

AMERICAN BLACK FILM FESTIVAL

Film fest brings talent here from around globe

■ **The 15th American Black Film Festival opens Wednesday, bringing films, workshops and networking events to Miami Beach.**

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The long holiday weekend may be over, but the celebrations continue with the American Black Film Festival that kicks off Wednesday.

Now in its 15th year, ABFF brings together top African-American talent from around the globe for three days of film screenings, workshops and networking. It also provides a platform for emerging filmmakers to showcase their work through short-film and documentary competitions.

This year's festival kicks off with the red-carpet premiere of *In the Hive* directed by Robert Townsend.

The closing awards ceremony will honor comedic actor Keenen Ivory Wayans.

Workshops include a masterclass in screenwriting by *Brown Sugar* screenwriter Michael Elliot (\$100), an "idea pitch" class with Townsend (\$100), and a three-day acting bootcamp

with actor Bill Duke (\$200).

The festival's main venue will be the Ritz Carlton South Beach, but movie screenings take place at several South Beach venues: the Colony Theater, Fillmore at the Jackie Gleason Theater and Miami Beach Cinematheque.

The festival hopes to attract more than 5,000 industry professionals and film enthusiasts, a 15 percent increase over 2010, said Jeff Friday, founder and CEO of Film Life, which runs the event.

For South Florida, the fest provides a tourism boost during the slow summer months and raises the region's profile in the film-making community.

"We want to let Hollywood know that this is an area of the future," said David Karsh, director of communications at the Miami Community Redevelopment Association.

In the last two years, the CRA supported the festival with grants worth \$100,000.

The goal is to show filmmakers that there's more to Miami than just South Beach.

The out-of-towners were given tours of historic Overtown and the Wynwood Arts District.

Budget constraints prevented a 2011 grant, he said.

The festival is also supported by the Miami Beach Visitor and Convention Authority and the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, which views the event as an opportunity to serve a valued niche market, said Rolando Aedo, CVB executive vice president.

The American Black Film Festival runs from Wednesday to Saturday.

Most screenings are open to the public, with tickets priced at \$12.

All-festival passes are priced \$450-\$1,500; parties and other events are also priced individually. For the complete schedule and list of events, visit www.abff.com.

