



**Press Release**

**SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL™ PRESENTS**  
**SPACE SHUTTLE: THE FINAL COUNTDOWN**  
**PREMIERING SUNDAY, APRIL 22 AT 8 PM ET/PT**

**Debut of 2-Hour Special Coincides With Space Shuttle Discovery's April 19 Arrival at National Air & Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center**

**New York, NY – April 3, 2012 –** For 30 years, it was America's flagship in space, flying more miles, completing more missions, and delivering more hardware than any other spacecraft in history. Now, as the Space Shuttle enters America's pantheon of air and space achievement, Smithsonian Channel marks the end of an era with the premiere of **SPACE SHUTTLE: THE FINAL COUNTDOWN** on Sunday, April 22 at 8 p.m. ET/PT. Through interviews with NASA scientists, administrators, astronauts and Smithsonian Institution historians, **SPACE SHUTTLE: THE FINAL COUNTDOWN**, tells the definitive story of the Shuttle era: its incredible achievements, its devastating tragedies – and the dream to make space travel affordable and routine.

The special is premiering just days after the Space Shuttle Discovery, the most accomplished vehicle in the fleet, is scheduled to make its much anticipated journey from Kennedy Space Center in Florida to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Virginia, where it will go on permanent display. The Smithsonian is planning a four-day celebration for its arrival.

When Space Shuttle Atlantis touched down at the Kennedy Space Center on July 21, 2011, it was the program's 135<sup>th</sup> and final mission. And while the Shuttle program's tragedies – Challenger in 1986 and Columbia in 2003 – left indelible scars in the national memory, its achievements are less known and deserve recognition. Without the Space Shuttle there would be no Hubble Telescope, which transformed our understanding of the universe. With its enormous cargo bay, the Shuttle became a workhorse for transporting satellites and scientific equipment to space, enabling the construction of the International Space Station. It was also a powerful symbol of international collaboration.

The Shuttle itself, a re-usable spacecraft capable of bursting through the atmosphere and returning safely to Earth, was an extraordinary technical achievement.

SPACE SHUTTLE: THE FINAL COUNTDOWN tells the truly epic story of the Shuttle's creation, its many staggering achievements and the painful tragedies that cost the lives of 14 crew members, including Christa McAuliffe, who was scheduled to be the first teacher in space but who died in the Challenger disaster. Over its 30 years, the Space Shuttle took 355 astronauts into space. It completed 21,152 Earth orbits and flew a total of 542 million miles – enough to reach Jupiter.

SPACE SHUTTLE: THE FINAL COUNTDOWN is produced by Darlow Smithson Productions for Smithsonian Channel, Channel 4 and Endemol Worldwide Distribution. The film is directed by Jeremy Hall, produced by Clare Bradbury and executive produced by Julian Ware and Tom Brisley for Darlow Smithson. Executive Producers for Smithsonian Channel are David Royle and Charles Poe.

#### **ABOUT SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL**

Smithsonian Channel is owned by Smithsonian Networks, a joint venture between Showtime Networks Inc. and the Smithsonian Institution. Its programs are largely inspired by the assets of the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum complex. Smithsonian Channel features award-winning original documentaries, series, and groundbreaking programs highlighting America's historical, cultural and scientific heritage. Smithsonian Channel brings the American experience home in high definition and Dolby Digital 5.1 and is available to customers of DirecTV, Comcast, Time Warner Cable, Charter Communications, Cablevision, Verizon, AT&T, and more. Learn more at [www.smithsonianchannel.com](http://www.smithsonianchannel.com).

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