

Q Culture

'98 Renaissance Festival is off and running

by Brian D. Holcomb
Q-Notes Staff

The 1998 Carolina Renaissance Festival opened in Charlotte on October 3 and runs weekends through November 15. Before you give it the brush-off, ask around. Many of your friends have probably gone in past years. For some reason, this annual event, and others like it, attract a larger gay/lesbian audience than may be expected. Must be the costumes. In any event, this is definitely a 'family' event, and you're certain to run into lots of people that you know.

Every autumn for the last several years, 240 acres of wooded land in the northern part of the county have been transformed into a sixteenth century village. The term "Renaissance" is used a bit loosely...it is decidedly more Medieval, but Renaissance sounds better. Also, most people associate the Renaissance with Italy (not that this is correct, just what most people think), and the Festival is definitely more Anglo-oriented. Still, if you want to see tights, codpieces and low-cut bodices, this is the place.

Theatre

Art

Music

Dance

Film

Naturally, there is more than just the costumes. If you have ever wanted to see a jousting match (and haven't we all), then this may be the only place to do so. Where else can you wander the woods with a turkey drumstick and look like one of the regulars? The Festival has a commercial element as well: the Artisan Marketplace. A hundred or so craftspeople will be in attendance, manufacturing their wares, most of which fall somewhere between Pottery Barn and Ten Thousand Villages. (That was a compliment, by the way.)

Entertainment, you ask? Why certainly. There will be lots of...bizarre performances (bizarre in a good, family-oriented way, not bizarre like Lolapalooza's Side Show). Expect lots of knife-throwing, juggling, and mock-Elizabethan theatre, some of which the crowd is welcome to participate in. Of course, there is also lots of food. Some of it is theme food, which might be fun, some of it is downright pretentious (fettuccine alfredo with stuffed crab, etc.) So there is definitely something for everyone. And what would a Renaissance Festival be without beer? There are several varieties from which to choose.

The Festival is located at NC73 and Poplar Tent Road between Huntersville and Concord and is open from 10:00am to 5:30pm both Saturdays and Sundays. (For those of you urban queens who never do anything with directions involving a State Road, it might be a nice change.) And don't panic. It can be found quite easily from either I-85 or I-77 (you'll want to watch for the NC73 exit).

For more information, call (704) 896-5544 in Charlotte, (919) 828-9928 in Raleigh, or (336) 727-9909 in the Triad. Tickets are \$11 for adults, \$5 for children 5-12 and children under 5 get in free. However, advance tickets may be purchased for \$1 off the above prices at your local Harris-Teeter. Group discounts are available by calling (704) 896-5555. ▼

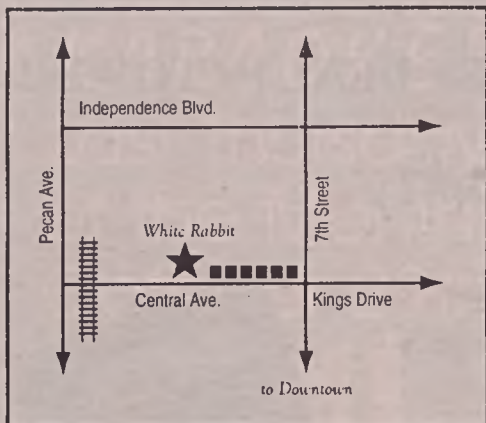


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SubUrban blues create urban art

by Brian D. Holcomb
Q-Notes Staff

A new and vibrant arts group is "exploding" in the North Davidson Arts District of Charlotte. Another Roadside Performance Company, a multidisciplinary performance group, has set up shop in a renovated space across the street from the Ling Ling Palace and is planning to open with a production of Eric Bogosian's *subUrbia* in November. I recently met with Zach Sessions and Rob Simmons, two of the company's members, to discuss their mission and the show they plan to produce.

Another Roadside Performance Company was born out of a desire to unite artists from all media, to produce collective works, and to create some critical mass in the development of new expression. The recent (and ongoing) arts debacle here in Charlotte certainly lent fuel to the fire, but the basic twentysomething "what do I do now?" problem is the driving force behind this group.

Instead of sitting on the hoods of their cars at the local strip mall on a Saturday night, this group of twentysomethings decided to do something. They have completely renovated a space in NoDa, including inviting visual artists to fill the walls with their creations, and have fashioned it into a rehearsal/performance/studio space. And their first major project is *subUrbia*,

a play that deals with, of all things, young people with nothing in particular to do and no particular reason to want to find something. Bogosian's script deals with staying in limbo or leaving it...Another Roadside Performance Company has decided to stay and change it. Another company member, Robin Russo, has written an essay describing her experience with the company which is reprinted in this issue. Take a look to get a better idea of the momentum building in NoDa.

After *subUrbia*, Zach and Rob explained, the hope is to become a constant presence in the arts scene. Note that they refer to themselves as a "Performance Company." Although their first major effort is theatre, their company also consists of dancers, photographers, musicians, improv artists...anything you can think of, really. Even the more visual arts can be incorporated into a performance experience, so expect to hear about some exciting multimedia projects in the near future.

Tickets and information are available at Another Roadside Performance Company's production space. Call them at (704) 335-1120 to reserve your seats. Preview is November 3 with performances on Thursdays - Sundays November 5-8, 12-15 and 19-22. All seats are \$10. Performances are held at the Neighborhood Theatre on 36th Street. ▼

Living the subAmerican dream

by Robin Russo
Special to Q-Notes

[Ed. Note: Robin Russo is a member of Another Roadside Performance Company highlighted in the above article.]

I am stunned. I've lived in Charlotte all my life and I've never felt the creative energy that surges through the veins of Another Roadside Performance Company. Never have I seen a collaboration as open-minded and inclusive as this. The time has come and I've been waiting.

I grew up in South Charlotte, where my parents still keep a happy home amidst bulldozers and growing traffic problems. Their house was built over a field of sunflowers and the surrounding area consisted of trees and a small creek, just big enough to build a rope swing, just enough trees to hold *National Geographic* explorations as a kid with an imagination. Small foxes used to walk up to our porch in the early morning. Bats circled overhead at night and we kept toads and turtles in aquariums through the summer. The American Dream...

...Crushed as the neighborhood expanded and woods were bulldozed. I haven't seen a toad hop across the driveway for years. Every time I go to South Charlotte there is a new and better strip mall, movie theater, restaurant. What is lacking is anything for the kids, the teenagers who hang out in the parking lots, just like in the play *subUrbia*.

When I first walked into a casual meeting about the play, I told the group I would help out as much as I could, but I was planning to leave before October. I was beaten down and

had finally made up my mind. NOTHING would stand in my way.

We read through the script, talked about who we knew and explored personalities, discovering what each could contribute. Suddenly I realized: Here is a group of young and extremely passionate individuals working together, with egos left at the door. Everyone with an interest in the play is welcome to become involved immediately. Every single volunteer is important and feels that from the start. Maybe I'm a hopeless romantic, but I fell in love that night — with action, opinion, motivation, revolution, desire, creativity, collaboration, and hope, overcome with PASSION.

I'm staying, needless to say. I have no exciting career; I'm not in school; I didn't have any emotional ties to this town until I walked into that meeting. The central conflict of the play itself is staying or leaving, creating or merely dreaming about it. I was living the play. Most of Charlotte's teens and twentysomethings are living the play as I write this essay. Throughout the production of this play, I am fighting the attitudes I have represented all of my life. This is where I belong now.

This production will set a new standard for Charlotte's art community. Working together with honesty and heart, we will be a shining example for everyone who has ever had a dream and doubted the efficiency of pure passion. I have learned to love again, and by loving I can only generate more love around me, and I will be proud to say I am a part of all this, and that this is happening here. Charlotte, North Carolina. The Queen City. My home. ▼

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