

Ebony Readers Perform Cultural History

By Natalie A. Godwin
Staff

The Black Student Movement has many talented sub-groups active on campus. These groups add a distinct cultural voice on the University of North Carolina campus and are valuable assets to the black community.

The Ebony Readers/Onyx Theater is certainly one of these talented groups.

The organization began in 1972 at the Black Student Movement (BSM) Coalition Ball and ever since has strove to produce the African-American experience through literary performances of African-American authors.

The group presently consists of 25 members who perform around campus, at other universities, at local churches and around the Chapel Hill community.

"I remember watching an Ebony readers performance for the first time my freshman year," said Leon Livingston, a senior

pre-med student from Durham. "As the crowd got into it, the readings stirred all the black pride within me. It was very inspiring.

"I can imagine how these performances must make the older generation feel glad that the youth of today can appreciate the pains and struggles blacks before us had to endure," Livingston said.

Currently the group is working on its fall production, "Dark Symphony Re-Visited," conceived by Dwight Collins. The production is directed by Herman Jones, the group's artist-in-residence. The production will be presented at on Dec. 7 and Dec. 8 location to be announced.

Jones said the production was a compilation of poetry, music, prose and dance that will present a chronology of the movement of African-Americans taken from the Harlem Renaissance and contemporary playwrights.

"We are trying to move into the sounds and images that black men and women created," Jones

said, "to re-live through the words of those great black people."

Jones said the organization was a very talented group that exhibits a professional attitude.

"I've worked with students all over the country and at other universities, and I have to say this is the best group of students," Jones said.

Eric Keith has been an Ebony reader for two years. "I love the Ebony Readers because it affords us African-Americans a chance to express ourselves through the literature of our prominent black artists."

Jones will be working with the group next semester as well. He hopes that the the group will be able to do a full play as their spring production.

Until then Jones and the rest of the Ebony Readers will continue performing and following their organizational belief: "We cannot forget where we have been, and we must be aware of where we are in order to get where we need to go."



Movie Review: *Graffiti Bridge*

By Alan Woodlief
Staff

Rating: C-

Prince's latest film, *Graffiti Bridge*, is a testament to the Purple One's magnificent musical abilities. It is also proof that one man, even if he's armed with a dynamite soundtrack, cannot produce a quality feature film single-handedly.

Prince composed the music, wrote the screenplay, directed the production, and played the lead role in the film. The challenge of such an effort is too much for anyone to tackle. And, judging from *Bridge*, Prince should have turned the writing and directing over to someone else.

The plot, or what there is of it, centers around two friends who share ownership of a bar called the Glam Slam. Morris Day, reviving his scene-stealing character from *Purple Rain*, is one of the club's co-owners. Prince, reprising his *Rain* char-

acter, The Kid, is the other. The Kid and Day disagree on their club's future direction, providing the little conflict and drama the film possesses.

What the film lacks in story, Prince tries to make up for with depth and feeling. Prince the screenwriter shows an affinity for morbid, dreary thoughts while fleshing out the character he portrays. His father, a failed composer, has left town because no one appreciated his music, and his mother is in a rest home. The Kid's life is so gloomy and full of despair that he considers suicide. Still, Prince never really takes the audience deep inside The Kid. Instead, he only teases with unconvincing soulful and pouty looks.

The entire film is somber and grim. Its sets are enveloped by a suffocating mist pierced only by beams of colored light from the bar's strobe lights or the horizon. A sense of dread permeates the film. The gloom overpowers the drama, and the

audience is left with a feeling of sadness.

Along with this desperate view of life, Prince treats us to some of the dumbest scenes and dialogue in recent memory. For example, Day urinates on one of Prince's plants during a fight. And newcomer Ingrid Chavez as Avra is forced to utter the chorus lines of the title track: "Everyone wants to find Graffiti Bridge; everyone is looking for love."

The rest of the film is filled with Prince riding up and down the street on his motorcycle, and fortunately filled with the film's saving grace — its musical numbers.

We hear not only from Prince, but also from the Time, Tevin Campbell and Mavis Staples. Staples' stirring gospel number may be the film's best tune.

The beat is incessant. The music is penetrating. Thankfully they are there throughout the film. Rescuing the plot. Res-



cuing the setting. Prince the composer rescues Prince the screenwriter, Prince the director and Prince the actor.

If you overlook the shortcomings—and the music makes that a lot easier—*Graffiti Bridge* is not that bad.

The best thing to do is to

consider *Graffiti Bridge* as one long MTV video. Ignore the dialogue like you would those silly VJs bantering between videos. Open your ears and your eyes — especially during the musical numbers — and enjoy the rhythm.