

Local tattoo and beauty salon use the arts to sponsor youth programming



Photos by Ashlea Jones

Tattoo Artist Erran Hamlin paints live at the Evening of Art event on Sunday, April 10

selections were delivered by Soul Jam, a local North Carolina band. Lead vocalist Joy Rivers and her fellow band members played high energy tunes by artists such as Frankie Beverly and Maze, Michael Jackson, and Bruno Mars, to name a few. "I really enjoy art, poetry and obviously music," said Rivers. "So, I'm really enjoying tonight's event."

Spoken word artist LB, Cognitive Complexion, Justice, and Smooth entertained the audience with their live poems that discussed social issues such as societal conformity, politics, sexual assault, inner racial prejudice, and even romance.

The Basement Tattoo and Beauty Studio will have other upcoming events that will support their goals. "We don't want to just make a financial gain, we want to deposit something back spiritually," Wilkins said. "We have some programs we're putting together. Since we are located on MLK, we have the ability to use the lot on the side of the studio as well."

The proceeds from Sunday's event will be used to sponsor youth art camps. "We are going to try to do three four-week sessions," said Wilkins. "We're also going to do a writer's camp with the spoken word artists. We're going to teach our youth how to express themselves on paper."

The Basement Tattoo and Beauty Studio is located at 1321 Hardesty Lane in Winston-Salem.



R&B selections were delivered by Soul Jam, a local North Carolina band at the Evening of Art event on Sunday, April 10.



This table holds items sold in the Silent Auction at the Evening of Art event on Sunday, April 10.

BY ASHLEA JONES FOR THE CHRONICLE

Local artists joined together Sunday, April 10, to contribute their talents to the Evening of Art event sponsored by the Basement Tattoo and Beauty Studio at the Delta Arts Center. This event was a fundraiser to generate money for youth art camps. This all-black affair featured over 20 pieces of canvas art from two local tattoo artists and showcased four spoken-word artists.

"The canvas art featured was painted by the tattoo artists at the Basement Tattoo and Beauty Studio," said Marlin Wilkins, owner of the Basement Tattoo and Beauty Studio. "These artists aren't just skin artists, but canvas artists as well."

Erran Hamlin and Shawn Merci Wright's art pieces were displayed at the Delta Art Center amongst artists such as Donald Sawyer and Joseph King. Hamlin, who has been a professional tattoo artist for three years, demonstrated his artistic talents by painting live for the audience. Neither Hamlin nor Wright identify their pieces by naming them. "I paint for fun," Hamlin said. Ironically, I want the individual to enjoy each piece and put their own meaning to it.

"I let my paint brush speak for me. I like to learn what people like to see, get a new vibe. That takes my creativity somewhere else," said Wright.

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'Driving While Black' receives rave reviews during RiverRun International Film Festival

BY TEVIN STINSON THE CHRONICLE

In most cases, racial profiling is no laughing matter. That is, until now.

In the new film "Driving While Black," that played last week at the RiverRun International Film Festival, co-directors Paul Sapiano and Dominique Purdy use comedy to address the growing trend of police officers pulling over blacks more often than whites.

Sapiano, who is white, said the idea for the film began when Purdy, who grew up in Los Angeles, began telling stories about how the police would pull him over on a regular basis for no reason. During an interview with *The Chronicle*,

Sapiano said at first he didn't believe him, but after riding around with the star of the film, he soon found out Purdy was telling the truth.

"I couldn't believe it at first," said Sapiano. "After riding around with Dominique and seeing what he and others face on a regular basis, we decided to start writing the script."

The dark comedy follows Dimitri, an inspiring artist in his everyday struggle to make a living delivering pizzas, but as a young black man, he is faced with extra challenges navigating the busy streets of Los Angeles. Throughout the film, Dimitri has to deal with constant harassment from a number of police.

Sapiano said he loved the idea of using comedy to address a serious topic. He mentioned he wanted to do

something that had not been done before.

"There have been a number of dramas on the topic, but there has never been a comedy. We wanted to do something different," Sapiano said.

Although the film is filled with laughs, it is also deeply rooted in reality. A number of studies done in recent years have proved that black drivers are more likely to be pulled over for minor violations than whites. Here in the Triad,

"The film doesn't hide or sugarcoat anything. That's what I appreciate most."

-Veronica Rodriguez

blacks make up more than 50 percent of drivers pulled over.

Following a showing last Sunday, Purdy mentioned comedy has a way of introducing people to a topic that they otherwise wouldn't pay attention to or know anything about. Purdy also told the packed house at the Hanesbrand Theatre that the film reflects his own personal encounters with the LAPD.

"This is an everyday thing for the black community," said Purdy. "As soon as the police get behind you, even if you aren't doing anything wrong, you get that feeling that you may get pulled over."

Purdy mentioned the film will make more people aware and teach valuable lessons as well. He said the main thing he wants people to take away from the film

is that this issue is everyone's problem.

"The film can teach people who get pulled over how to remain calm," he continued. "That can make a big difference, especially for people of color."

After the final showing of the film last weekend, a number of festival goers said the movie does a great job of balancing real life situations with comic relief. Many also echoed Purdy's statement that the film could be used as a learning tool.

"The film doesn't hide or sugarcoat anything. That's what I appreciate most," Veronica Rodriguez said.

Dr. Carlton A.G. Eversley of Winston-Salem said he thought the film was very relatable.

Eversley, who teaches at Carter G. Woodson School, said it is very important that people of color have a plan, especially when dealing with police.

"The film was amazing," said Eversley. "Unfortunately, for black people in America, this is a real issue. The film shows our youth that sometimes you may be angry, it's best to just remain calm to ensure you make it home safely."

For now, "Driving While Black" can only be viewed in its entirety at various film festivals across the nation. According to Sapiano, they are working on a major distribution deal. For more information on the film and to watch a clip, visit www.drivingwhileblack-movie.com.

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