

5B ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Crouch returns with Pray CD



By Winfred B. Cross
THE CHARLOTTE POST

**Andre Crouch
Pray
Scott V. Smith and
Andre Crouch,
producers
Qwest/Warner Bros.
Records**

☆☆☆ 1/2

Before Kirk Franklin was raising eyebrows with "Stomp," Andre Crouch had church folks making the same complaints. "That ain't gospel!" "Sounds like jazz to me." "You can't sing those blues in church."

Crouch was always good at combining traditional gospel sounds with the music of the day. He still is. Pray is in the vein of his best albums like *This Is Another Day* and *No Time To Lose*. It bridges the gap between r&b and gospel in the way that most should find spiritually fulfilling as well as ear pleasing.

The opening song is classic Crouch. The melody bounces along as the background singers soar jubilantly on the chorus. Crouch's voice is at its raspy best on "Distraction," a duet with his twin sister Sandra. "He Does All Things Well" is as grounded in r&b star Brandy's "Baby" as it is in the Bible. A trio of sisters named Kimberly, Kandy and Krystal Johnson give the song a '90s soulful edge. "Just A Matter of Time" could be considered "I'll Be Thinking of You, Part II" — same lilting melody, same memorable lyrics.

Crouch sings more on this CD than he has on the last couple of releases. He still has his all-star backups — Alfi Silas, Kristle Murden, Tata Vega, The Waters and McCrarys. And he's writing songs that reach back to his heyday as a lyricist. You could call it more of the same, and that means you would have to call it good.

**Norman Connors
Easy Living
Norman Connors, pro-
ducer
MoJazz/Motown
Records**

☆☆☆

When percussionist Norman Connors released his latest CD titled *Easy Living* with "One For Mr. C," I got the impression it was going to be spectacular. The deep, rich cords of the piano combined with Najee's sexy sax pulled me in immediately.

Alas, the CD is only good. There is a lot to like, especially the tranquil "Saturday Afternoon" and the flowing "River Nile." But there is a lot of stuff that's just so-so. "Every time I Fall In Love," "Remember When" and "The Day We Said I Do" all seem a bit lackluster when compared to the great stuff.

No matter. Great and so-so equals good and that's about all you can ask for these days.

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SummerFest moves to Blockbuster venue

By Winfred B. Cross
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

WPEG FM 98 will move its annual SummerFest concert from downtown Memorial Stadium to the smaller Blockbuster Pavilion near the UNC Charlotte area.

Robb Ferguson, marketing director for WPEG, said the move should prove to be a good one.

"We were trying to expand to another area," Ferguson said. "We already have a relationship with the folks at Blockbuster. This is a way of enhancing that relationship."

This will be the third SummerFest. The first two held in Memorial Stadium drew nearly 50,000 patrons. The stadium holds about 25,000. Blockbuster Pavilion, located on Highway 29 near the Cabarrus County line, has about 14,000 seats and a grassy area which holds more than 5,000.

"It's a smaller venue, but it's still going to (have) a low, low ticket price," Ferguson said. "We're still in deliberation on prices. We're looking at adding

a children's area. And the local vendors will still be present."

Although smaller, the Pavilion is better suited for a concert. That's what it was built for. Its summer concert series have drawn such artists as Whitney Houston, R. Kelly, Ray Charles, Natalie Cole and George Clinton.

"If we look at it realistically, the stage is there, the lights are there and the sound system. It's geared to having a full-scale production," Ferguson said. "It's already perfectly outfitted for what we want to do."

The new location may prove to be a logistical problem for some of WPEG's listeners. Memorial Stadium's downtown location is centrally located. The Pavilion is on the fringe of the county. Ferguson said the station is looking into an agreement with the Charlotte Transit Authority to establish a shuttle bus system.

Ferguson is tight-lipped on who will perform at SummerFest. "I wish I could tell you," he said. "But it's going to be the best we've had so far. People can be prepared for some real excitement."



Breakfast Brothas B.J. Murphy (left) and Keith Richards (no longer a part of the duo) host the first SummerFest in 1995 at Memorial Stadium. (File photo)

The first SummerFest was held in 1995. About 24 acts performed, which included Jody Watley and MC Hammer. The 1996 show featured rappers Outkast, D.J. Kool and about 18 other acts.

Ferguson said this year's

show will feature about 16 acts, which the station will begin announcing in June. The station will do ticket giveaways and on-air promotions. Local Chevrolet dealers will offer discount coupons. Tickets will be available at all TicketMaster

locations and both Willies Records Tapes & CDs locations.

"Willies is going to be our one-stop SummerFest location," Ferguson said. "You will be able to purchase SummerFest towels and other items. This is really going to be a big event."

New book chronicles the street code for respect

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHILADELPHIA — As a University of Chicago graduate student in the early 1970s, Elijah Anderson spent three years on one street corner, talking to the young black men who hung out there, finding out about their lives. From that came a book, "A Place on the Corner."

A quarter-century later, the Ivy League sociologist is wrapping up his latest study of black inner-city life — this one on a "code of the streets" that Anderson says drives much of the violence over jackets, sneakers and girlfriends.

The code centers on the dangerous business of getting and maintaining "respect," or "props," in communities where people feel they must fend for themselves because the larger society has abandoned them.

"A lot of them don't like living by this code but, in a way, if you're living in this community, you don't really have a choice," Anderson said. "With respect you can be left alone. Not only can you feel good about yourself, it's useful to get people to give you some space."

The ethnographer ventured from his comfortable office at the University of

Pennsylvania to Philadelphia's most blighted neighborhoods.

"I visited jails. I visited taverns. I visited schools, playgrounds, car washes, convenience stores, street corners, housing projects, and I got to know people in various communities," said Anderson, who is 52 and black.

He found a structure to the neighborhoods, where people define themselves as "decent" — those who accept mainstream values and focus on church, school and work — or "street" — crack-addicted mothers or drug dealers whose lives are marked by violence and disarray.

"Most people are decent and trying to be," he said.

Decent and street people alike, feeling they have been left without police protection, municipal services and jobs, follow the code. The decent youths must sometimes mimic street behavior for their own safety.

"There's not a whole lot of faith that one's concerns will be met," Anderson said. "It means that people are more into taking matters into their own hands."

Middle-class, decent families learn how to switch to street code, becoming loud and boisterous and staring people

down if necessary.

Those without respect, who don't dress and carry themselves the right way, risk harassment or violence. People feel they must let others know they will answer insults and physical attacks.

Children who run home from a fight might hear: "Don't you come in here crying about he beat you up. I didn't raise no punk. You get back out there and whup his ass." The parents are trying to toughen their youngsters for survival, Anderson said.

The code can be subtle but always involves showing

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Cosby shooting theory offered

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — The son of comedian Bill Cosby — The son of comedian Bill Cosby — has been killed while offering a cigarette to someone, Time magazine reported this week.

Crime-scene photographs shown to magazine staffers showed Ennis Cosby clutching a pack of cigarettes.

That, along with the point-blank nature of the fatal gunshot wound, support the conjectured scenario, the magazine said in its June 2 issue, citing forensics experts.

Time did not publish the crime scene photos in the issue, which hits U.S. newsstands Monday.

Ennis Cosby, 27, was found dead beside his father's convertible Jan. 16 along a dark road where he apparently had stopped to change a tire. The elder Cosby is one of the most

popular comedians in the United States and is best known for his routines about fatherhood.

Time magazine also reported that Cosby may have been hit or kicked in the mouth after his heart stopped beating, since he suffered a split lip but the lip was virtually unswollen.

Trauma inflicted after the heart has stopped will not cause typical swelling and discoloration.

Telephone messages seeking comment from the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office and defendant Mikail Markhasev's public defender, Henry Hall, were not immediately returned Sunday. Attorneys in the case are bound by a gag order.

The photos also show gunpowder residue on the left side of Cosby's face, suggesting the

killer was within 4 feet of Cosby, Time said.

The photos show Cosby's right hand clutching a pack of Natural American Spirit cigarettes, the magazine said. The Time story did not say what, if any, further evidence supports the cigarette offering theory.

The New York Daily News reported in January that Cosby apparently had a pack of cigarettes in his hand when he died.

Markhasev, 18, has pleaded innocent. He was arrested in March after an acquaintance implicated him in the killing and attempted robbery.

Police were led to a wooded area where a knit cap and gun were found.

But there were no fingerprints on the gun, Time reported.

'Lost' sets records

By Michelle Dearmond
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — The cunning skills of the Caped Crusader and secret agents and even the high-tech powers of space aliens were no match for the brute force of dinosaurs.

Steven Spielberg's giant lizards crushed opening weekend box office records as "The Lost World: Jurassic Park" made \$90.2 million over the Memorial Day holiday period.

That total would beat the "Mission: Impossible" opening four-day take of \$56.8 million last year, according to preliminary figures released Sunday.

The "Jurassic Park" sequel was on track to defeat the five-day opening of \$85 million set by "Independence Day" in July and the three-day opening of "Batman Forever" in 1995 of \$52.8 million.

The estimated Friday-through-Sunday figure for "The Lost World: Jurassic Park" was \$69.1 million. "Jurassic Park" grossed \$47.1 million in its three-day opening in 1993.

The holiday weekend estimate is based on projected total sales from Friday through Monday and does not include the gross from previews. Total cumulative sales through Monday were estimated to reach \$88.1 million for "The Lost World: Jurassic Park."

It could have passed the \$100 million mark as early as Tuesday.

The sequel, about a man (Jeff Goldblum) who tries to rescue his naturalist girlfriend (Julianne Moore) from a dinosaur-infested island, benefited from recent ticket price hikes to as high as \$9 in New York and the widest release ever to 3,281

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Same old, same old for 'Diff'rent Strokes' co-star?

By Dinah Wisenberg
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Former "Diff'rent Strokes" child star Todd Bridges pleaded innocent to several misdemeanor charges stemming from a dispute that allegedly escalated into the ramming of a friend's car.

Defense attorney Richard J. Beada entered the pleas Monday to one count each of

reckless driving, malicious vandalism of an automobile and battery. Bridges, now 31, wasn't in court.

Municipal Court Commissioner Joseph S. Biderman set trial for June 23.

Bridges was arrested Jan. 19 after an acquaintance, Michael Hill, accused him of deliberately ramming his car following an argument in Marina del Rey.

Investigators said Hill got in

his car and drove away. Bridges allegedly followed him and rammed his car in Culver City and again in the West Los Angeles area, Officer Don Cox said at the time.

"As a result of that collision, he hit a couple of parked cars," Cox said.

Bridges, who played Willis on the 1978-86 NBC-TV sitcom, has been arrested several

times before.

He was arrested in 1993 after police allegedly found methamphetamine and a handgun in a car he was driving. He was charged with possessing and transporting a controlled substance while carrying a firearm.

Earlier that year, he arrested for stabbing a tenant for drugs, but authorities declined to press charges, saying Bridges

acted in self-defense.

In 1990, Bridges was acquitted of assault with a deadly weapon in the near fatal shooting of a narcotics dealer in a Los Angeles drug den. Bridges was earlier acquitted of attempted murder in the case.

Bridges testified in his November 1989 trial that he became depressed and turned to drugs after the situation comedy was canceled in 1986.