

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**TRAILBLAZING INDUSTRY LEADER BILL KEYS AMONG ELITE  
OF BLACK FILMMAKING HISTORY**

NEW YORK, NY (November 8, 2007)- As filmmakers across the country converge in Los Angeles for the American Black Film Festival to celebrate Black cinematic history and culture, Bill Keys stands among many of the stars as one of the most influential and accomplished Black leaders in the film business. Keys is one of the founders of the dynamic NEHST Studios, and President of the NEHST-Out Distribution Group charged with releasing content from Nehst's recently announced \$250 million film fund.

Now at the helm of distribution for NEHST Studios, Keys is charged with selecting and distributing films to be funded in the 2 to 50 million dollar range. Being responsible for helping to choose and then take the products from a 9 figure, revolving fund places Keys in the position of influencing a lot of lives, careers and jobs. "This is an opportunity to perform in rare space. I'm blessed to be able to share the helm and bring the innovation that Nehst will be injecting into the industry.", Keys said.

The breaking down of a barrier isn't lost on Keys or Larry Meistrich, CEO of Nehst Studios. "We're unaware of any person of color, particularly an african-american, ever having the position of running distribution for a mainstream company with studio level funding, slates, international distribution and relationships. That seems odd in this day and age.", said Meistrich.

With the success of Denzel Washington, Will Smith and Tyler Perry on the artistic side, this might be a harbinger of things to come and an opportunity for Hollywood to become more inclusive. The all important ability to greenlight and knowledge of how to harness the consumer power of niche audiences is a constant topic in conversations regarding leveling the playing field in the film industry. Keys intends to address it head on.

Like many in the business, Bill's story started out humble as he began his climb to success.

A football scholarship took this D.C. native to the University of Virginia. After graduation and two attempted stints in the NFL, Keys went to work doing unglamorous tasks such as making phone calls, filing, and carrying around the suitcase for his boss. In this case however, it wasn't just any boss. The man he was following around the country was the Reverend Jesse Jackson. At the National Rainbow Coalition, Keys learned about diplomacy, the impact of tackling big picture issues publicly and simply how to tell a story. "It completely changed my world view," said Keys, "every single issue or trick, everything he tackled or dealt with could have been a movie."

Keys launched his film career in production and worked his way up through the ranks in New York by working on set of various projects and working at Artisan Entertainment under the marketing guru of the "Blair Witch Project" campaign, Miramax and USA Films (now Focus Features). In 2002, he co-founded a North American theatrical distribution company, Film Movement, later becoming its Head of Acquisitions and highlights his time there by the acquisition and distribution of award winning films such as "Alexandra's Project" from the Toronto Film Festival, "Manito," a

Sundance winner and "Raja" from the Cannes Film Festival and Achero Manas' "El Bola" from Spain.

Keys has produced and consulted in the past few years as well as been a judge for top festivals such as the Urbanworld Film Festival '03 and the Tribeca Film Festival '05. "Somebodies," a film Keys was an executive producer and sales agent on, was recently an official selection of the 2006 Sundance Film Festival. "Somebodies" recently became the first scripted series to be greenlit by BET in its 28 year history.

NEHST is a content financing, development, production, and distribution company that integrates the most powerful trends in entertainment and technology. Through their inclusive, open pitch sessions and Aspiring Filmmaker's Bootcamp, NEHST Studios hopes to revolutionize the filmmaking process by giving filmmakers with fresh ideas a chance to pitch directly to producers.

### **NEHST Studios**

NEHST Studios is a diversified film production, financing and distribution company that integrates the most powerful trends in entertainment and technology market, headed up by industry veteran Larry Meistrich – producer of *Sling Blade* and *You Can Count on Me* and founder of indie film studio Shooting Gallery – and Internet entrepreneur Ari Friedman. One of Nehst's goals is to remove entertainment industry barriers and open up the pitching and development process to anyone with a great idea. Through their inclusive, open pitch sessions and Aspiring Filmmaker's Bootcamp, NEHST Studios hopes to revolutionize the filmmaking process by giving filmmakers with fresh ideas a chance to pitch directly to producers. The company, which launched at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival, is currently developing seven projects.

For more information on NEHST Studios, please go to <http://www.nehst.com>.