

ARTICLES

August 10, 2009

Live review: Tone-X's celebrity roast



By Alexzenia Davis

Comedian Tone-X has been tickling Charlotte's funny bone for quite some time. But on Monday, August 3, it was the comedian's turn to laugh as the spotlight turned on him in a very special way.

Anthony Belser, a radio personality on Charlotte's Power 98 WPEG and host of Tuesday night's Tone-X & Friends Comedy Show, has never shied away from his opportunity to shine. His resume boasts of spots on Russell Simmons "Def Comedy Jam", BET's Comic View, and a feature on Diddy's "The Bad Boys of Comedy". He is an announcer for the Charlotte Bobcats and recently embarked on a three state tour with Mo'Nique; branding his name on a more wide scale level.

So naturally, it was time to roast him.

The surprise event, organized by Y Square Management and Swagger TV, took place at Apostrophe Lounge — an intimate spot located in Charlotte's South End neighborhood. On this particular night, the normally upscale venue was even more star studded as some of the city's finest walked the red carpet in honor of "Uncle Tone."

Before Tone's arrival, guests were treated to performances by Y Square Management artists Quills and Ida Divine. DJ Skills manned the booth, keeping everyone's energy on high.

The limo arrived soon after toting a well groomed Tone-X, and was escorted by managers — wife, Yolanda Belser and business partner Kimberly Edmonds. Photographers swarmed to take pictures of the guest of honor and Power 98's Janine Davis pulled him aside for an interview where he admitted he had no idea what was in store for him.

As the doors opened, Jay-Z's Encore blared through the sound system and at least 150 guests cheered him on as he took his seat center stage. Bluz, host of the event, kicked off the roasting session. Other roasters included fellow Power 98 personalities Janine "JD" Davis and No Limit Larry, local comedian, Neechie, and Tone X & Friends co-host, Chris "Funnyman" Robinson. Stacey Blackman of Q92 took to the DJ booth later in the evening.

It proved to be an emotional night; one full of good humor and well deserved appreciation. It was a night that reminded everyone that it is important to make the time to recognize people in the midst of their goodness; a reminder that good people are like good jokes — they're to be applauded in the moment and they stick with you for a lifetime.

<http://clclt.com/theclog/archives/2009/08/10/live-review-tone-xs-celebrity-roast>

August 3, 2009



Todd Gallinek likes Nothing But Noodles



Todd Gallinek didn't always have his eye on the boiling pot. In fact, he didn't even have his foot in the kitchen. As a college student, Gallinek just knew he would become a lawyer ... a career choice that stuck with him until his final year. Now, married with three kids, Gallinek has found his true calling. He owns two Nothing But Noodles restaurants in Charlotte — the franchise, located in 12 states, has garnered an impressive reputation. Along with his NBN locations, Gallinek owns a travel agency, Four Corners of the World, which specializes in adopting children from around the world. Making an impact in everything he does is what says Gallinek truly loves. He spoke with *Creative Loafing* and elaborated on what attracts him to the food industry.

Creative Loafing: I know you're not a chef, but how did your love for cooking and the culinary industry come about?

Todd Gallinek: I've always loved to cook, but I'm more about service. I saw the restaurant business as a way to serve customers. I love to eat and I've had a chance to travel around the world. When I came upon this restaurant, I loved everything about it. I can't take credit for creating it. But we make our sauces from scratch, everything's fresh. We cut every vegetable and every fruit.

I read that your food is heavily influenced by a variety of cultures and cuisines. What is your favorite country to visit, and which makes your favorite food?

My favorite food would be Indian, my favorite country to visit would be Vietnam. We don't serve either here, but I love flavors from Southeast Asia. [Nothing But Noodles serves] Thai dishes, Chinese and Japanese. I'm really into the flavors and spices.

If you can pinpoint the biggest perk that has come with entrepreneurship, what would it be?

Being my own boss. I would say flexibility, but when you own two restaurants it makes it very difficult. Meeting people. The reason I really got into it. I can meet new people every day. I serve the same food, but always to a different audience.



July 22, 2009



Live Review: Tone X & Friends

The Deal: Live comedy show hosted by radio personality Tone-X and Chris “Funnyman” Robinson (and sponsored by members of the Carolina Panthers) that takes place every Tuesday at 8 p.m. at Skandalos (5317 East Independence Blvd).

The Good: The Tone X & Friends comedy show, which has featured well-known comedians such as Hope Flood and Michael Blackson, definitely lived up to the hype last night, pulling all the stops. The show kicked off with open mic, as amateur comedians were given their chance at QCity fame; one shot to rock or flop. And it didn’t stop with comedy — R&B artist Young Fletcher blew everyone away with his fresh sound and crisp performance. To top it off, headliner Dekeys kept the momentum as he moved the house with his crude but tear jerking humor — I literally laughed till I cried.

Tone X & Friends' affiliation with urban media network, Swagger TV, allows the show to stream live — nationally and internationally. And thanks to the network’s accessibility to major artists, the show was able to pull off the biggest surprise of the night: a performance by Sean Paul! As if the crowd wasn’t live enough ... Trust me, you’ve never seen a show like this before.

The Bad: Anticipate a large crowd and plan to arrive early. Ladies, if your stilettos are just for show, then you might want to make an appearance before they bring out the “standing room only” sign.

The Verdict: Food, drinks, laughs ... what more could you ask for? If you don’t mind raw humor and long lines — you should definitely check out this show. (\$15 goes a long way, huh?)

<http://clclt.com/theclog/archives/2009/07/22/live-review-tone-x-and-friends>

NITRAM KNARF

July 2008

Ace Hood

By Alexzenia Davis

Charlotte, North Carolina... Woods restaurant... Private room... black businessmen and women... table for 30... Conversation: music, entertainment, politics, business, gossip, concerts, family... There was plenty of joking and laughing along with some intellectual dialogue—but this was no average business meeting. This was a thank you luncheon for hip hop's newest rising star.

If you ask him what his name means, you'll get a lightning bolt 40 second rap as the response. This is only part of what he'll tell you:

*"Now anybody wanna know who I be
I am H to the double O D
Keeps it gutta till I D I E
Runnin' them blocks with the real OG's..."*

His name is Ace Hood.

At age 19, Ace has already achieved a significant amount of fame. Born Antoine McColister and raised in Broward County, Florida, his flow is quick in pace. His east coast accent is tinted with a hint of southern drawl. His hard hitting beats and his rapid fire lyrics affirm that Florida's reign of hip hop heavyweights has never been stronger. His music has earned him features in Billboard Magazine, XXL's Show & Prove, and the title as MTV's new discover artist.

Today he sits dressed in a black tee and red shorts; laid back but seemingly poised to conquer not only the interview awaiting him outside, but the music industry as a whole. Far removed from the overt cockiness that plagues the industry, he possesses a cool swagger and seasoned flavor of confidence. A confidence that at age 17 put him in front of one of hip hop's toughest producers, DJ Khaled.

Ace met Khaled outside of WEDR 99 Jamz, a radio station in South Florida, hoping for the opportunity to perform at his birthday bash. With a bio, a demo, and some local buzz, it was a shot in the dark for the pursuing artist. Fortunately, impressed with his style, Khaled agreed to a meeting and later challenged him to spit over a verse of T-Pain's, "I'm So Hood". After stepping up to the plate and proving himself, a protégé was born. Ace quickly moved from freestyling over number one singles to a hit of his very own—Cash Money featuring Rick Ross and T-Pain. Now signed to both We The Best Music and Def Jam Records, Ace will be releasing his debut album, "Gutta", this coming August.

So what sets Ace apart from his hip hop counterparts? He has a certain youthful energy that when combined with the hard core reality and depth in some of his songs, can silence many of today's more commercial artists. Although his sound can easily identify with fans of southern hip hop, it is still original and capable of lasting through all of hip hop's rapidly changing phases.

*'... Apprehended by the beat
My image is well cemented in the concrete
no con can compete
no conceding to defeat
If I die up in the streets
To every thug my soul will speak"*

Now, after dining in a top of the line restaurant, Ace stands to thank his guests which include his own team, Power 98 DJs (Charlotte, NC), and TV producers. His immensely blinged out chain reading "We The Best" dangles from his neck; a status of his quick rise to success, but never weighing him down. His quick speech is a gesture of appreciation to people who have helped him along the way, but it serves as a message to everyone in the room that he has reserved his spot in the game.

Later for the Kings. Ace has played his cards right, shuffling his way to the top of the deck. And just like the title of his mixtape predicts, "Ace Won't Fold."

NITRAM KNARF

2009

Focus on Fashion: From Braids to Fades



By Alexzenia Davis

Unique, trendsetting, evolving, yet classy-- hip hop is consistently the most popular and often controversial cultural movement. With music, language, and fashion as its three defining elements, it is easy to get caught up in at least one aspect of the urban lifestyle. Over the last few years fashion has boldly begun to push its way to the forefront-- finally breaking from the 'me in my white tee, baggy pants' saga to something more respectable. So everything else aside, its only right to take some time and focus on fashion.

In 2004 we witnessed the emergence of Kanye West and the sudden switch to button ups (and collars up) sparking a significant shift in hip hop style. However it was Jay-Z who surprised many, as we were actually able to see his transformation into a more sophisticated HOV. With the help of other notable artists, throwbacks became a distant memory. While some debated whether it was yet another passing fad or an actual sign of progression, many took it as a chance to step out of the box and diversify their look.

One of the most recent trends to receive attention is bringing fashion back... to another decade. Formed by a group of fashion conscientious teens, the Retro Kids, a crew of 8 from various sections of New York City are reverting urban wear to an 80s feel. They have showcased their wardrobe consisting of track jackets and acid washed jeans on a daily basis. The combination of colors and retro style speaks to the 'going against the grain' mentality that seems to have struck many hip hop heads, telling fans that what is in is to be completely different. Think Lupe Fiasco skateboarding, or the growing hip hop/rock collaborations. Fashion is following suit realizing that what is now more commonly accepted is generally what is most innovative.

So what about footwear? Well obviously vans have etched their sole print permanently on the face of hip hop. But as we found out, they were more than just a shoe that carried a hip hop song-- literally. They proved to be a nice break from sneakers and, depending on the occasion, a cool alternative to regular shoes. So when they entered the hip hop scene they were in high demand. Still, sometimes change is overrated as mostly everyone I checked with is content kickin' it with their Nikes.

Last but not least, we can't forget about the hair. For a while now there has been an increase in lock wearers. For some it's a display of black pride and for others it is the perfect option when looking for a natural way of hair care. Some recognizable figures have opted to chop it off completely. Busta Rhymes, Ludacris, and the Detroit Piston's Rip Hamilton have all gone from braids to fades this year. Other than that the hair scene has remained pretty tame.

While we always await change, that's what it's like in fashion... for now.

November 2013

Charlotte's Girl

By Alexzenia Davis



Charlotte's Own:

THE TONE X Effect

Tone-X's detailed road to success has made all the right impressions. Born Anthony Belser, in Wilmington, NC, he has worked diligently to make his mark in the world of comedy permanent. The notches on his belt speak to his performances on Russell Simmon's **Def Comedy Jam**, BET's **Comic View**, P. Diddy's **Bad Boys of Comedy**, and **The Kings of Comedy** tour. His immense talent, genuine soul, and strategic mind have allowed him to penetrate multiple arenas including: stand-up, radio, TV, and sports. Yet, even with his many achievements, his passion has never been greater.

Tone-X first built a name for himself in Charlotte, NC where he became one of the most recognizable and engaging radio personalities on WPEG's Power 98 FM; a position which he held for 12 years. During this time, he also served as the official spokesperson for the Charlotte Bobcats, the former (WNBA) Charlotte Sting, and was a featured host on various FOX on air programs. In 2008, he branched out on an even larger scale as he went on to create and host **Tone-X and Friends**—a comedy show which quickly became a Tuesday night Charlotte hotspot.

His accomplishments catapulted him into a position which brought him to Atlanta and put him center stage in an even brighter spotlight. In 2009, he was pulled on as a writer for **The Mo'Nique Show** on BET; an experience which made him even more versatile, greatly enhancing his knowledge in the realms of TV and production. And to top it off, he landed a spot on Mo'Nique's national tour.

The time away from his old NC stomping grounds has helped Tone-X to mature as a comedian. Staying true to the idea that, "the funniest material is the truth," he has let audiences in on the new developments in his life, including the birth of his son. And as his family grows, so does he; a fact which can be evidenced in his style. From hip hop comedy to "grown man," Tone-X has elevated in more ways than one. Taking note from his own tagline and personal belief that you should "walk into a room and be celebrated, not tolerated," Tone-X is currently prepping for the release of **The Blue Line**—his sock line which will also feature bowties and pocket squares.

Faithful fans and friends will get to relive the Tone-X experience first-hand when he returns in November. On November 17, Tone-X will present **Ocean's 46**, a special night of comedy which will double as a celebration of his 46th birthday as well as 20 years in comedy. Playing on the Ocean's trilogy theme, Tone-X, in Clooney-esque fashion will bring three comedians along on his "heist" to steal the laughter. It will be a night to remember for Tone-X, as well. Having remained humble through it all, he considers the show a thank you to all of those who have helped to make him a success.

As his star grows, he continues to pay it forward. Through his involvement in various youth-gearred organizations including **Education Through Talent** and this year's **Hip Hop Caucus Townhall Forum**, he has been able to serve as a mentor both directly and indirectly.

Passing along some of his wisdom and serving as a positive influence is not something that Tone-X takes lightly. He knows that his responsibility is far more complex than to simply make people laugh. He wants to make them listen. He has, and he will. For through his gift, he promotes his purpose. And that is what makes comedian, Tone-X, not only great, but necessary.

Hit him up on Twitter! @ToneXComedy

Hit me up on IG & Twitter! @Charlottes_Girl

December 2013

Charlotte's Girl

CLEAN SLATE FOR THE BLACK STATE



By Alexzenia Davis
@charlottes_girl

It wasn't so long ago that I allowed my mind to slip into the muddled issue of the black image. The portrayal of Black America is a hot and often debated topic; the consensus usually being that our image is skewed, tainted, and overall, inaccurate. However, past that initial point, which we all seem to find agreeable, opinions are complex, varied, and arguable. With the recent passing of Nelson Mandela—South Africa's first black president and anti-apartheid leader—it seems fitting to spark some dialogue regarding black identity here in the states.

While Mandela was not American and though South Africa's plight was not the same, it was similar. He was still exalted as a great "black" leader and was one of the few prominent civil-rights figures remaining. He overcame great, if not extreme opposition—27 years of imprisonment—and spent the entirety of his life working towards the goal of equality in South Africa. For those of us born later, we missed much of the critique and backlash. We were either not yet alive or not yet alert enough to hear his status discussed as anything other than iconic.

His presence was not lost on us, just as conversation of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Adam Clayton Powell Jr., and others are likely sewn into the fabric of history to last the test of time. What does this have to do with Black America today? Well, we seem to be lacking a few things that existed in the past: a concise understanding of our issues and position, an agreed upon standard of excellence, and a deeper respect for those at the forefront of our issues. They all go hand in hand.

A concise understanding of our issues. The diversity of Black America is one that allows us to have such complex and at times, opposing, views of one another. Even the mention of "the black community" is cause for confusion. Our communities are not homogenous. The belief that we are, causes us to attempt to tackle issues through a single lens. Additionally, it makes it difficult to pinpoint and prioritize problems. We are no longer in the grip of the civil rights era fighting for basic rights. And though intense prejudice and outward racism persist in many parts of the country, many of us have been afforded and are aware of all of the many opportunities we have. For so long we have been defined by our struggle. Perhaps it is the case that without a single glaring obstacle to overcome, we have lost all sense of purpose.

An agreed upon standard of excellence. A deeper respect. It's likely never been the case that we seeped perfection through and through. However, the recorded history of our prized leaders and figures—from the realm of entertainment, sports, and politics—showcased a certain standard. They were poised, vocal, and intellectually in tune with our issues. The mouthpieces of the black community outwardly represented a standard. There are

plenty of black positive activists and political figures that exist today—not to mention our president, Barack Obama. However, many of our most outspoken and respected figures now seem to derive from the entertainment sphere. With a multitude of problematic messages finding their way to the forefront of our popular culture—profanity, brawls, lack of responsibility, broken families—our standards have become unclear. How are we supposed to attempt to define ourselves if we have not yet concluded what is acceptable?

Collectively, we have contributed to the complexity of our image with the overwhelming and unbalanced uplifting of those who represent only one aspect of our people. Upon defining an issue and coming to a consensus of what we would like the end result to be, we must understand who is equipped to speak on our behalf. Credentials, motives, and credibility are components which must always be examined. We cannot give our respect away to just anybody.

Many of us care about our representation. What do you think it will take to improve it?

**YOUR AD
HERE!**
EMAIL FOR
COST EFFECTIVE
MARKETING

January 2014

Charlotte's Girl HI-DEF RESOLUTION



By Alexzenia Davis
@charlottes_girl

Each year brings a new set of trials and triumphs. Yet, whether you ended the year in complete bliss or in a frantic attempt to heal open wounds, a general consensus remains: as the countdown winds, a fresh set of chances and opportunities approach.

With each impending New Year come a slew of resolutions. What we propose we'll do to live our best life, or at least a better one. Introspective lists filled with things we need to change about ourselves and our surroundings. Yes, the amount of pressure we put on ourselves in the beginning of a new year is incredible. But at what point do we stop to measure our progress? At what point do we account for the year's unexpected twists and turns? And finally, does the way our resolutions fare amid unexpected change speak to how dedicated we were to them to begin with?

A lot can change in a year. I'm certainly a testament to that. Last January I was returning to my exciting job in publicity, my cozy studio, and my fast-paced Los Angeles life. My rhythm was set. Starbucks to kick off my day—hot chocolate with whip and a bagel—check emails, check voicemails. Pitch, pitch, bitch, and pitch. What should have been fourth quarter music industry mania had somehow trickled into the first. It was busy, but I was grateful. The industry had been so shifty. Busy meant that things were still afloat.

Work was a unique type of routine; a controlled chaos. Every day and every situation was slightly different—both fulfilling and exhausting in its own way. The industry nightlife proved no different. Work was both work and play. It required both firmness and flexibility. It called for both intense emotional involvement and the understanding that while personalized, business is never personal. Mastering your world within the world of entertainment deserves its own paycheck.

All of the perks seemed dream-like. But as busy as we were, the inevitable still occurred like clockwork: Layoffs. Some were abrupt. Others we saw coming from miles away. Either way, it was a stark reminder that though we may have dominated our working environment and individual assignments, so much was ultimately out of our control. I watched my coworkers accept their fates. Some handled it with poise and optimism while others were visibly shaken to the core.

When I decided late in the year to relocate back to Charlotte—home of my alma mater—a lot of people were shocked. Why would I voluntarily give up something that others were so afraid to lose? It was a personal decision, and though it may have seemed abrupt to some, it was one that was absolutely not made in impromptu fashion. Other factors excluded, I ultimately felt it time to once again identify my purpose and take hold of my destiny. I resolved to leave with reputation intact, relationships preserved, and goals clear. While no cross country move is ever easy, my faith was strong.

My only resolution for 2013 was to remain true to myself without letting anything or anyone define me. I made a promise to find and maintain my happiness and stability. For 2014, I think I'll keep it. Sometimes it takes a little shake-up to test out your foundation and to re-affirm your faith in it. There needs to be something that grounds you. Something you can come home to. Should you reach that unfortunate low in life where nothing matters, it will be that something that either keeps you or defeats you.

METRO

PROPOONENT
NEWSPAPER

December 2013

The Best Damn Sports Bars

By Marian Drayton & Alexzenia Davis

Buffalo Wild Wings

We've all been there. We all know it. We all love it. No one can deny that atmosphere, that food, and those prices! And when your game falls on a Thursday... #GoBoneless!

Ale House

Phenomenal food. Set in the middle of Charlotte's uptown area, the ambiance is perfection! Peer in at night, and you'll just wish you were there. TVs galore, but get there early because this place gets packed.

Belfast Mill

Great location. Hidden & homely! Stumbled across this place on a whim and fell in love. Two words: Buttery nipple.

Taco Mack

Great food, good waiters! LOTS OF SPACE. The flatbread pizza is delicious and the hamburgers are a personal fave. If you want to catch your game and get a good seat, get there early!



JCSU BULL'S EYE



JCSU STUDENT NEWS

February 2008

By Alexzenia Davis
Opinions Editor

Rent, strict professors, extra-curricular activities, internships-- not to mention social life... Managing the average stresses of today's college student is enough. Throw "run your own business" into the mix, and you have the life of two very ambitious young men.

When Robert Johnson and Johnny Petrozelle became roommates in January 2009, neither one expected to become business partners. Two complete strangers with two different backgrounds, they both had one thing in common—a desire to see success on their own terms.

Johnson, 22, was raised in Winston Salem, NC; a product of a supportive family, with an urban upbringing. He transferred to Johnson C. Smith University where he currently plays Quarterback for the Golden Bulls. On the contrary, Petrozelle, 19, hails from Denton, NC; an area where he says racism still lingers. The University of North Carolina student met Johnson after picking up a sublease from a former roommate.

"We had the same mind," said Petrozelle. "We liked the idea of being entrepreneurs, being successful, and not just working the normal job."

Having started his NASCAR career a year before moving to Charlotte, Petrozelle spent a lot of time searching for sponsors. Naturally the energy drink market was his primary option; the business often advertises and endorses extreme sports.

"They'd always tell me the same thing, make me a national brand. Find me shelf space. Get interactive with the marketing between potential customers, and we'll sponsor you," he said. "I did this for a lot of brands, helped them land some shelf space. [I] really did a lot of promotions, [that helped] the brand out. And at the end of the day for some reason or another, I never got the sponsorship check."

Tired of the run around, Petrozelle took matters into his own hands. After sifting through a website specifically catered to the beverage industry, he came across

a business looking to form a private label. He then contacted a formulator in New Mexico.

"I brought the idea up to Robert and he liked it. I told him that I had some experience with energy drinks, but I didn't want to do this alone," said Petrozelle. "Robert knew a different crowd than I did, here in Charlotte. So I figured that would help."

Johnson's background as an accounting major didn't hurt either.

"[Having taken] various accounting courses, I'm starting to learn a lot about how to keep books. You begin to build a business mind and learn a lot of the terminology," said Johnson.

From there they compiled a 20 page business plan in hopes of receiving a loan. Although they chose not to disclose the amount, the pair said they still have the receipt, even recounting it as one of their most rewarding moments. Finally, their first shipment arrived.

Since then, the product has experienced a rollercoaster of momentum, receiving exposure from events such as the Lowes All-Star Race in Charlotte and the CIAA, where comedian Tone-X gushed over the drink to their amazement.

So what separates the 2 ounce shot of FLY energy from its competitors? For starters, less caffeine and more vitamin B helps to lessen the infamous "crash" which tends to occur after consuming these beverages. The shot can be sold warm or cold, a difference from larger size products-- this tends to be an advantage for the seller. FLY's versatile, yet neutral, design and colors allow it to be easily marketed to both genders.

"Marketing really makes the energy drink [since] they all pretty much do the same thing," said Petrozelle who also noted, "We're not going after just extreme sports. We've done racing, we're trying to do football. We're all over the place."

When it comes to marketing, everything is done in-house: flyers, logos, and website. With no employees to depend on, Johnson and Petrozelle take the time to reach out to college students and peers,

Are You Fly?: Two Athletes Put Their Energy on the Shelf

Staying in touch with their wishes and remaining hip to their hang out spots aids in the advertisement process.

"[The business] is very competitive and very demanding and it's just about the marketing. What can you do to effectively grab your audience?" said Johnson, who feels that relating to consumers is key. "As college students, we feel the effects of needing energy."

As of now, the drink can be found in Charlotte, Winston-Salem, and a few stores in Sacramento; the prices range from \$1.99 to \$3.99. This, they say, is a huge accomplishment.

"Getting shelf space is the hardest part. It's so competitive. And coming from nothing, you have to kind of build your own contact base. You have to find everything for yourself," said Johnson.

Overall, it has been a learning experience for both. Naturally their bond has shifted from that of distant roommate to brothers. With the support of family witnessing their boys surpass their wildest dreams, as well as awe-struck friends, Petrozelle and Johnson have no plans of slowing down. Utilizing their background

and current status to their fullest advantage, they are spreading their wings and shooting for the stars.

As Petrozelle stated, "Were not 60 year old men sitting on the top of a skyscraper wondering what college kids are doing. We're here."

Johnson agreed. "I think that if we could put some marketing dollars behind the ideas that we have, we could be more effective than the people spending millions of dollars," he said. "And once we get rolling then I don't really think they stand a chance."

For more information about FLY Energy drink, please visit: <http://www.areyoufly.com>

"Were not 60 year old men sitting on the top of a skyscraper wondering what college kids are doing. We're here."

- Johnny Petrozelle



JCSU STUDENT NEWS

March 2009

March 2009

Features

Officer Reviews Extra Campus Security

By Alexzenia Davis
Editor-In-Chief

When it comes to campus security, students just want to know that they are in good hands. They just want to feel protected. Every day for the past two years, Officer Greg Martin has suited up to do just that.

As a lead officer and unofficial sergeant of his shift, Martin has evaluated the circumstances time and time again attempting to make campus security more efficient.

While he pinpoints a lot of positive changes within the force, he also makes note of some very serious issues, giving JCSU Student News a brief insight into how secure the campus really is.

“What has improved is that we are getting officers that are trained.

They already had experience before they came on campus,” Martin said. “We’re developing a master plan to make it easier to man the whole campus.”

The master plan Martin discussed includes additional security at Area 2—the section by Liston, Duke, and Sanders halls. The booth which is being outfitted with the necessary electric appliances will be in place soon, providing much needed security to that area of the campus.

Taking into consideration negative student feedback regarding the security team which was in place last semester, changes were made swiftly. Students found the security to be somewhat disrespectful, often citing the gap in age as a factor.

“[The complaints] were valid, but at the same time there has to be accountability held,” Martin said, “We had to go through an outside agency because we didn’t have the manpower. By going through private agencies [there will be] people who are not under JCSU’s umbrella, [who are] not under the same training.”

The solution? Four new officers have been hired—most, fairly young in age. According to Martin, the new security helps accommodate for the prior lack of officers.

While Martin believes that the campus is pretty much a safe place to be, he also feels that the lack of sworn and certified police poses a serious problem; only sworn officers are able to carry firearms.

Martin says that the only way things will change is if students and parents write to their senate.

“We are completely unarmed. It puts the campus at complete risk. At any given time, on any given shift, you will find nothing but regular security. So, is it really safe?”

“Hindsight” is Martin’s word of choice when it comes to the issues happening on Smith’s campus. He believes that while the force does its best to foresee and plan for the worst, what is realized in hindsight is usually beyond the control of the plotter. Officer Martin tries to stay two steps ahead of the game, keeping his eyes open, and his mind searching for solutions—each and every day.



JCSU STUDENT NEWS

Emergency Notification System



Photo By Emma Mann

By Alexzenia Davis
Staff Writer

In the wake of two tragic shootings on college campuses, Johnson C. Smith has taken the first step in improving school safety with the purchase of an emergency alert notification system.

According to Sergeant Greg Martin of JCSU Campus Police, the system, which was implemented in October 2007, sounds like a loud blaring horn and can be heard across campus as well as in the surrounding community. It would be used to notify the school in the event of an emergency which includes anything from a shooting to a natural disaster.

"If we're notified at any given point that someone is on campus with a deadly weapon, it will cause this same system to go

into effect without the shooting actually having to take place," said Martin.

If the siren should sound, students are to remain where they are. A staging area will be set up in Brayboy Gymnasium for anyone travelling between buildings.

"We try to narrow down where the problem is located. If it is located in Biddle hall, it will go into a complete lockdown. Then the school will go into lockdown and nobody will be allowed on campus."

Prior to the switch, Smith's primary mode of notification in the case of an emergency was through word of mouth. Campus police would alert department heads who would then notify their classes of the situation via telephone or a bullhorn. Emails were also a consistent method of

communication. However, neither of these procedures met the standards for fast and complete delivery. Students commuting between classes and buildings would more than likely fail to receive word should there be a campus wide lockdown.

There are still other security measures that Smith plans to employ to increase school safety. One of them is the placing of security cameras in the front entrance and back exit of dormitories.

As for the emergency alert notification system, campus police will hold drills to prepare students in the event of a real emergency.

"We're actually going to go back to be retrained on the whole lockdown evacuation plan. Then I can [release] more information at that time," Martin said.



JCSU STUDENT NEWS

April 2009

Home Away From Home: 'Is Your Campus Home Really Safe?'

By Alexzenia Davis
Editor-in-Chief

Last month an unidentified male entered Duke Hall. After making his way to the third floor, he stationed himself in the women's rest room near the shower stalls. No alarms sounded.

According to police reports, one of Duke's residents, a freshman, who shall remain anonymous, then emerged from the shower, catching the intruder. She screamed, alerting other residents who proceeded to chase him out of the building.

Upon review of footage captured by Duke's security cameras, an updated description of the male was released: light skinned black male, 6-foot tall, stocky build, broad shoulders, with braids. He was wearing a black jacket, black pants, boots and a doo rag.

Despite the video footage, description and information acquired from some Duke residents who say they remember seeing the man outside of Two Way convenience store on more than one occasion. Campus Security says that the suspect fled and they were not able to get a good look at his face.

When asked what steps are being taken to further the investigation, Chief John Williams explained that students, faculty and staff, have been notified of the situation and provided with a description of the intruder.

Since the incident, improvements have been made to *further secure* and monitor the area surrounding Liston, Sanders, and Duke residence halls.

"We found that the back door had been propped open," said Williams,

chief of police. "Since that time we've taken some measures to make sure we have contracted security over [on the freshman side] from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. We've also replaced the doors in the residence halls. Officers have found the doors and windows open a couple of times."

In addition, changes have also been made to the automatic gate which encases the freshman side. Whereas the gate used to open at 6 a.m. and automatically close at 9 p.m., it now stays closed for 24 hours.

If students do not have their proximity fobs on hand, they will not be able to enter the dorms from Beatties Ford Road. They will have to enter campus and cross over the bridge.

Meanwhile, opinions and speculations have surfaced regarding student safety.

"Perception is reality," Chief Williams said when asked if he felt the campus was secure. "In reality, I feel that the campus is safe. But perception is reality. If these students don't feel safe, then it is our job to make our perception their reality."

While Duke residents do realize the heightened security, some say it is too little too late, and that attention needed to have come sooner.

Brittney Robertson, a Duke Hall resident, is just one of the many students who felt strongly about the situation as well as the subsequent release of RHC, Tara Reid. Reid was well known for enforcing dorm and campus rules.

"I was a little bit disturbed about why she left. A lot of students in the

building feel she shouldn't have left and it wasn't her fault. She put in requests to fix the doors, but nobody was responding," Robertson said.

"The peak hours for stuff to happen are late in the evening. Ms. Reid was always staying up until about 4 or 5 in the morning to make sure no males were running in and out. The man could've come through the back door. She's one person. How was she supposed to know he came in and went upstairs? They need to put alarms on these doors."

Many students wonder whether Reid's release had any thing to do with the incident. JCSU President Dr. Ronald Carter said that the two are not directly related. "We are not at liberty to discuss the reason for her suspension. From my understanding, she's under suspension pending investigation," he said.

So the question returns: Is the campus of Johnson C. Smith University truly safe?

In a recent issue of JCSU Student News, an article featuring officer Greg Martin of the campus police, Martin suggested the need for a larger security team, or more succinctly, more "man power." According to Martin, since the release of that article, he has been on suspension.

Williams made the following statement regarding the situation: "That is a personnel matter. He was not released. He is still employed with JCSU."

Martin said that additional security should be added to the area by Liston, Sanders, and Duke.

recently proposed to administration following a recent evaluation of Smith's campus security.

"I think we have some disconnects between our university police and security, and the students on the campus at large," said Dr. Carter. "I acknowledge that we need to increase security. I have on my desk a report that was done by chiefs of police of two major universities. They came to campus and did an assessment of our campus security department. I will implement many of their recommendations."

Dr. Carter believes that the security team should be expanded to include not only security officers, but more deputized police. "My vision would be that [security] would be strategically stationed in the residence halls. Our university police would be the ones moving across campus making sure we are safe."

While changes and improvements are being made, administration and security ask that students keep all main entrances locked and be sure to contact campus security if they have any concerns.



JCSU STUDENT NEWS

2009

An Unusual Occurrence: 2009 Graduation Venue Changes

Alexenia Davis
Editor-in-Chief

Seniors received a shock this semester as word quickly spread that this year's Pomp and Circumstance would be accompanied by a march across the 50-yard line. A change from the usual venue, Bojangles Coliseum (formerly Cricket Arena), many students worry whether or not Johnson C. Smith's Irwin Belk Football Stadium will be just as accommodating.

While some students have talked about protesting the change, other students are calmly trying to comprehend the reasoning behind it all.

"I was shaky about it at first," said Ethan Harris, a communication arts major whose 15 family members have already booked their hotel stays. "I can understand where Dr. [Ronald] Carter [JCSU president] is coming from. He wants to bring tradition on campus. I'm just hoping it will be a success."

Dr. Carter spoke to JCSU Student News about his vision.

"This campus is rich in legend, in symbol, and in ancestral spirits. We should be proud of that and take every opportunity to engage people to this very stunning campus. One thing I notice now as we invite people to campus is that we have no idea that this campus is as beautiful as it is," Carter explained. "This is a clean campus, so I have to ask myself 'what did they think existed behind the gates?' We don't want to be a well kept secret in Charlotte; we want to be an illuminating presence."

Some students say they never saw the issue with the change of location.

"Personally, I don't think it's that big of a deal," said Shioban Graig, a senior social work major. "I have been to institutions that have their commencement

ceremony on the field. It's not something that's uncommon. The only thing I have a problem with is the rain site."

If weather is unfavorable come May 3, the ceremony will be held in the Brayboy Gymnasium. Because of the space restrictions and to ensure that guests do not exceed capacity, seniors will be limited to eight tickets per person. Guests unable to get into Brayboy will be stationed around campus and forced to view the ceremony on in various TV screens across campus. As of now, many students say this is their main concern.

"For our rain site to be the gym is unacceptable," said Graig. "It overheats when just the students are in there. I don't want my grandmother to have to step up into the bleachers. They should have had another venue for the rain site."

Harris agreed, "My biggest concern will be if it rains. I'll have to choose who I want to come to the gym. I don't think that's going to fly well with my people."

Another underlying element that has students concerned is how quickly the decision was reached and presented -- without ample discussion.

Kidist Square, an interdisciplinary studies major, said that she understands tradition and does not mind the decision anymore -- a change from her initial reaction. "I was upset at first. I felt that [the decision] was set in stone and there was nothing we could do about it."

Senior Class President Aramith Trimiar is sensitive to the students' concerns although he maintains an optimistic view on the situation. "I don't mind the venue change because it's Dr. Carter's vision to have it on campus. A lot of great institutions do this. It brings a homey feel back to campus. People were infuriated not because it's outside, but because they had no input."

In a meeting held with JCSU Chief of Staff Dr. Brian Johnson

Trimiar discussed the issue of lack of communication, pointing out that there needs to be a stronger relationship between administration and the students. He also argued that Senior Council members should have been invited to previous meetings seeing as they are the liaison between students and faculty; instead, Trimiar and other senior council members found out about changes at the same time as the general student body.

In response to these concerns, Dr. Carter said that he made several attempts to reach out to members of SGA.

"I care deeply about the Student Government Association," said Carter. "But more than once did we extend an invitation for them to come to the table [and have a say] in all of these plans. They have not. I made a commitment to them that we can have standing appointments and that has never transpired; and not because I never reached out. That's why the council and others were never there. SGA could've easily had someone represent them if the meeting conflicted with their schedules."

With all that has occurred, Trimiar believes that in the future students should be informed and well aware of changes in advance.

"[When] you tell people two months ahead of time [that the venue is changed], people are going to protest," Trimiar said. However, trying to put everything in perspective, he said he declined to sign any petitions. "I understand where they're coming from. But we don't need to protest a month before graduation. Being that we have to deal with this, let's just deal with this."

Dr. Carter is sure that this decision is the right one. "When we do not nurture our tradition, we die. As JCSU alumni and students, we have a responsibility to nurture our tradition."

The graduation ceremony will



JCSU STUDENT NEWS

2008

JCSU Student News

ELECTION PAPER SPECIAL EDITION 2008

IN OUR LIFETIME...

**By Alexzenia Davis
Editor-In-Chief**

It is one for the books! The history books! Students in JCSU's Union erupted in celebration as the 44th and FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT was announced: Barack Obama!

The slogan of choice, "My president is black!" was intertwined with screams and tears as CNN called the election just after 11 p.m.

It had been a long road for many Smithites, most of whom were first time voters. With the weight of possibility riding on their shoulders, this election called for a massive level of participation. The voter registration drives, phone banks, canvases, and workshops were an active part of both campus and community life for just over a year. The results were exactly what the Democratic Party and most Smithites were hoping for.

Nov. 4 at JCSU did not fall short of political excitement. Just around 3 p.m., the JCSU Drumline marched to the block to deliver a powerhouse performance: a pre-celebratory boost if you will. As students, faculty, staff, and guests gathered around to observe, an odd emotion could be sensed. There was a special vibe on campus—one that was light-hearted,

positive, nervous, and proud.

The 2008 Watch the Vote Party kicked off the day. The event, set up by Rushmore Drive and NS News TV in conjunction with the Communication Arts Department, featured a live DJ, food, giveaways, and up-to-the-minute election coverage. Students took part in dance battles, election panels, and surveyed the various booths that were set up around the room. Smithites were everywhere: filming, being recruited as impromptu hosts, and discussing the most pertinent issues of the times. Later on, the jazz band performed in Biddle as event organizers were treated to an intimate reception.

But it was the evening that everyone was waiting for. It was the race to 270 electoral votes. It was the moment when people would all find out whether their votes, time, effort, and prayers were enough.

Herbert "Mr. G" Gidney and alumnus Struthers Johnson sat side by side in the Rotunda as approximately 30 students stared anxiously at the big screen. Gidney talked about how he felt as the Electoral College marked Obama at 207 and McCain at 138.

"I won't be excited until that number reaches 270," he said honestly. "I've been

voting since before you guys were born... I've been watching elections like this before you guys were even born. When I was in college I never thought I would see this moment. I'm not even talking about him winning. I mean all of this."

He was talking about the fact that he never thought he would see the day when a black person would even have a chance to win office. Gidney was asked if he would allow a picture to be taken of his reaction when the final results were announced.

"I will be outside taking a moment to myself," Gidney said.

"[This is] very real. I saw [John F.] Kennedy get shot. I saw Bobby get shot. This feels very real to me. I've seen a lot of Charlotte. I've gotten slapped for drinking out of the white folk's water fountain when I was 3-years-old," said Johnson, a 1972 graduate.

"This is just the start of a change in this country. Never before have [we had] a diverse [group] of people come together for a common goal — to get rid of the Republicans," Johnson said. "Black, white, Hispanic, and Chinese... Everyone's been saying what the Republicans have been doing to us. There needs to be change. It's like diving--either

you're going to drown or get up and keep swimming."

McCain's Electoral College numbers shot up to 141 and students anxiously awaited the results from California. As CNN's poll tracker counted down, students chimed in--New Year's in November.

3, 2, 1... "Obama elected president."

There was a slight hesitation as students all realized what had just happened. A few moments prior students were waiting for California's votes to be accounted for. Students were now hit with the realization that they had actually witnessed what will probably be the most historic moment in their lifetime.

Everyone ran to the television screen, ecstatic and emotional. Johnson gave two thumbs up, smiling from ear to ear. It had been a collective effort and it was an inherent victory. For those who really understood the significance, it was a deeply rooted reward for African Americans in this country. It was the moment of truth and it was the beginning of a new day of work, labor, and progress.

It was the coming of a black president as witnessed on an HBCU campus... and it was amazing!



JCSU STUDENT NEWS

February 2008

Generation Y

By Alexzenia Davis

OP-ED

It was Sunday afternoon and the fliers advertising a free screening of a new film, "Chicago 10" lured me to Northlake Mall. Filmmaker Brett Morgen's documentary covered the Chicago Conspiracy Trial in which leaders of three major groups protesting the war in Vietnam were charged with provoking riots in Chicago. The event was hosted by GenerationEngage, an organization dedicated to getting young adults more involved; and when the film was over, we were all invited to stay and chat.

Our generation has been most commonly referred to as Generation Y or the Net generation – one that has infinite access to information and the world at its fingertips. Yet with our lap of luxury, we still seem to garner the reputation of being incredibly uninformed. But what is even worse than being considered ignorant about our surroundings and occurrences is the notion that we are indifferent. Somehow previous generations deem ours as passive with little desire to get involved.

Now I realize that some people choose to remain in the dark, but I was offended by the way my peers and I were being generalized in such a belittling manner. As I sat there and listened to audience members comment repeatedly: "Young people don't understand" "These students don't care," "These students don't know," my tolerance lowered. What gave these adults the right to hold such an arrogant position on the matter? We were not only ostracized for supposedly not caring about the War in Iraq but also for not standing against it in protest as the Yippies did in the film.

I put my personal frustration aside for the moment. Don't get me wrong. I do feel a significant amount of disappointment when my peers are not as proactive or infuriated about certain injustices as I feel they should be. But at the same time, we live in a completely different era. We did not see our fathers, mothers, and grandparents protesting for their civil rights. We were not victims of an active draft as were the students in the 1960's. We were not brought up around the spirit of activism, which was so prevalent in Morgen's film. In fact, that spirit has been missing for the last few generations.

Before I continue, I would like to emphasize that this is not only a generalization, but a slight misconception as well. There are plenty of angry and assertive "young adults." When a draft did seem probable in early 2003, thousands of high school and college students led a march in New York City; and on Feb. 15, 2003 there was a "No War in Iraq" march in which millions of people throughout 800 cities defended their position. But let's face it, with so many military volunteers, the need to protest has not been as great.

While I sat and listened to a number of 30- and 40-year-olds discuss our lack of presence, I felt like interrogating them. Were they out reprimanding their equally "passive" counterparts for wanting to remain employed rather than protest the War in Iraq? Were they really willing to leave their families for months on end to fight for the freedom of six boys in Louisiana? And were they willing to do it for more than a weekend? If the raging spirit of activism is missing from Generation Y, it is missing period.

In an attempt to provide an answer to why some of us are not as militant, I'll offer this: fear and stability. The suggestion that we should remain within the perimeters rather than risk losing everything that our grand and great grandparents fought for is passed down, helping to shape our somewhat conservative culture.

Reflecting on the event, GenerationEngage's effort to bridge the gap of communication between generations is an important goal. And as I sat and listened silently, I unknowingly let that opportunity slip through my fingertips -- just like they figured I would.



JCSU STUDENT NEWS

September 2009

The Makings of a Queen: The Rachelle Sawyer Story



Alexzenia Davis Opinions Editor

Rachelle Sawyers entered Johnson C. Smith in the fall of 2006 with her eyes set on the prize. A Harrisburg, Pennsylvania native and self-acclaimed shy girl in high school, Sawyers had only one previous experience in pageantry—she was the second runner-up to her high school homecoming queen. Despite her slight insecurities, she made a decision during her freshman year which she vowed to keep.

“Upon entering Johnson C. Smith University, it was already in my mindset that I was going to run as a freshman,” said Sawyers, “I wasn’t sure how I was going to execute my plan as far as winning. When I first entered I wasn’t popular, so that was something that I knew I was going to have to overcome.”

Two items shot to the top of Sawyers’ list as she began to position herself: maintaining a good grade point average and exerting herself as a recognizable face on campus. She became involved in her major—elementary education. As a first generation college student, Sawyers’ background became a strong force behind her extreme dedication. In 2008, she joined Delta Sigma Theta, another choice which helped to boost her reputation.

Still, as the pageant neared closer, a potential problem faced her.

“My biggest fear before running was that I wasn’t going to get chosen by the chapter to run. Our advisor didn’t want chapter members running against each other for any position. That was my fear: what if they said I couldn’t do it?” However, it was a fear that she would not let alter her decision. “I was going to do it anyway because I wanted to do it from

years ago.”

Luckily, Sawyers was chosen to run, and as she learned who her contenders were, more pressure arose.

“[While running] my fear was my likeability on campus. There were so many prominent girls running. I didn’t want anything to happen... like tearing down posters.”

Working two jobs to save up money, practicing her oratory and talent, and preparing for her interview meant long nights and little sleep; but the sacrifice paid off. In April, Sawyers was awarded the title she’d been waiting for—Miss JCSU.

Her family has supported her every step of the way. Although they were unable to attend the pageant, Sawyers says she felt their presence.

“They gave me moral support. They couldn’t really support me financially, but they prayed for me,” Sawyers said. “They’re really happy, but I don’t think they know how serious it is. Come coronation, they’ll understand.”

Her first duties included a photo shoot and preparing a written welcome for the students. She will be going to an HBCU Queens competition, coronation, as well as the homecoming parade and football game. She is a member of SGA which allows her to remain up to date with what is going on.

“So far I can say I’m changing for the better. It hasn’t changed me as the Rachelle that everybody knows... but the Rachelle that everybody knows is more enriched.”

Sawyers’ transformation is evident. Confidently humble, the girl that used to cater to her timidity now shines as a positive ball of energy on Smith’s campus. She holds advice from her family close to her heart.

“My grandmom and my deceased aunt would always tell me to hold my head up, because when I was young I wouldn’t necessary walk with my head held high. You’ll always have people who will dislike you, but you have to smile with your head held high. The situation could be whole lot worse.”

Her advice to her peers is just as inspirational.

“We’re all queens. It doesn’t matter what your background is—good, bad, or worse. We should treat ourselves as queens. And men, treat your selves as kings. We’re at an HBCU. We need to walk around like queens and kings.”



JCSU STUDENT NEWS

December 2008

Chatting With Dr. Carter: Calculated Risks

By Alexzenia Davis
Editor in Chief

"I have always been passionate about higher education, so I can say that being involved in education has always been a part of my agenda. In regards to whether or not I've always wanted to be president, not necessarily. I've enjoyed being in higher education. When I've been presented with the opportunity to get involved, I've made myself available." Words from the 13th president.

He has travelled the world and immersed himself in education. After graduating from Morehouse College magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, he continued on to earn his Ph.D. from Boston University. His accolades are numerous and his accomplishments well received. But Dr. Ronald L. Carter has now taken the next big step in his career.

As the 13th president of Johnson C. Smith University, Carter has high hopes and complex and challenging goals. Recently, he agreed to a one-on-one, shedding a little insight into his thoughts on education, politics, how he handles the stress, and more.

As seen with the implementation of the passport initiative which allowed Smithites to apply for a passport free of charge, Carter is serious about granting opportunities for students to be able to experience other cultures.

"I think it's very important for students to learn to speak across racial, cultural, ethnic boundaries. The more articulate you become, the more you will be able to break through and engage people in conversation," Carter explained.

Twelve students were recently awarded the opportunity of a lifetime—a free trip to study in Rome, just one of Carter's ways of promoting studying



Dr. Carter speaks on the details of studying abroad at the leadership luncheon

Photo by Sabrina Cato

abroad. He plans on establishing a Center for Applied Research in Global Studies as well.

Carter has taken some time to expand his horizons in this way during the course of his career. He was granted the opportunity to serve as an administrator for higher education in South Africa and noted the difference between educational programs for blacks overseas as compared to in the states. Discussing the limited resources he explained that there were no

physical school facilities forcing many students to study under trees and in other make shift locations.

"It was a challenging situation. I admire the teachers there. They had to be very creative."

When it came time to talk about the status of African American youth in terms of education, Carter had a firm position. When asked what he thought was the biggest problem facing black youth today, he had this to say:

"I don't see a big problem as much as I encourage African American students to take advantage of all of the opportunities put in front of them. Now of course we have in front of us blocks, glass ceilings, or stereotypes. We have to work to push past those stereotypes."

Smith's campus is full of student organizations, meaning it is running rampant with potential leaders who are leaving their mark but nevertheless are still in need of advice and guidance. Carter explained what keeps him focused during his most stressful moments.

"My religious life. My spiritual life. And then, I always realize that there are major issues in life. Why should I be overcome by my own worries? The purpose of my life is not to be happy but to be creatively insecure."

He also plans on creating a Center for Applied Leadership.

If there are any two adjectives that best describe the new president they are generous and devoted. All he asks is this: "Would the students please, please, please help me by not throwing paper and cups on the ground. Students need to help me demonstrate that we take pride in our campus. We want a clean campus and clean dorms."

And lastly, doing what he does best. Carter ended with some words of encouragement.

"I want students to read, read, read and to write, write, write, so they have something to say that will capture the imagination of the people. I want people to be comfortable with themselves, but not to the point where they stop growing. I always say it's better to be creatively insecure rather than comfortably secure. Take calculated risks to grow and evolve."

With that, Carter will certainly end his first semester on a high note.



JCSU STUDENT NEWS

September 2009

If The Block Could Talk
Campus News

The Frosting On a Well Baked Cake... Seniors Leaving With Laptops In Hand

By Alexzenia Davis
Editorial Editor

Seniors returned to campus this year with a lot on their plate: lyceum count, community service hours, credit hours, senior papers, and of course, May 2.

But if that was the cake, then special news from the IT department served as the frosting-- graduating seniors will be able to keep their laptops.

Ever since 2000, when the university coined itself a "ThinkpadU" by introducing the "free" laptop initiative, the pressing issue amongst parents and students has centered around ownership. With the cost of tuition and fees, were the laptops *really* free or was this just a way for the university to make money? What about those who would not have been able to afford their own laptop otherwise? The debate, while recurring, often went unresolved.

Yet, this summer, news leaked that seniors would be able to leave laptop in hand, an implementation which will

continue in the future. Along with that change, the rest of the student body received a surprise as well--the switch from longtime vendor, IBM, to Dell.

Several rumors have circulated in regards to the switch, but Henry Hughie, IT manager, cleared the air.

"We thought it was time to break free and do something new," Hughie said.

"The first thing we thought about was customer service. We wanted to partner with a company that would give us a true partnership and that would serve our students better than in the past. We also wanted a recognizable brand."

The IT department surveyed students at the conclusion of the fall 2008 semester. The results proved that students were

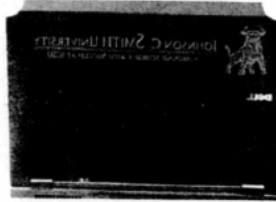
dissatisfied with several aspects of the old model--including its bulkiness.

The department then invited several vendors to the table to explore all options. Dell came out on top.

"[This is] what the students wanted. Under the direction of John Norris [director of academic support services], and me, we restructured the program and found a way to make that happen," Hughie said.

So what exactly is included in your \$1325/year laptop fees? Aside from the actual model, students receive unlimited customer service and support, wireless access, and software.

"I think the students feel like on one side [they're] paying for the laptop. But on any given day, you cannot take a personal laptop to Best Buy and say that you need support. We try to provide exemplary support," Hughie explained. "Now that students are able to walk away with a laptop, I hope that students realize that we went the route that was best for them."



Front view of senior laptops.

Photo by Monique Dummett



Front view of student body laptops.

Photo by Brooke Harrison



JCSU STUDENT NEWS

Spring 2010

The Bull's Eye (Senior Farewell)

By Alexzenia Davis
OP-ED

I always imagined college as a place for free thinkers. A place where I could push my thoughts to the limit... Expand my knowledge... Think without restraint. Three of my four years at Johnson C. Smith University were spent on the newspaper staff. In a setting where often time speech does not come without repercussion, the newspaper served as a much needed outlet.

I served as staff writer, editor-in-chief, and associate editor; the gain was enormous. I could sit here and type all of the many ways in which my character was built... but I don't want to. It's unimportant. Those qualities are forever being strengthened and I still have a lot to improve. What I appreciate from my newspaper experience is what I learned about others and how much I have taken away from this family which lost and gained members each semester.

Commitment & Work Ethic. We had our share of ups and downs, but one thing that I can truly say is that the work of a team reflects leadership. To see such devoted staff members who truly cared about learning and progressing, boosted the pride I have in my own work. I learned that people respect decisiveness and that with the right amount of training, everyone has the potential to be great.

Laughter. I loved the staff members that made me laugh. The newspaper can be stressful. Long nights, tedious edits, deadlines, and fact checking. The strain was alleviated by those who found humor in work. I loved their ability to thrive under pressure.

The flip side. I learned through reporting that there is always another side to the story. That is one life lesson that I do not take lightly. It is easy to dismiss the concept of an in between when you are dealing with black and white facts. Leaving bias at the door is crucial and it showed me that judgment furthers misinformation which breeds misconceptions. Once people have their mind made up about a situation, person, or group, it is hard to sway their opinion. You can learn a lot by listening regardless of whether you find validity in the statements spoken to you.

Depth. I've learned to never assume that someone is void of depth. I have to admit that at times I was cautious about who I sought interviews from. Sometimes it takes the person who would ordinarily not be taken seriously to shed light on an angle you may have never considered. I've learned that everyone has opinions that they feel strongly about and that no one goes unaffected.

There is a power that we, as journalists, hold. It is the power to take our thoughts, translate them into words, and preserve them on paper so that they can birth new thoughts which will reside in the minds of others. We have the power to not "hide behind a pen and a pad," but to expose ourselves in ways that aren't necessarily possible otherwise. We have a responsibility to use that power properly. I hope that Smith continues to develop individuals who nurture their gifts and who always remember to cherish their freedom of *thought*.

FREELANCE ARTICLES

OFF THE METER

By Alexzenia Davis

So imagine this... On Tuesday, while everyone is still trying to adjust to another routine week of work, you're heading off to spend some quality time with Kelly Rowland. On Thursday, as everyone else begins to wind down for the week, you're on your way to chill with Bow Wow and Omarion. And after the week's worth of excitement, you need to get away, so it's off to Mexico for the weekend.

Sounds good? Well it's a dream that became a reality for Colin Gayle and Thomas Gibson who in 2006 successfully produced what was to become South Africa's number one show- O Access. The idea was to create a 'day in the life'/travel show which would bring a taste of American celebrity and worldwide culture into the homes of millions of Africans.

Gayle, a Jamaican born, now Los Angeles resident, got his start in the music industry managing artists such as Kenny Lattimore and Dru Hill, eventually making the shift into producer management. Gibson, originally from Illinois, began his career in 1993 as a music reviewer for YSB magazine. After receiving a position at BET, he was able to use his journalism background to produce several documentaries including a special on Mary J. Blige. Being able to utilize and combine all of their skills and connections has helped the duo, who were quick to realize the untapped potential of South African television.

"O Access came about by taking several trips to South Africa and realizing that the content that they were receiving was very generic and didn't take them into consideration and include them," Gayle explains. "O Access tries to connect the dots between Africans and African Americans on a new, personal level."

Chris Brown, Ne-yo, Akon, 50 Cent, Omarion, Bow Wow, and T.I. are just some of the stars that have been featured on O Access to date. But it takes a good host to keep viewers coming back for more. Nonhle Thema was already a popular VJ for Channel O when her name was submitted along with several others for a chance to become the official host of O Access. She was exactly what they were looking for.



"She has definitely blossomed into, I think, the next face...basically Tyra Banks of her country. She's going to have her own talk show. She can ad lib, she's charming. She reels people in with her magnetism and that's the reason why the show is a success," says Gibson.

“It’s easy to get comfortable with your perception of who you are and where you are and it’s always refreshing to have someone else who comes in and is from a different cultural and moral background that is uniquely different from us,” adds Gayle. “Working with her has been an incredible experience because we were able to experience America through her eyes and experience Africa through her eyes.”

As mentioned, O Access also involves travel. The crew has filmed in the US, Mexico, Jamaica, Portugal, London, and several parts of Africa, always attempting to capture the liveliness and natural feel of each locale. In fact, when asked what has been their favorite show to produce thus far, both Gayle and Gibson chose shows involving travel.

“The Journey to Africa with Chris Brown,” says Gayle. “It gave me a chance to take someone to Africa who didn’t know much about the continent and I was able to show him a part of Africa that most young African Americans don’t know. It was exciting to see his eyes and his reaction.”

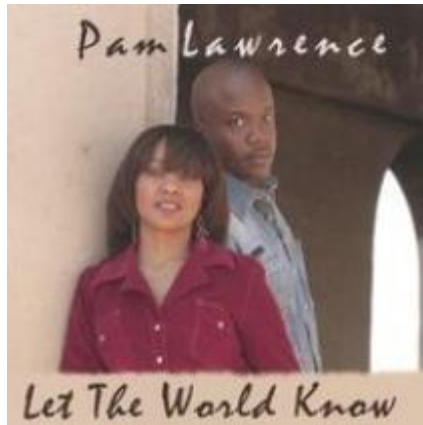
“[It would] probably have to be Beenie Man in Jamaica. He was shooting a video. It was just the experience of seeing Jamaica from a local perspective,” Gibson shares.

While the team is constantly working on various projects, they still feel a special sense of pride when it comes to O Access and producing a show for Africa.

As Gibson explains, “You have to put in a lot of work but I think the benefit is the response you get from the people because they don’t have a bunch of quality programming. And I think you do get more of a fulfillment of doing something meaningful rather than doing something here [in America] because we have a lot of programming to choose from whereas people in Africa don’t.”

And Gayle agrees, “There’s always a positive in being in Africa. There’s always a positive to being in a country where the majority of the people look like you and think like you. There’s a certain level of comfort that you get from that experience. We’re still somewhat foreigners [in Africa] but I feel more at home... my soul feels more at home. It’s more rewarding for me.”

SOULDIERS



By Alexzenia Davis

It is 11:15 AM, Saturday morning and the 1st Baptist Church of North Hollywood California is already alive as filming for the gospel music video 'I'm A Soldier' gets underway.

It is a calm atmosphere on the church lawn as members of the production team, actors, and some members of the congregation wait patiently for filming to begin again.

Written by husband and wife duo Lawrence and Pam Droughn, 'I'm A Soldier' speaks of the spiritual battles we fight daily.

"[The song's] about showing the world that being a soldier in the Lord's army starts when we wake up in the morning," Pam explains, "Reading his word for instruction... the video tells the world it's a beautiful thing. We have to have our hearts right."

The couple who both began singing at the ages of five in church share a love of 'ministering the gospel through music.'

"We chose soldier because it's a now type of song. We wanted to reach young adults who might be struggling in life," Lawrence says.

Director and founder of Hollywood Kid Productions, Terry Wilkerson, and executive producer, Salenta Baisden, both developed the concept for the video.

"When I heard the song, I felt like it had a strong message. I felt like it was really something that needed to be portrayed. I didn't think anyone else would be able to bring across the vision I had for it," says Wilkerson.

The video follows Lawrence into his nightmare where he foresees the closing of the church and the eruption of crime. Immediately he decides to recruit people to fight in the name of the Lord. As the video progresses, we see a girl rescued by Pam and guys exchanging guns for Bibles.

"We want to capture the essence of their lyrics as well as exemplify their vision," says Baisden, "To us that means soldiers in the army of the Lord, spiritual warfare, and everything necessary to get the attention of this generation and point them in the direction of their salvation through Jesus Christ."

"They're soldiers, they just have to go around telling people to get down with God," Wilkerson adds.

The up tempo hip hop meets gospel song which makeup artist Zena Hernandez describes as 'young and vibrant' is sure to be a hit among people of all ages.

"This song is for everyone who's doing the work of the Lord," Lawrence says adding a reminder that, "We're all soldiers trained to fight a good fight for the Lord."

"This video is awesome and wonderful," promises actor Billy Stoakley, "So glad I was given the opportunity to be a tool."

"We're hoping that this video will be a pleasing offering to God," says Salenta Baisden.

Hollywood Kids Production and Almighty Entertainment would like to thank co-writer and producer of I'm A Soldier, Jason Floyd. They would also like to thank Pastor Michael Woodcock and the 1st Baptist Church of North Hollywood.

For more information on PamLawrence, visit Pamlawrence.com or CDBaby.com

Dinner & A Voice



By Alexzenia Davis

It is Saturday night and North Hollywood's Perk-U-Up Café is fuller than ever. But only one voice can be heard as everyone's attention is directed towards the stage where a small lady with a huge personality shares her life through song. Her name is Shaya.

Friends and strangers alike sit shoulder to shoulder as her voice fills the tiny café. Most already know the lyrics and many have already chosen their special song. And yes, this is hard to believe since CD's are only available for purchase after her shows. So, is this Shaya really that enticing?

Well if you ask anyone who has seen her live or heard her music, then yes, she is just that good. Shaya's music is a breath of fresh air in an industry so dependant on studio processing and commercially driven lyrics. Her CD 'Sweet Letters', combines Rhythm & Blues with a Latin flavored sound. Her emotion shines through on every track which makes each tune so much more believable.

For this particular show, Shaya performed five songs from Sweet Letters, including audience favorites 'Sweet Letters', 'My Eyes They Rain For You', and 'You Saved Me'. She also sang some of her older tunes including: 'Do You Think Of Me Daddy', 'Oop Stop', 'Simply A Love Thing' and 'Yeah'. To spice things up, Shaya made sure to include many comical anecdotes and self written poetry before almost every song. This made her transitions from upbeat easy going to slow tempo extremely deep songs seem effortless and added significantly to her performance skills.

Along with her band, Smooth, consisting of guitarist (Jerome Garrett), pianist (David Linz), and congo player (Spencer Polk), in one night Shaya proved to a full house, as well as a few passersby, that she is more than ready for the big stage. With a video and single on the way, there is no slowing down for this artist. And this can only be good news for a devoted group of fans who fill the café in North Hollywood for dinner and a voice.

Highly Recommended.

BIOGRAPHIES

Audio Push Bio (updated since)

By Alexzenia Davis

They had no idea what the future held for them when they first bonded on the basketball courts in middle school. But one hobby led to the recognition of another common interest; an interest which would eventually lead to their pursuit of a hip-hop career worthy of placement amongst some of the greats.

Born and raised in the Inland Empire, during the 90s, Audio Push's Price Tag, 21, and Oktane, 22, have always been immersed in music. In fact, their list of inspirations reads as a roster of icons: Tupac, E-40, MF Doom, Wu Tang Clan, and A Tribe Called Quest to mention a few. And although both state with strong affirmation that as youngsters they could not have foreseen just how far it would take them, both artists have early memories of when hip hop became more than just a pastime.

When it comes to Price Tag—his name courtesy of a fellow high school rapper with a knack for picking dope stage names—it was R&B which remained in constant rotation throughout his household. His mother's avid love for soul and R&B collections such as "Body & Soul" helped shape a musicality which would come in handy in his later years. Still, his earliest recollection of his hip-hop start was a song his sister penned for him when he was only 5. "She was my inspiration because she rapped. She wrote me that rap and when I rapped it to everybody, they thought I was tight. It made me want to start writing."

For Oktane, it was his older brother who had a hand in his love for hip hop. "My big brother was so hell bent on real hip hop music," says Oktane, who contributes his lyrical abilities to his exposure to underground hip hop. "You could turn on MF Doom and I'll know a verse. I won't even know how I know it."

However, it was seeing a video from another pair of young artists that sparked his initial desire to want to pursue rap. "What made me want to first want to start rapping was the Kriss Kross, 'Jump,' video," he says. "I don't even know when I actually started rapping. I just know I was about 12 or 13 when it happened."

Coming together to form Audio Push (formerly, The Push), the duo has amassed serious buzz: They have released several mixtapes (six in total), have been signed to a major record label, have had two hugely successful radio singles, and have even headlined a sold out show in South Africa—an experience which they consider to be the most pivotal moment to date. They have also formed their own label—BOW Entertainment.

They each continue to hone in on their individual talents as well. Price Tag, who has developed his skills as a producer, produces for Audio Push as well as the acts signed under BOW; his beats are even sought after by some of California's other young hip hop groups. And Oktane, who stumbled upon his talents as a singer by chance, continues to bless Audio Push's tracks with his melodies.

It's this versatility that keeps the group on the move. During a trip to Los Angeles' Power 106 in early 2012, the two announced that they had just signed with Hip-Hop and R&B platinum-producer Hit-Boy's record label: Hits Since 87 (or HS87). The partnership with the Grammy Nominated producer holds extreme significance for Audio Push. "Hit-Boy's been our friend forever," says Price Tag. "Why wouldn't you want to sign with a person you're so close to who's the greatest producer in the world?"

Under HS87, Audio Push released their mixtape, "Truth Be Told," which features a cleverly crafted mix of songs ranging from gritty to club. Simultaneously, they launched a movement of the same name. Along with creating a product of studio album quality, Audio Push released a series of webisodes and visuals to assist in marking their spot in the realm of hip hop. "We really followed [a] blueprint... Telling the truth in our songs and doing what we want to do in the most original way possible," says Oktane, "Be original, be tight, be dope."

With plans to tour, an album in the works for 2013, and with what can only be described as "a major announcement" on the way, the group is excited about their current and future endeavors. Consistently intent on branding their selves as raw talents with content that in the future can be considered "classic," Audio Push is on their way.

As Price Tag says, "It's our life experiences and who we really are. When you listen to Audio Push, that's what you're getting."

Original. Tight. Dope.

Megan Nicole Bio

By Alexzenia Davis

On any given day yet another young talented vocalist takes to the internet in hopes of unveiling their talents to the world. However, it takes more than just “desire” to be worthy of that walk down the aisle to fame. Talent, personality, and creativity; it’s a formula which is obvious in theory, yet intense in practice. And for 18 year old Bad Boy/Interscope recording artist, Megan Nicole, it is a formula that will eliminate any thought of “15 minutes of fame.” This superstar-in-the-making deserves a date with destiny.

With over 1,000,000 subscribers and a combined 250 million video views, Megan Nicole’s remarkable rise to YouTube stardom started not too long ago. It was December 2009 when a fresh faced Megan first posted a Kings of Leon cover. Possessing only her guitar, she croons the significant lyrics, “I hope it’s gonna make you notice someone like me.” Fast forward to 2012, and Megan’s staying power is clear. Her cover of Bruno Mars’, “The Lazy Song,” has attracted over 31 million views and boasts all the qualities of a full production. Anything but “lazy,” she diligently recreates Mars’ video—even down to the choreography—producing a combination of impressive sound and captivating visual.

A Texas native, Megan was born in Houston and raised in Katy, TX. Growing up in the 90s, she was accompanied by an array of sounds from the generation prior, including: Queen, Al Green, Stevie Wonder, and various artists from the 70s funk era. Her own talents began to emerge around 4th grade; she first recognized her vocal abilities while dabbling around with her family’s karaoke machine. It was also around this time when she was introduced to the piano, a skill she became proficient in, and eventually used to lead her church’s youth group. Her musical aspirations at that time, however, were few. Even opportunities to perform with her youth group were almost thwarted by her shyness.

Still, real talent can never truly be silenced. By the time Megan reached her freshman year of high school, she was determined to make more of her gifts. Adding even more of an edge to her performance, she added another instrument to her resume, becoming fluent in guitar. And after a video of her singing at a wedding generated some additional hits (it was actually intended for family sharing), her father convinced her to begin posting cover songs.

Her fans have been true. YouTube artists have a difficult task. Their fans, conditioned to awaiting renditions of already popular songs, don’t always take well to original music. Yet, when Megan released the Kurt Schneider directed video for her song “B-e-a-utiful” in July 2011, the reception spoke for itself. With almost 18 million views, the acoustic-pop single can hold its own among today’s crop of young pop performers.

Harve Pierre, president of Bad Boy, took notice. Aware of Megan Nicole’s growth, as well as potential, he arranged a meeting between the young singer and Bad Boy founder/hip hop mogul, Sean “Diddy” Combs. Impressed, Bad Boy quickly scheduled a meeting with Jimmy Iovine, CEO of Interscope Records. All aspects of her career falling into place, Megan also found a distinguished management team to represent her: Wright Entertainment Group. The company, founded by music manager Johnny Wright has dealt with some of music’s biggest names, including: New Kids on the Block, Backstreet Boys, Justin Timberlake, the Jonas Brothers, and Janet Jackson.

Ever busy, Megan recently wrapped a set of shows overseas, which included performances in Vancouver, Brussels, Berlin, and Paris. She is currently prepping for her debut album and anticipates the release of her own original material. She continues to record in Los Angeles alongside a host of legendary producers.

Also awaiting this promising artist’s first dance with fame, are her fans. Though, if you ask Megan, they are more than just her following... they are her inspiration.

She has already taken the web by storm. Next up: center stage.

Alexzenia Davis Bio
By Alexzenia Davis

As any lyricist will attest, transforming introspection into a written piece—subsequently creating an exposé of self—takes an immense amount of fervor and delicacy. As premeditated as a crime, yet as authentic as innocence itself, the perplexity of a poet is like that of a puzzle.

Alexzenia Davis is this; an enigma of sorts: penning her life without ever quite wanting to tell on herself, open, vulnerable, honest, but yet mysterious and guarded. All of these characteristics can prove to be a possible testament to her Brooklyn, NY upbringing, or even the learned sly maneuvering of her journalism background. Either way, one thing is for sure: she is baring pieces of her soul one poem at a time; and she is inviting you to come along.

Davis published her first book, “Would You Love Me?” in 2011. The book—a poetic piece—contains one poem, of the same title, and is broken only by illustrations. Delving into her inner emotions, Davis ultimately presses the idea of true and undeniable love; even under unfavorable circumstances. Past the initial interrogation, she explores the possibilities of a limitless love.

Davis, who has been writing creatively since childhood, began posting YouTube videos upon entering college. The videos—edited with music and stylized to fit the feel of each individual poem—provide a backlog into the journey of the young poet.

The topic of love is one of the many Davis revisits throughout her body of work. Those very thoughts helped garner her recognition on a wider scale with her most recent collaboration. The viral release of the short film, “Make Me a Doorway” (directed/edited by Jesse Russell Brooks; written/narrated by Alexzenia Davis), caused a buzz throughout both poetry and film communities, earning the film several screenings at festivals throughout the United States and Canada.

In addition to love, her poetic portfolio speaks to politics, activism, religion, and more recently, breaking the chains of mental enslavement. Her views speak to an intense maturity—persistently questioning, yet remaining consistent in her emotional and analytical processes.

Professionally, she has also worked to leave an imprint. Davis began her career as a freelance journalist spotlighting up-and-coming artists and entrepreneurs. With aspirations to mesh her love for music with her passion for writing, she eventually amassed a diverse background by pursuing jobs that complement both desires. Working for companies such as SOTAC Magazine, Nitram Knarf Magazine, Creative Loafing (Charlotte, NC), Y2 Management and Interscope Records, her work has been highlighted in various mediums including online, print, and television.

Davis is a graduate of the renowned LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. She graduated summa cum laude from Johnson C. Smith University with a bachelor's degree in communication arts/journalism. Currently working in entertainment in Los Angeles, California, Davis plans to release her second book of poetry in late 2012.

Her life experiences continue to fuel her drive. Her desire for betterment continues to dictate her journey. And her love of poetry continues to write what will certainly be her legacy.

RoXxy Montana Bio

By Alexzenia Davis

It would be negligent to discuss Detroit without mentioning music. Known for breeding some of the greatest hip hop stars, soul singers, and rockers, it's no wonder that the Motor City is also home to three very talented sisters. Under the name RoXxy Montana, siblings Tenija, Tiara, and Temperance are on the verge of something big.

They are an R&B group, make no mistake about it. Yet, as any dynamic artist will tell you, their musical influences and personal tastes are plenty. Each sister has a preference, which contributes to their individual sound. Tiara, 20, desires more of a country/pop selection, noting Tim McGraw, Faith Hill, as well as Michael Jackson among her favorite artists. Tenija, 21, leans more towards neo-soul and gospel; artists such as India Arie and Kim Burrell are at the top of her list. Meanwhile, 19 year old Temperance's taste ranges from Prince to Cage to Tina Turner as she more so fancies rock, indie, and pop.

"I believe we embody all genres," Tiara says, "Vocally each one of our voices bring a totally different element. If it's not my hard country-ish twang [or] Tenija's R&B/pop tone and riffs, it's Temperance's deep, soft, raspy tone."

They have all of the elements and their natural abilities seem to come with ease—the girls even learned to harmonize on their own. However, it was in the midst of a more difficult situation that their talents were first recognized.

"One day our family was going through a tough time and our mother was in the other room praying and crying," explains Tiara, "We heard her and we started singing a song that we learned in children's church. It was a very simple song, but she ran into the room like 'Who is THAT?'"

Their parents, stunned, wasted no time in helping the girls develop and polish their craft. They were enrolled in choir and were encouraged to perform in front of family and friends. Their father, who played in a band, began to fill their record collection with old Motown hits. The exposure and support was enough to seal one simple fact: they were meant to sing!

It paid off.

They auditioned for X Factor and made it to boot camp. The entire experience is one that represents both the peak and valley of their career to date. "The best [part] was being told on national television, 'Yes, you have the X Factor,' by 4 major people in the industry," says Tenija, "Being told by Simon Cowell, 'You complement each other perfectly' and [to have] LA Reid say, he wants to hear more. I mean, we'll never ever forget that moment in all our lives."

Then came boot camp, a trial which put the girls on edge. With near daily eliminations, the group was taken out of their comfort zone and had their limits tested. Trying, yet necessary; grueling, but vital.

Their experiences, both personally and professionally, will surely find a way into their debut album; a project which is currently in the works. "We kind of pull from everything. It can be our lives or our friends' lives," says Temperance, "One of our first songs was written about one of Tiara's friends. Our content is a mix of our life, and the current, definitely."

Their musical goals are succinct. The ladies would simply love to be known as talented vocalists who refuse to apply gimmicks to their artistry... Artists who can be an example to young girls, while being appreciated by parents... Artists who are not confined to barriers.

Few things are more genuine than when siblings join their talents. In fact, it's almost magical. This certainly rings true for these sisters.

Tone-X Bio

By Alexzenia Davis

Tone-X's detailed road to success has made all the right impressions. Born Anthony Belser, in Wilmington, NC, he has worked diligently to make his mark in the world of comedy permanent. The notches on his belt speak to his performances on Russell Simmon's Def Comedy Jam, BET's Comic View, P. Diddy's Bad Boys of Comedy, and The Kings of Comedy tour. His immense talent, genuine soul, and strategic mind have allowed him to penetrate multiple arenas including: stand-up, radio, TV, and sports. Yet, even with his many achievements, his passion has never been greater.

Tone-X first built a name for himself in Charlotte, NC where he became one of the most recognizable and engaging radio personalities on WPEG's Power 98 FM; a position which he held for 12 years. During this time, he also served as the official spokesperson for the Charlotte Bobcats, the former (WNBA) Charlotte Sting, and was a featured host on various FOX on air programs. In 2008, he branched out on an even larger scale as he went on to create and host Tone-X and Friends—a comedy show which quickly became a Tuesday night Charlotte hotspot.

His accomplishments catapulted him into a position which brought him to Atlanta and put him center stage in an even brighter spotlight. In 2009, he was pulled on as a writer for The Mo'Nique Show on BET; an experience which made him even more versatile, greatly enhancing his knowledge in the realms of TV and production. And to top it off, he landed a spot on Mo'Nique's national tour.

The time away from his old NC stomping grounds has helped Tone-X to mature as a comedian. Staying true to the idea that, "the funniest material is the truth," he has let audiences in on the new developments in his life, including the birth of his son. And as his family grows, so does he; a fact which can be evidenced in his style. From hip hop comedy to "grown man," Tone-X has elevated in more ways than one. Taking note from his own tagline and personal belief that you should "walk into a room and be celebrated, not tolerated," Tone-X is currently prepping for the release of The Blue Line—his sock line which will also feature bowties and pocket squares.

Faithful fans and friends got to relive the Tone-X *experience* first-hand when he returned to Charlotte for a special night of comedy. The show, cleverly titled Ocean's 46, doubled as a celebration of his 46th birthday as well as 20 years in comedy. Playing on the Ocean's trilogy theme, Tone-X, in Clooney-esque fashion brought three comedians along on his "heist" to steal the laughter. It was a night to remember for Tone-X, as well. Having remained humble through it all, he considered the show a thank you to all of those who have helped to make him a success.

As his star grows, he continues to pay it forward. Through his involvement in various youth-gearred organizations including Education Through Talent and this year's Hip Hop Caucus Townhall Forum, he has been able to serve as a mentor both directly and indirectly.

Passing along some of his wisdom and serving as a positive influence is not something that Tone-X takes lightly. He knows that his responsibility is far more complex than to simply make people laugh. He wants to make them *listen*. He has, and he will. For through his gift, he promotes his purpose. And that is what makes comedian, Tone-X, not only great, but necessary.

Mr. 704 Bio
By Alexzenia Davis

“I want to be one of the reasons Carolina artists get a chance—because of my success, my hard work, and dedication.” – Mr. 704

His influences vary from the soulful vibe of west coast rap to hard hitting east coast hip hop. But you'll have to travel down south to find *him*. You'll discover him deep in the mix and on a mission to add his name to a particularly significant list of classics: Outkast, Goodie Mob, UGK, 8 Ball and MJG.

Yes, etched in the heart of down south hip hop is **Mr. 704**.

Born Dwayne Frazier in Charlotte, NC, Mr. 704 is truly a home grown act. The Queen City has served as not only the canvas, but the inspiration for much of his music. And as he's worked to build his name in hip hop, he has stayed true to task; one requiring him to authentically share his story while emphatically representing Charlotte's bubbling hip hop scene.

Immersed in the culture his whole life, it wasn't until 2000 that Mr. 704 decided to fully dedicate himself to the game. He teamed up with a few friends and fellow artists to create the hip hop group, **Fenced In**. The name derived from the idea that the group would collectively “fence in” their ideas while pushing away naysayers and negativity. Yet after realizing his individual talent—first as a producer, then as an artist—he decided to pursue a solo career.

Under the imprint, **Fenced In Entertainment**—a nod to his former group—Mr. 704 has seen much success. Following some buzz on the underground circuit, he released his much anticipated debut album, **Welcome To Charlotte**, in 2009. The album featured several hit singles including a collaboration with Atlanta's Pastor Troy. He continued on to link up with a number of the South's notable artists including 8 Ball & MJG, Rocko, Sean Paul (Young Bloodz), and most recently west coast rapper YG (“Plugged”). In addition, he has performed on several major stages and his records have been heard across airwaves. His most recent radio single, “Hustlin’,” received Record of the Year at the Queen City Music Awards.

But the highlight of his career? “Having 400+ paying fans come to my show to see me, show love and support the time and effort that I've put into my craft.”

Remaining true to his desire for feel-good up-tempo hip hop *without* compromising content, Mr. 704 hopes he can fill what he feels is a void in today's hip hop. Aside from the music, he hopes to push Charlotte to the forefront. He recognizes the array of artists, but notes that it will take more overall support from promoters, fans, and DJs alike, to push to the next level. He hopes to make Fenced In Entertainment a profitable label in order to assist in that process.

Having worked to perfect his craft over time, Mr. 704 knows that the path to success is long and strenuous; one that requires much determination and heart. His advice is simple, yet real: “Stay focused and determined. Be willing to take criticism. Never get discouraged. Never quit.”

James Cyrus Bio
By Alexzenia Davis

“To let the hungry be fed, the naked clothed, the sick nourished, the aged protected, the infants cared for, and the homeless housed.” It’s more than just a Rastafarian creed. It is a belief which attorney James Cyrus IV embodies.

In 2010, Cyrus, a graduate of North Carolina Central University School of Law, opened **The Law Office of James F. Cyrus IV, PLLC** in Charlotte, NC. The firm strives to provide affordable civil and criminal defense to those in need of legal representation. His clientele is comprised of a diverse group—including the underrepresented immigrant population. Cyrus’ devotion to those of varied backgrounds is a nod to his wide range experience.

Cyrus hails from a family of successful attorneys who have practiced both in the states and Barbados. His storyline is held together by the many opportunities he had to immerse himself in various cultures. Raised in Trinidad during his early years, Cyrus’ family eventually relocated to Miami, FL due to the country’s political unrest. He later attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for his undergraduate studies where he earned a degree in political science.

Prior to law school, his extensive travels throughout West Africa, Asia, and Europe drove him to examine the stark differences in cultural atmospheres. The experiences, including a few poignant examples of extreme poverty, fueled his desire to fight for his people as well as the global community.

Cyrus continues to fulfill his purpose through his dedication to his practice and various organizations—including RALAK (Rastafari Ancient Living Arts and Kulture), on which he serves as counsel.

The Law Office of James F. Cyrus IV has been successfully serving the Charlotte community and surrounding areas. It is located in the NoDa district.

Areas of Practice

Criminal

Civil

Immigration

Bar Admissions

North Carolina – 2010

Education

North Carolina Central University School of Law

J.D. – 2008

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

B.A. – 2000

The Greys Bio

By Alexzenia Davis

Don't let the name fool you. Converse with any of the three teenage siblings that comprise The Greys, and you'll find that they are quite vibrant and colorful in their approach. With a musical palette that transcends the genres of jazz, pop, dance, and more, Sydney (17) and brothers Jayden (16), and Silas (15) know no boundaries.

Each armed with a different skill, all three siblings add something unique to the group. Sydney: a singer, guitarist, and dancer. Jayden: a producer, pianist, and drummer, who also raps. And Silas: whose focus has remained on singing from the very beginning. Their influences, personally and professionally, are just as varied as the music itself. Collectively, their icons range from Justin Bieber to Ray Charles to their musically inclined parents who serve as Worship Pastors.

Yet despite all of that creative energy floating around, it wasn't until they recorded their first song together, "TooDaLoo," that their full potential dawned on them. It was then that they decided to officially form The Greys.

Since their inception, the Dallas, TX trio has performed all around their home state, steadily building a loyal following. Their big break came when manager Sidney Richland and music industry veteran, Garnett March, flew to Texas to meet the group after hearing a 7 track demo. Trusting their instincts, The Greys knew that the opportunity was everything they had been waiting for and subsequently signed with The Chemists.

But their music is only a piece of their charm. Behind the music lies three very genuine souls; each member gripping a very distinct idea of what their success will ultimately mean. Sydney's joy truly revolves around family. Having been adopted into the Gray clan, she hopes to catapult her future success into a platform for her to speak out about pressing issues affecting families. But as of right now, she is simply excited to exact her dreams alongside the two people who matter the most. A sentiment echoed by her brothers who also emphasize the importance of keeping God, family, and charity at the forefront.

As they continue to pen the next chapter of their story, brace yourself. This one's sure to hit.

Anthony Lewis Bio

By Alexzenia Davis

It's almost as though Anthony Lewis' love for music is ingrained in him; his love of art, somewhat hereditary. His parents were stage performers who could both sing and act. And it is apparent that neither the rhythm, nor the beat, missed Lewis.

Born in Los Angeles, CA, Lewis first realized his vocal potential at age 6. Though he shared his talent in church, singing remained a personal hobby until he and his sister took to YouTube. As interest piqued among viewers, so did Lewis' desire to pursue his gift. And his strides are apparent. While singing for producer Donnie Scantz, he impressed industry veteran, Garnett March, and was soon signed to The Chemists. The rest is history-in-the-making as he prepares his debut album and single.

With influences ranging from Chris Brown and Justin Timberlake to Michael Jackson, Lewis wants his sound and content to reflect his reality. By delving into and remaining *true* to his experiences as a teen, he hopes to create timeless music. And it's exactly what he is meant to do.

Billy Bang Bio

By Alexzenia Davis

Born Anthony Maurice Clark in Queens, NY, Billy Bang describes his passion for hip hop as “inevitable.” He was polished with pieces of the 90s; the core of his childhood correlating with the heart of the era’s hip hop. He was surrounded not only by the showcasing of his favorite artists—Nas, Jadakiss, Wu Tang—but with a family who was knee deep in the culture. And after seeing one of his cousins rip a show in Brooklyn, a young Billy Bang was *enticed*.

He began as a battle rapper. But after the success of Queens artist Noreaga, Billy Bang knew he could take his career to the next level. Frustrated with the inability to find quality production, he taught himself how to produce—adding yet another credit to his musical resume. He chose his stage name courtesy of his father, a street legend and “The Original Billy Bang.” And by 2010, Billy Bang landed a guest spot on BET’s music video show, *The Deal*.

Now, at 26 years of age, Billy Bang is signed to The Chemists—an entertainment company established by music industry veteran, Garnett March. Though he initially stumbled into March’s music audition by chance, Billy Bang is taking the opportunity by the reigns. He considers March a mentor and has wisely become a student of the industry.

Excited about his journey and with limitless goals, Billy Bang is ready to set the world ablaze.

**PRESS
RELEASES**

FORMER PUSSYCAT DOLL, MELODY THORNTON, RELEASES ONLINE MIXTAPE

LOS ANGELES, CA – March 15, 2012 – Powerhouse vocalist, Melody Thornton is finding her way back to the spotlight, but on her own terms. After dropping traces of what would form her upcoming mixtape, she is now ready to bare all with the release of, **Piss On Your Black List**.

“**Piss On Your Black List** has nothing to do with being a rebel or fighting against anything. It has everything to do with fighting for myself,” says Thornton. “It’s clever with attitude. It’s kind of funny and gets a strong reaction; all things that, at times, describe my art.”

The mixtape consists of 10 tracks which do just that. Through various melodic stories of love, music, and faith, Melody exposes the battles she faces with each, and at times, she even reveals the battle within herself.

Aside from one cover, each of the five remakes, and four original tracks are all written by Thornton; a treat for fans who will finally have a chance to experience her writing ability. Producers for the four original tracks include: Andre Harris (“Smoking Gun”), Church and State (“Sweet Vendetta”), Mark Vinten (“Intro”), and Melody on a self-produced track (“Hit the Ground Runnin’” featuring Michael Gallope/piano and Paran Amirinazari/violin).

Musicality is also worth a mention. For her remakes, Melody was particular about choosing popular instrumentals from the 60s and 70s. Her appetite for a bluesy flavor fused with a hint of today’s popular music prompted her to label her style, “Soul-Pop.”

Along with her mixtape, Melody will release a series of viral videos—the first of which is already making noise. The visuals for “Lipstick&Guilt,” directed by Hyperballad, recently hit the internet.

“We were influenced by the dark undertones of the track and Melody’s powerhouse vocals,” said directing duo Dano Cerny and Marielle Tepper of Hyperballad. “We worked with our effects team Nick Young and Zack Young to create a world that matched the mood and beauty but wasn’t your typical video imagery. The great thing about working with Melody is that she thinks out of the box and wants to push the envelope visually, which makes for a great collaboration.”

P.O.Y.B.L is currently available for free download on her personal website: melodythornton.com. “Sweet Vendetta” is also available for purchase at all digital retailers.

Track Listing

1. Intro
2. Sweet Vendetta
3. Lipstick&Guilt
4. Smoking Gun
5. Loving You Better
6. Crazy Mixed Girl
7. The One That Got Away
8. Bulletproof Feat. Bobby Newberry
9. Someone To Believe
10. Hit The Ground Runnin’

AUDIO PUSH RELEASES ONLINE MIXTAPE, TRUTH BE TOLD

LOS ANGELES, CA – March 26, 2012 –SoCal Hip-Hop duo, Audio Push, aren't sleeping; yet their dreams are concise. With plans to make their way to the forefront of west coast hip hop, these Inland Empire artists haven't been quiet during their trek toward that goal. Having already seen mainstream success with two popular tracks—"Teach Me How To Jerk" and "Up N Down"—Oktane, 22, and Price Tag, 21, are ready for the next step in their journey. Recently signed to Hip-Hop and R&B platinum-producer Hit-Boy's record label, Hits Since 87 (or HS87), Audio Push will be releasing their mixtape, **Truth Be Told** on Tuesday, March 27.

The 19 track compilation is a cleverly crafted mix of songs ranging from gritty to club. The impressive showcase is a testament to their hip hop roots. Growing up during the 90's golden era of Hip-Hop, Price Tag and Oktane have been greatly influenced by a handful of west coast icons, from Tupac to E-40. Now, almost 10 years after they first started rapping together at the tender ages of 12 and 13, both have realized just how musically inclined they truly are. Aside from their lyrical abilities, Oktane, 22, sings and Price Tag, 21, produces; both of which are showcased on their upcoming mixtape.

Over the course of their musical career, the group has released several mixtapes: The Soundcheck, The Backstage Pass, The Intermission, 7th Letter, and My Turn. Formerly signed to Interscope Records and Sean & Kadis, Audio Push has developed a loyal fan base who, over time, have become quite familiar with their movement and music. They are confident that their latest project will not only excite fans, but further prepare them for what the duo has in store.

"We just made the kind of music that we wanted and love to make," says PriceTag. "There was no force with this project. Whoever it reaches, it will reach. We are just being the best Audio Push we can be."

Adds Oktane, "This, hands down, is our greatest project so far. We have found our lane and really captured it."

Truth Be Told drops on Tuesday, March 27 and will be available for free download online at audiopush.net.

Track Listing

Truth Be Told
Wide Open ft T. Mills
Wassup
Promise
Tip Drill ft. Rej3ctz,Joe Moses,Serious
Po'd Up
Drip Drop ft. Turtle
Top Of Me ft Raden M.
The Vision ft Donye'a G.
Skit
Extras
For The Night
KillStreak
Pretty Girls ft. Hit-Boy
Do Or Die ft. Casey Veggies
Shake It Up ft. IamSU
Snap ft. Chip The Ripper
10 East
Where Did We Go Wrong

**2013 HIP HOP CAUCUS TOWN HALL FORUM TO BE HELD AT CLARK ATLANTA
UNIVERSITY
STUDENT SHOWCASE TO FOLLOW FORUM**

ATLANTA, GA—October 14, 2013—The Hip Hop Caucus, an organization developed in 2004 to assist in the betterment of the African-American community through cultural awareness and humanitarian efforts, will bring the **Town Hall Forum & Artist Showcase** to the campus of Clark Atlanta University on Tuesday, October 15. Focusing on the most pressing issues of the day, students will gather in the Thomas Cole Research Auditorium for an open dialogue on race, politics, and hip hop.

Leading the discussion is a dynamic panel. CEO, Reverend Lennox Yearwood, will be joined by Theo Ratliff (former NBA player), Blondy (Hip Hop artist & pioneer), Anthony David (R&B artist), and Tone X (comedian/Mo’Nique Show). They will moderate the discussion touching on topics such as the recent Government shutdown, voting rights, and gun violence.

“The Hip Hop Caucus leverages Hip Hop culture to encourage young people to participate in the democratic process. This is why I’m so excited to be participating in the Atlanta Hip Hop Town Hall Forum put forth by the Atlanta Hip Hop Caucus and Clark Atlanta University Student Government Association,” says Reverend Yearwood. “We will discuss core issues affecting underserved communities, and figure out programs and campaigns to support solution-driven community organizing led by today’s young leaders. We might not be able to change the world, but WE can change our block.”

Unique to this year’s program is the artist showcase in which several Clark Atlanta University students will have the opportunity to spotlight their talents in front of both the panel and their peers. Sponsored in part by Education Through Talent—an organization dedicated to artist development and academic excellence—the forum aims to give students an outlet both politically and creatively.

“The Hip Hop culture has a huge influence in our communities. We are a voice that has to stand up for what is right and my goal is to infuse energy in our youth to help create an environmental paradigm shift,” says Gwendolyn “Blondy” Chisolm.

The **Town Hall Forum & Artist Showcase** will take place at 6pm on October 15th. The event is sponsored by the **Hip Hop Caucus Atlanta, Education Through Talent, Clark Atlanta University, and Y Square Management.**

For more information on this event, please visit: <http://www.hiphopcaucus.org>

Join the conversation: #HipHopCaucus

INTERSCOPE GEFFEN A&M PROMOTIONS DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES THE 9TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY & TOY DRIVE

SANTA MONICA (December 17, 2012)—In anticipation of the holiday season comes a night of music and charity with the announcement of the Interscope Geffen A&M Promotions Department's 9th Annual Holiday Party & Toy Drive. The event will be held on Tuesday, December 18, 2012 at Supper Club Hollywood with exclusive coverage by VIBE Magazine.

Sure to be a star studded affair, the event is a tradition for the department and serves as an opportunity to celebrate with those who lent their support throughout the year. Guests will be treated to the sounds of some of the label's urban roster with scheduled performances by surprise guests. As well, party-goers will enjoy complimentary cuisine and custom cocktails provided by Chambord Vodka.

Keeping the spirit of giving at the forefront, the I.G.A. Promotions Department will partner with Spark of Love Charity to provide gifts to underprivileged children. As with past events, guests are asked to bring an unwrapped toy valued at \$10 or more. Toys will be piled into an ambulance provided by the Shoreline Ambulance company at the end of the night.

Background: The 9th Annual Holiday Party & Toy Drive will be headed by Lifestyle and Brand Specialist Marlon Singleton. Under Singleton's direction (in conjunction with the Long Beach Community Action Partnership), last year's Party & Toy Drive collected over 500 toys which were donated to the Stephan's Kids Charity. It was also host to several of the label's artists as they put on thrilling year-end performances. Singleton has also been the force behind Interscope's recent BET Awards parties. Highly anticipated affairs, his events are known for drawing out top celebrities and tastemakers in the entertainment industry.

VIBE: Vibe Media | AccessNetwork is next generation media platform company with a mission to build and grow brands using premium content and proprietary, cutting edge technology and advertising platforms. Our technology division provides publishing and advertising solutions to our owned and operated brands and over 400 affiliates and customers. Our technology platforms are used by major global brands and publishers such as NBC, Viacom, Diageo, and Hearst.

INTERSCOPE RECORDING ARTIST MATEO RELEASES WE'VE MET BEFORE EP

SANTA MONICA, CA (August 13, 2013) — Interscope recording artist Mateo releases his new EP today, titled **We've Met Before**. The singer-songwriter kicked off the summer with his major label debut single "How Good Is Your Love," a fiery mid tempo track with an equally exciting video directed by David Telles.

On **We've Met Before**, the Cincinnati crooner journeys through his emotions over a series of love songs; with his lyrics sometimes serving as a double entendre for both relationships and music. Featuring production by Kerry "Krucial" Brothers and Zeke MacUmbert, each track lends its own to the signature sound Mateo has cultivated over the years: a warm blend of R&B/alternative music, presented with a smooth subtle tone and enhanced by displays of vocal forte.

"I'm in a better place than I have ever been musically. With this EP, I want to show fans how I've evolved. They may have met me before, but I have so much more to give them," comments Mateo. In addition to the EP, Mateo has been treating fans to an accompanying webseries; one that follows the star as he navigates the music scene. Mateo will continue to tour this fall and put the finishing touches on his forthcoming full length album.

We've Met Before is now available digitally.

We've Met Before Webseries: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BQgOkGAMhg>

How Good Is Your Love: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0wu-1iWas0>

www.mateoonline.com

Track Listing:

1. How Good Is Your Love
2. I Miss You
3. After Dark
4. Love Is a Gun
5. Sing About Me

KEYSHIA COLE ANNOUNCES WOMAN TO WOMAN TOUR 18 CITY TOUR KICKS OFF MARCH 28

LOS ANGELES, CA (March 19, 2013)—Multiplatinum-selling songstress Keyshia Cole (Geffen) is gearing up for an 18 city headlining tour, she announced today. Set to kick off this March, the **Woman to Woman** tour—named after her November 2012 album—will serve as a thank you to fans; all five of Cole’s albums have reached the Billboard Top 200’s top 10. The month-long tour will begin in Westbury, NY on March 28 and wrap in Cole’s hometown of Oakland on April 21.

The tour announcement continues an exciting run for the R&B diva. First, the Grammy-nominated artist bared her soul on **Woman to Woman**; an effort which earned her the #2 position on the R&B/Hip Hop Albums chart. The record was host to singles “Enough of No Love” and “Trust and Believe”; the first, a passionately belted up tempo track, with the latter serving as a confessional, yet catchy tale of broken trust.

In addition to the release of her fifth studio album, Cole also starred alongside husband Daniel Gibson in BET’s hit reality series “Keyshia & Daniel: Family First.” She’s slated to hit the Essence Festival stage for the fourth time this July.

Concert goers will also be treated to the sultry sounds of fellow crooner and special guest, Chrisette Michele.

For more information, please visit: <http://smarturl.it/KeyshiaColeTour>

KEYSHIA COLE ITINERARY

Thursday, March 28 Westbury, NY Westbury Theater
Friday, March 29 Norfolk, VA Chrysler Hall
Saturday, March 30 Washington, DC Warner Theater
Tuesday, April 2 Boston, MA Orpheum
Thursday, April 4 New York, NY Beacon Theater
Friday, April 5 Wallingford, CT Oakdale Theater
Saturday, April 6 Atlantic City, NJ Borgata
Sunday, April 7 Philadelphia, PA Tower Theatre
Tuesday, April 9 Toronto, ON Danforth Music Hall (No Chrisette)
Thursday, April 11 Detroit, MI Motor City Casino
Friday, April 12 Cleveland, OH State Theater
Saturday, April 13 Merrillville, IN Star Plaza Theater
Sunday, April 14 Indianapolis, IN Murat Theatre
Tuesday, April 16 Dallas, TX Verizon
Thursday, April 18 Phoenix, AZ Celebrity Theater
Friday, April 19 Los Angeles, CA Club Nokia
Saturday, April 20 San Diego, CA Humphrey’s
Sunday, April 21 Oakland, CA Fox Theater