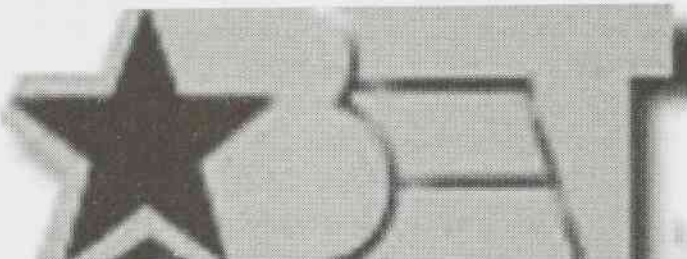


A Profile of

By Davené Swinson



Everyone is familiar with BET for its music videos, Teen Summit and weekly movies; however, how much do we actually know about the first and only black-owned and operated corporation?

BET, Black Entertainment Television, was founded on Aug. 8, 1979, by Robert L. Johnson. The cable network first aired in January as an advertiser-supported, basic cable television service, airing two hours every Friday night. Today, BET is a 24-hour showcase of music videos, live performances, sitcoms, news and public affairs targeted for African-American viewers.

Committed to maximizing its value and to establishing BET as the most valued consumer brand within the African-American community, BET Holdings Inc. is the parent company of BET. BET Holdings Inc. has created four additional programming service — BET on Jazz: The Cable Jazz Channel, BET Action Pay-Per-View, BET Movies/STARZ!, and BET Gospel. Outside the realm of cable television, this company has established “Emerge”, “BET Weekend”, and “Heart and Soul” magazines; BET Direct; BET SoundStage restaurants; and BET Financial Services. Having partnered with corporations such as Microsoft, Walt Disney World Resorts and Hilton Hotels, BET Holdings Inc. has reached into almost every area of entertainment and media.

Robert L. Johnson, the founder, CEO and chairman of BET, was the vice president of Government Relations for the National Cable

Television Association at the time of his conception of BET. He currently serves on the boards of US Airways, General Mills and the United Negro College Fund. Johnson has received major awards from several different organizations, such as the NAACP Image Award, a Distinguished Alumni Award from Princeton University, and Cablevision Magazine’s 20/20 Vision Award.

BET recently took on the projects of BET Pictures II, BET Arabesque Films, Arabesque Books and BET SoundStage Club. As the next century approaches, one should look forward to what BET has in store for the African-American community.