

STATE: NEW SYSTEM ALREADY NETTING STOLEN CARS

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Since a new salvage yard reporting law went into effect a month ago, the N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles' License and Theft Bureau has received 41 reports of stolen vehicles, stopping 22 from being sold to salvage yards and confiscating 19 following sales.

DMV's new North Carolina Scrap Vehicle Reporting System requires metals recyclers and salvage yards to verify whether a vehicle brought to them without a title and more than 10 model years old has been reported stolen prior to purchase. With access to the system, these recyclers can cross-reference DMV files. Since the law's implication, the Bureau and several local law enforcement agencies have recovered 33 vehicles and also uncovered three fictitious IDs still under investigation. Additionally, the Bureau is beginning to receive reports of illegal activities in buying and selling junked cars.

"This is a great example of how one new law has already made a big difference in a very short amount of time," said Motor Vehicles Commissioner Kelly J. Thomas. He said the number of vehicles stolen in North Carolina during 2012 totaled more than 15,876.

North Carolina salvage yards and recyclers were required to begin verifying the status of vehicles brought to them as of Dec. 1. Businesses who have not registered with the Division will be audited and are subject to felony charges if unregistered.

"I am thankful the law is now in effect and that the N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles will be able to more quickly identify stolen vehicles," said Rep. Tim Moore of Kings Mountain, the bill's sponsor. "I have talked with constituents, detectives, recyclers and others who wanted to see our law strengthened, and it is very encouraging to have the new law show such an immediate impact."



Moore

RAHMAN WRAPS UP RUSSIAN TOUR

BY LAYLA GARMS
THE CHRONICLE

After more than three decades of performing, Abdullah Rahman has recently completed his first overseas gig.

The percussionist, a New Jersey native who has called Winston-Salem home for nearly 30 years, played for jazz singer Michelle Walker during her tour of Russia. Rahman had met Walker years before, but says her invitation to join the tour came at the spur of the moment.

"This whole thing came about in two weeks. She literally sent me a text message saying, 'Would you like to go to Russia with me?'" he recalled. "I had two and a half weeks to get a visa, which is no small feat for Russia."

Nevertheless, Rahman says he jumped at the chance to make the two weeklong journey, which he says served as a crash course in Russian culture and topography. He and the other musicians traversed the country, from Moscow in the east to Khabarovsk, one of Russia's westernmost cities, and back again.

"We did 13 cities in 14 days, throughout the entire country. I was in the air probably more than 50 hours," said Rahman. "We would play, eat, get up and fly, play, eat and fly some more."

Visiting Russia gave him a whole new perspective on being a minority, Rahman said.

"The running joke is that there are no black people in Russia, and it's very, very true," he related with a chuckle, adding that he was often stared at and stopped by curious countrymen who wanted to photograph him. "... Russian military is everywhere. I would always pick up a detail when I was by myself. It's so different from what we're used to and it makes you appreciate the US and the freedoms that we have here. It stops being a cliché when you go to Russia."



Submitted photos

(Left) Well-known local drummer Abdullah Rahman stands in front of the famous Moscow Kremlin.



Though African Americans are few and far between in Russia, their musical traditions are highly regarded, and as performers, Rahman and his band mates were given the royal treatment, he said.

"They love American culture, they love American music," said the Winston-Salem State University alumnus. "They love jazz. We would walk into a venue and they would start clapping before we even played."

Rahman spent two decades

do that same thing for people."

Several years ago, Rahman decided to pursue a master's degree in Percussion Performance from UNC School of the Arts. Since graduating with a 3.9 GPA in 2012, he has devoted himself to performing full time. He has been a National Black Theatre Festival mainstay in recent years. In 2011, he served as the assistant musical director for Tony winner Lillias White's "...On Black Theater Holy Ground." He joined White again on stage in 2013, playing in the band and co-starring as her love interest in "Big Maybelle Soul of the Blues."

"That was a stretch to me," he said of acting and singing. "But it was a wonderful thing to do."

Since that time, Rahman has set his sights on a new dream. He hopes to someday relocate to New York and perform in Broadway musicals.

Rahman will be getting back to basics today (Thursday, Jan. 30), doing one of the things he loves best, performing for youngsters as part of the Carolina Music Ways project, which teaches students about North Carolina's musical heritage. Singer Chris Murrell, his longtime friend, believes the best is yet to come for Rahman.

"He's got a huge future," declared Murrell, who has graced stages the world over as a member of the Grammy Award winning Count Basie Orchestra. "He's an accomplished drummer as well as teacher."

Murrell, who has visited Russia four times himself, believes touring abroad is an important step in Rahman's music career.

"It's one thing to play around the area where people know you," said the city native. "... But when your stuff ends up someplace where people don't know you from Adam's house cat, that's when you know you're coming strong."

working in corporate America and performing on the side before breaking out on his own as a full time performer, but his passion for the craft dates back as long as he can remember.

"I would play anything," he said. "I was that guy who, from nine or 10 years-old, I always had drumsticks in my pocket, tapping on everything. That's all I ever wanted to do."

Throughout his career, Rahman has placed a strong emphasis on educating and mentoring the next generation of musicians, providing private lessons for young performers and conducting jazz master classes for school systems and colleges throughout the Southeast. The father of two says it is his way of paying forward all the encouragement and opportunities he has received over the years.

"I feel passionate about it because every opportunity that has come to me has been from someone thinking enough of me to mention my name or to give me an opportunity to play," he noted. "... I want to

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