

Simmons On ' Mainstream' Magazines

Written by Westside ID270

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Hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons did not mince words today as he took the magazine industry to task for its lack of cultural diversity.

Speaking on the third day of the American Magazine Conference in Boca Raton, Fla., Mr. Simmons told an audience of more than 500 of the nation's top magazine executives that they had failed to acknowledge the overwhelming influence that hip-hop has had on youth culture.

"You are in the business of spotting trends, and you've been largely absent," said Mr. Simmons, who is chief executive of Rush Communications and the founder of Def Jam Recordings and the Phat Farm apparel brand. Describing hip-hop as a great brand-building culture, he said that the inattention of marketers and magazines had been good for him. "You're not thinking about it, so I can build another business," he said.

Mr. Simmons was especially pointed on the subject of who is making decisions throughout most of the publishing industry. "You've got two black people in this room, and both of them are on stage," he said, referring to his interviewer, Roy Johnson, assistant managing editor of *Sports Illustrated*

, who is African American. "There are more images out there than Puffy [Combs]," he added. Later, Mr. Simmons acknowledged that he hadn't seen all of the people of color in the room.

Mr. Simmons drew some negative criticism himself. Diane Weathers, editor in chief of *Essence* magazine, asked the entrepreneur about what could be done to combat negative stereotyping in some rap lyrics and videos. Mr. Simmons agreed there was a problem, but insisted that current artists were less sexist than those in the previous generation. His response did not satisfy Ms. Weathers, who said in an interview after the Q&A period, "The message hip-hop sends is that young black men are gangsters and thugs and young black women are whores. He didn't answer my question."

Overall, Mr. Simmons' remarks were received warmly. "It was a wake-up call," says Tom Ryder, CEO of Readers' Digest Association Inc. and chairman of the board of the Magazine Publishers Association, the trade group sponsoring the conference. "He talked about things we need to know."

[Source](#)

***Editors Note: Big Up's to Ms. Diane Weathers for asking a great question. To bad Mr. Simmons could not respect her enough to give a truthful answer. The answer is it's all about the money for them and we will take the other industry's to task for self advertisement: of course

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that is my opinion.--Westside