

BLACK ENTERPRISE

Millionaire Success Formula

YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

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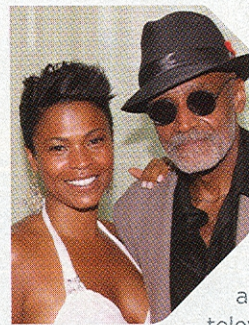
BLACK FILM FESTIVAL

When Jesse Jackson called for a boycott of the 68th annual Academy Awards in 1996, Jeff Friday thought that shunning the Oscars would accomplish very little. "We need to create a Sundance [film festival] for black films," he said. "Instead of complaining about what film studios aren't putting out, why don't we just create a vehicle so [we] can tell our own stories, and we'll tell the world how great black films can be."

Byron Lewis, founder, chairman, and CEO of UniWorld, and Warrington Hudlin, president of the Black Filmmakers Foundation, signed on and the three agreed to launch the American Black Film Festival (ABFF) in 1997.



ABOVE: FRIDAY (CENTER) AT STAR-STUDED ABFF. BELOW: NIA LONG AND MELVIN VAN PEEBLES ENJOY THE FESTIVAL.



Establishing itself as the premier vehicle for black filmmakers, ABFF grew from 290 attendees and 14 films its first year to 3,000 film enthusiasts and more than 400 submissions (50 of which were actually screened) this year. In 2002, Friday became founder and CEO of Film Life Inc. with a goal of creating new and unique opportunities for black filmmakers outside of the traditional Hollywood system. He recently partnered with Warner Home Video to distribute the best releases (roughly six to eight) out of the festival under the ABFF DVD Series label in major retail outlets including Wal-Mart and Blockbuster. The deal also allows for sales of these films to television networks. With the help of Dick Parsons, CEO of Time Warner, and in association with DePasse Entertainment, Friday was able to get the Black Movie Awards aired on TNT.

Film Life has also entered into a partnership with Wal-Mart to tour ABFF films, offering a theatrical experience to audiences in cities throughout the U.S. Chicago and Atlanta were the first. Six additional cities will be added to the tour in 2007.

Friday boasts several successes. One is Roger Bobb, a producer from Brooklyn who screened *The Riff* at ABFF in 2002. There he met producer Rueben Cannon who introduced him to Tyler Perry. Today Bobb is vice president of film and television production for The Tyler Perry Co. "It's about art, but it's [also] about the business of Hollywood. We want to have a pool of [film producers] 10 years from now who can say, 'I got my start at the American Black Film Festival.'" **BE**

—Sonia Alleyne