

Savoy Magazine - April 2003 "Dream Weaver"

Access. Hollywood, everybody who's anybody has it: access to roles, access to capital and access to studio heads who can green-light the next movie or TV pilot. Only the elite have their calls answered and returned by industry honchos. Expanding that list to include more people of color is the goal and purpose of the BFF Summit. This annual meeting of Hollywood creative types and decision makers is an "invitation only" event for the true movers and shakers—and getting invited once doesn't necessarily mean you'll be invited again. The Summit is designed to connect the A-list of Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American professionals in motion pictures and television with top executives for closed door, off-the-record discussions. Producer and Summit founder Warrington Hudlin (Boomerang, House Party) says the idea for the event was inspired by entertainment financier Herb Alien, of Alien & Company, who brings together major CEOs and movie moguls to network, strategize and generate deals at his annual summer fete in Sun Valley, Idaho. "If those people needed to gather, we needed it even more," says Hudlin, who is also president of the Black Filmmakers Foundation. "We realized that we had neglected those who had advanced in their career but still faced barriers. Fortunately, HBO was willing to sponsor it."

Summit organizers invite the most senior professionals of color to meet with industry leaders such as Alan Horn, president and COO of Warner Bros.; Richard Parsons, chairman and CEO of AOL Time Warner; Leslie Moonves, chairman of CBS and Jonathan Dolgen, chairman and CEO of Viacom Entertainment Group. The sixth annual meeting took place this past October at the Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel in Dana Point, Calif. The three-day conclave saw 135 filmmakers, producers, directors, CEOs, studio and television execs, technocrats, financiers and entertainment attorneys engaging in strategy sessions covering a range of topics, including "Who's Got the Money?" and the "Convergence of Video Games and Movies." In an exclusive and first-time opportunity, SAVOY was allowed to photograph 83 attendees of the BFF Summit. "The very fact that we've created a regular event, an occasion where the right people come together in an industry that is totally based on relationships, is the importance of the event," says Hudlin. "We provide access for the most accomplished filmmakers among us to real decision makers."



Left to right, seated then, standing:

1. Gil Williams, Silver Pictures
2. Leonard Washington, Paramount Digital Entertainment
3. Carl R. Washington, Urban Marketing Corporation of America
4. Maria Weaver, HBO
5. Preston Whitmore, Films For The Grassroots, Inc.
6. Keenan Ivory Wayans, Ivory Way Productions, Inc.
7. Omar Wasow, BlackPlanet.com
8. Jeff Valdez, SI TV