television, from signing record deals to dealing with feelings of abandonment by Priscilla's crack-addicted mother, Gabriel Noble's chronicle of the Diaz family offers a personal, intimate look at ambition, talent, and the sacrifices family members make for one another.

To learn more about the film and its subjects, visit the companion website for **P-STAR RISING** at [pbs.org/p-star-rising](http://pbs.org/p-star-rising). 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.

### **About the Filmmakers**

#### **GABRIEL NOBLE (director/producer)**

As a graduate of UCLA, Noble founded and served as artistic director of Equal Opportunity Productions, an arts outreach organization whose mission was to use arts education to empower youth in Los Angeles, Cuba, and South Africa. Gabriel went on to serve as Assistant Director on the narrative film, *On The Outs*, nominated for IFP Indie Spirit award, Gotham Award, and recipient of the Grand Prize at the Slamdance Festival. He produced *Death of Two Sons*, a political, spiritual, and personal exploration of the death of Amadou Diallo, executive produced by HBO. Gabriel's directorial debut was with the feature documentary, *Autumn's Eyes*, which tells the story of losing a teenage mother to prison through the perspective of her 3-year old daughter. It premiered at South by Southwest, and is being distributed by Indiepix Films. He has since served as director/producer on a feature documentary for MTV News and Docs, *I Won't Love You to Death*, and as supervising field producer for CNBC's talk show *dLife* for five seasons. In addition to working as a director, producer, and cinematographer for film and television, Gabriel teaches film for The Pearson Foundation. Gabriel is currently in developing the feature fiction adaptation to P-Star Rising.

#### **MARJAN TEHRANI (producer)**

TRU FILMS is a production company based in New York City and founded by Marjan Tehrani in 2001. Tru Films is dedicated to promoting dialogue between cultures, sharing the intricate and subtle aspects of identity and capturing the transformative moments of human experience with both humor and integrity. Tru Films has produced two independent documentaries: *Her Israel* premiered on the Sundance Channel in 2004 and **ARUSI PERSIAN WEDDING** premiered on *Independent Lens* in March 2009. Tehrani has also produced several original series for television, including *dLife* on CNBC and the Emmy®-nominated *After School*, which featured celebrity alumni such as Harvey Keitel and Tim Robbins. She has also produced commercial segments for clients such as Saatchi and Saatchi and General Mills and has created videos for several nonprofit organizations.

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## **Director's Statement**

I first saw Priscilla, a.k.a P-Star, perform at a nightclub in lower Manhattan six years ago, when she was nine. The bouncer had snuck her in the back door, and given her five minutes to rap on stage to a packed audience twice her size and three times her height. Her perfect storm of charisma, raw talent, charm, and street smarts won over the crowd. I spent the next day filming Priscilla and her father, Jesse, as they hit the Harlem streets to continue to build P-Star's name by rapping on corners for crowds of locals and tourists. At nightfall, we returned to their one-room shelter for Priscilla to nap and for Jesse to help his older daughter with her homework, and then headed back out to the club. This was their routine. Jesse was back in the music business he had left to raise his daughters, and Priscilla was carrying her family on her back with her fierce promise of becoming a star. As a filmmaker I was immediately struck by these complex and dynamic characters, the unique family relationship, and a little girl's mission to make her daddy proud by redeeming his deferred dream.

On the surface it appeared like a classic tale of an overzealous stage father living vicariously through his daughter's career. And although there is some of that, it is not the whole story. Priscilla had something special – she lit up the room with her innocence, passion, and raw talent. It was easy to forget that she was just a little girl, as her father and others often would do. As I got to know Jesse and his family, I was able to dig deeper and understand why he was the way he was, and I took on the responsibility of presenting all his dimensions. I saw him as a loving and struggling single father who was haunted by his painful past and who wanted to protect his family at any means. It was when I filmed Jesse and the girls finding their estranged mother, a drug addict, on the streets of Brooklyn, that it became evident that he did truly want the best for his daughters and had fought to raise them alone. Music was his answer, for good or bad.

In the weeks, months, and years that followed, I built a relationship as a director, cinematographer, and confidant and friend to Jesse, Priscilla, and her older sister Solsky. This relationship was built on trust, which allowed me inside the home and hearts of the family, both in times of triumph and in times of struggle. Partly due to a lack of funding, and partly due to my ability to unobtrusively blend in behind the scenes, I decided to shoot and direct alone to capture this authentic family drama.

I formed a bond with Jesse, but Priscilla and I also became very close. She shared with me both on and off camera the pressure that she was experiencing from her father and the industry, as well as her longing to be a child. She was conflicted too, however, because she had grown addicted to the music and wanted nothing more than to realize the family dream. I witnessed Priscilla grow from a little girl into a teenager, and it was magical to capture her discovering her own voice and taking control of her own destiny.

And that is when I stopped filming. When I knew that Priscilla's voice would be heard and that the family would persevere together.

## **About *Independent Lens***

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10PM 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 a unique individual, community, or moment in history. Presented by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites, national publicity, and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at [www.pbs.org/independentlens](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens). *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), 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.