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TAVIS SMILEY ON PBS CELEBRATES 1,000th EPISODE

Los Angeles (September 18, 2008) On Thursday, September 18, *TAVIS SMILEY* on PBS celebrated the milestone of its 1,000th episode. Over 250 guests mingled with Smiley on his set at the KCET/Los Angeles studios, having their pictures taken with the man *Newsweek* described as one of “20 people changing how Americans get their news.” Guests also had the opportunity to meet the behind-the-scene production team that has helped *TAVIS SMILEY* reach such an auspicious milestone. Smiley acknowledged his staff, sponsors, friends and family, and introduced the evening’s broadcast. KCET President and CEO Al Jerome reminded those in attendance of the significance of *TAVIS SMILEY* and his accomplishments during his five years on PBS.

The show airs locally on KCET Los Angeles at 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. weeknights. The commemorative episode featured highlights of its eclectic mix of current events, politics, pop culture and entertainment that have distinguished it from other talk shows in the late night TV landscape.

Among the special moments selected for the show included:

- *Dustin Hoffman—the remarkable 15-minute interview that grew into a two part, 60-minute conversation between Smiley and the Academy Award®-winning actor.
- *Coretta Scott King—her last extended TV conversation, taped at her husband’s church.
- *Prince—live performance and riveting conversation.
- *40th anniversary of Dr. King’s death this April in Memphis with Harry Belafonte.

TAVIS SMILEY made its debut on PBS in January 2004 on 76 stations with outreach to 54% of American households. Today, the show is carried to over 90% of the country topping 3,000 individual broadcasts per week. In addition to its stellar list of newsmakers and trendsetters, the show has been distinguished by its weeklong documentary series on Katrina with Jonathan Demme entitled “Right to Return: New Home Movies from the Lower 9th Ward,” the primary election All American Presidential Forums, and programs marking the anniversaries of the founding of Jamestown and the deaths of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy. As the only late night daily show on PBS that emanates from the west coast, *TAVIS SMILEY* celebrated its fifth anniversary this past January.

“I feel blessed beyond measure to have had the opportunity to reach this milestone,” stated Tavis Smiley. “The mission from our first episode was to advance a conversation that would introduce Americans to each other. We take particular pride in the fact that the overwhelming majority of our guests on these 1,000 shows have been fresh faces and new voices to late night talk television, and most were making their first appearance on PBS. The enthusiasm and support for the show from both sides of the political aisle at the recently concluded conventions is also encouraging to us that we’re on the right track.”

“When you set out to do something different in the genre of late night television, longevity is usually not the result,” added executive producer Neal Kendall. “We have offered an alternative to programming and formats most all the other shows uniformly follow. One striking difference is the fact that some of the most fascinating conversations we’ve had are with musicians and singer-songwriters. On the other programs, these people rarely get a chance to talk.”

“Tavis Smiley has brought fresh voices, energy and smart conversation to late night television and PBS,” said John Boland, PBS Chief Content Officer. “It’s an honor for PBS and our audience to celebrate this occasion.”

“KCET is extremely proud of its association with Tavis Smiley,” stated Al Jerome, KCET president and CEO. “This milestone is a testament to his dedication to engaging new audiences for some of our country’s most important conversations, and we look forward to another 1,000 episodes.”

With the 5th season launch of *TAVIS SMILEY* earlier this year, the series is now a multi-platform endeavor. PBS.org/tavis Web site actively engages viewers with its on-demand Web casts of full episodes; original content, such as “Road to Wealth”; special features and expanded behind-the-scenes coverage.

Major funding for *TAVIS SMILEY* is provided by Toyota, Wal-Mart, The Annie E. Casey Foundation and PBS. Each of these underwriters has supported the show since its inception. *TAVIS SMILEY* started with a one-time seed grant from the National Black Programming Consortium.

TAVIS SMILEY is produced by The Smiley Group Inc./TS Media Inc. in association with KCET/Los Angeles. *TAVIS SMILEY* airs nationwide on PBS. Please check local listings. For more information, visit www.pbs.org/tavis.

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