

FEATURES

Review

Outkast Concert Sponsored by UNCA Underdog

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Staff Writer

The explosive, triple-platinum, hip-hop artists Outkast invaded the Asheville Civic Center with their funky, post-modern, rhythmically explosive house party April 21.

The concert was one of the last venues of the Stank Love World Tour to promote the group's most recent album, *Stankonia*. The show at the Civic Center was sponsored by UNCA's Underdog Productions.

At times, I felt as if I was smack in the middle of some teenage, meat market hell. On that night, the Outkast concert was the place to be.

"I have never seen so many poorly-dressed sluts in my life" said senior psychology major Lauren Demarco.

Indeed, for some of the people there, this event seemed to be the culmination of a year's worth of hitting the malls with religious fervor.

As I entered the Civic Center, I was overwhelmed by many people dressed and ready for such states of teenage courtship.

Coming through the security checkpoint, my crotch was casually groped. I almost ran away before I realized the wandering hands were those of an Asheville police officer trying to pat me down.

I attended the concert with Melissa Grassette, junior chemistry major, and her fiancé, Dennis White.

Melissa told me that she heard the opening act had been booted off the stage at Clemson two nights ago, but she was not sure.

When the opening act appeared, preceded by some promotion by the group's record company, Little T and One Track Mike, failed to please the turgid audience. It was hard to take them seriously.

Instead of describing the slightly startling, visual composition of the band, it would be more important to try and jam them into a neat genre for categorization, and see if I can make any sense of their style.

A Beastie Boys/ hip hop/ socially-conscious punk/ death metal/ jazz/

funk/ house/ ska/ gospel style, which is not always bad, except Outkast tried to put all of that in every song. Especially when they tried, and failed, to apply such a formula to a cover of Donovan's "Season of the Witch".

It left me wondering if Little T and One Track Mike are not quite ready for prime time, or if prime time is just not ready for them.

"What the hell was that?" I asked a concert-goer in front of me.

"That was weird," he said.

Even when promoters tossed free singles to the crowd, much of the crowd threw them back.

This group was definitely waiting for Outkast.

When Outkast took the stage, everyone in the Civic Center went nuts faster than you could say "Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik" (the name of Outkast's debut album).

Admittedly, I would not have considered myself an Outkast fan. Just a few days before the show, I was only familiar with one song—the first single off of *Stankonia*, "Ms. Jackson," which I was pretty much unenthusiastic about.

However, I acquainted myself with several other songs through the Internet, and found some that were much more promising.

Although I was not as versed in the Outkast lyrical repertoire as most of the fans at the show, it did pay off to have some prior knowledge.

Between the thundering ring in my ears and the frantic style of rappers Dre 2000 and Big Boi, the only words I could make out came from the crowd, who lovingly turned every tune into a high-octane sing-along, hands in the air and booty-shaking all around.

Whatever my prior ignorance caused me to lose in the total Outkast experience, I knew the place was hyped up for a reason.

The whole event seemed to have a "remember the time when Elvis came to Asheville" feel.

I am aware of the comparisons from fans and critics of Outkast with Parliament Funkadelic, but from this experience, the Parliament likeness is only a small piece of the much larger scope of Outkast.

There was plenty of smoke, lights and an underlying beat that says George Clinton, but one thing I



COURTESY OF MICHAEL LAVINE

Well-known group, Outkast, performed in the Asheville Civic Center April 21. Although the audience consisted mainly of hormone-charged teenagers, the quality of the music was undeniable.

will give Outkast outright: they know all the roots of the music they make, well enough to have a clear idea of where it's going.

While Big Boi lurked around the stage delivering quick, clever rhymes, Dre provided a strange, exciting presence as he leapt, serenaded and fell to his knees a la James Brown in a hazard orange leisure suit and bleached white hair.

The other performers on stage were a trio of back-up singers, a guitar player, a bass guitarist, a DJ high above everyone else on a piece of set that looked like a giant boulder and guest rapper Slim Calhoun, who traded between rhyming solo and with both Big Boi and Dre.

The crowd hooted along with Dre on "Ms. Jackson," grooved en masse to "So Fresh, So Clean" and lurched

back and forth to "Rosa Parks." Despite my initial misgivings, it was a very peaceful concert.

As a matter of fact, the only violence came in a parking lot on Haywood Street after the show.

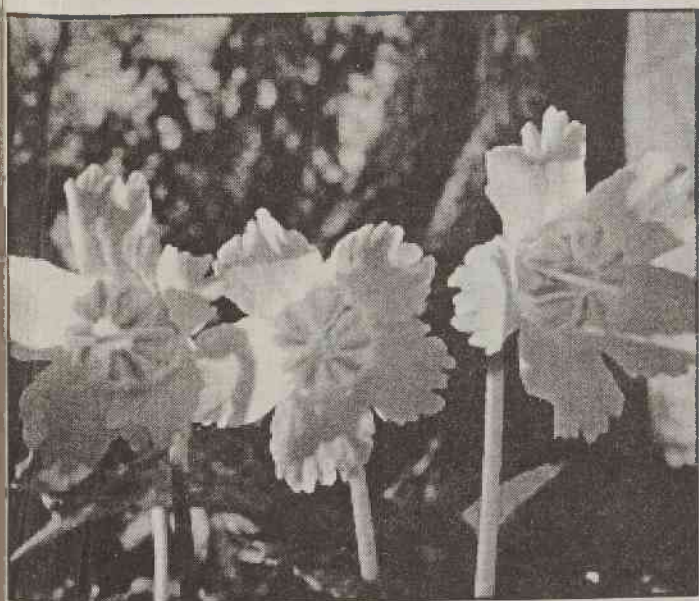
Three primed and preened teenage girls were beating the snot out of each other in an angry mass of hair, nails and chunky shoes.

Whether Outkast is your type of

music or not, it seemed undeniable from being there that night that they have their finger on the pulse of the future of not only hip hop, but rock 'n' roll.

Current bands such as Limp Bizkit and Crazy Town may have picked up on the trend, but it is groups like Outkast that continue to innovate, experiment and influence whatever comes next.

Local Hikes Highlight Springtime Flora and Fauna



COURTESY OF RUTH HAPPEL

Oconee bells (*Shortia galacifolia*), the symbol of the Spring Wildflower and Bird Pilgrimage. Although rare, these delicate flowers surface in bunches around our area.

Cate Bergman

Staff Writer

Of the numerous springtime joys, the resurgence of plant life and bird songs rank high with many.

Only those students with dangerously rigid study schedules will have missed the signs the natural world is busy celebrating the advent of spring.

To honor this lively season, the UNCA Biology Department offers its annual Spring Wildflower and Bird Pilgrimage.

The event will be on the weekend of May 4-6.

The event consists mainly of plant and bird walks in the Asheville area. They also have evening programs offered on May 4 and 5.

The pilgrimage pamphlet states that the great age of our Southern Appalachian region allows for "a rich assortment of wildflowers un-

equaled on the continent."

Many of the wildflowers are spring ephemerals.

These flowers are only in bloom for a brief period of time.

Early May will be a prime time to view these wildflowers in their glory.

Dr. David Clarke, assistant professor of botany, is organizing this year's pilgrimage.

"It's a great way to get the student community and local community together to enjoy one of the area's most precious attributes," said Clarke.

Clarke also stresses the structure of this pilgrimage.

It will be a gathering of people either at Robinson Hall or at the Folk Art Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway, then travelling together to the destination.

The wildflower hikes have varying themes.

One theme will be the natural history of trees, spring ferns and wildflowers.

For beginners, they will also dis-

cuss historic uses of wildflowers and wildflower identification.

Bird walks will be offered on Saturday and Sunday early mornings.

This involves traveling along the Blue Ridge Parkway for possible sightings of spring migrant songbirds.

I can recommend one wildflower walk that I went on last year, to the Shinn Gardens in Leicester.

Tommy and Nancy Shinn have a lovely historic piece of land.

They have incorporated native wildflowers, growing in profusion, into their beautifully sculpted gardens.

The hike to Shinn Gardens will be offered again this year, on both May 5 and 6 afternoons.

Hikes range in the amount of car travel and hiking distance.

Because hikes focus mainly on looking either to the sky for birds or to the ground for the wildflowers, most hikes are only 1/2 to 1 mile long.

Recommended for the wild-

flower tours is a hand lens or magnifying glass.

For the bird watching hikes, binoculars would be an obvious asset.

Registration is on Friday, May 4 in the Robinson Hall Lobby, from 6:30 to 7:30.

Preregistration is possible for those who cannot attend Friday night's registration.

To register in advance, contact David Clarke at dclarke@unca.edu or 232-5150.

The cost is \$1 for students and \$3 for other adults.

Additionally, the UNCA Biology Club (Missing Links) will be selling herbs throughout the weekend as a fundraiser.

The herbs include lemon basil, sweet basil, cilantro, flat-leaf parsley, chives, and others.

More information is available on the web at www.unca.edu/biology/wildflower.html, and pamphlets are also available in the Biology office in Robinson Hall.