



CARL JUSTE/HERALD STAFF

**HERE COME THE GLITTERATI:** Actor/director Robert Townsend, left, and actor Eric LaSalle arrive at the opening night of the American Black Film Festival at the Jackie Gleason Theater in Miami Beach. The five-day, 32-film festival continues today. Passes cost \$125 a day.

# At fest, it's about networking

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Fendi sunglasses in the night and leather pants cut low, slinking down a woman's hips. The paparazzi, skittish and milling. Large forbidding men in denim suits and the suspicion of many colognes.

**LAST NIGHT**

It was opening night of the

American Black Film Festival at the Jackie Gleason Theater in Miami Beach.

"Do you want to take my picture?" asked Terrance Flowers. Flowers, 23, had driven 10 hours from Pensacola.

He wore black chinos and a plaid yellow Polo shirt, a bit pedestrian for the crowd he was trying to join.

## It was opening night of the American Black Film Festival at the Jackie Gleason Theater. Screenings will be at the Regal Cinemas.

"It's a good opportunity to network, display my talent," he said. He's up for a bit part in the *Bad Boys* sequel to be filmed here this summer.

Flowers auditioned this week. It went well, he thought, but he was nervous, and he snapped his fingers unconsciously as he talked. Two Lincoln Navigators were parked outside the theater, massive and glossy. One was a decked-out black pickup with tinted windows and black upholstery, the other a silver SUV with seat-leather the color of milk.

You could see your Manolo Blahniks in the hubcaps. The tires were covered in clear grease to make them gleam and the vehicles had been parked with precision, so the letters on the tires were easily readable.

"Networking, politicking, I'm here to do some business," said Alif Lanier, 26, a producer from Philadelphia.

"You've got HBO, Showtime, ABC, Uniworld down here." Lanier has some projects on stage, and he wants to work with short films. "You do one of those, it's just a short step up

to doing a feature," he said.

The five-day, 32-film festival started Wednesday and continues today with other screenings at the Regal Cinemas in South Beach and panels and events at the Loews and Royal Palm Crown Plaza. Passes cost \$125 a day.

Robert Townsend, the actor/director whose 1987 film *Hollywood Shuffle* satirized black stereotypes in movies, glided past, smiling. The rumor that director John Singleton (*Boys in the Hood*) was on site was never substantiated.

Inside the Jackie Gleason it was cold, and the women held their arms close. "We've got 3,000 African Americans together to talk about Hollywood so please, carry your business cards, and let's make some deals," said the man on stage. The festival had begun.