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Section

Lyfe's story

Talented R&B singer talks about life and love for making music

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PHOTO/WADE NASH

Singer Lyfe Jennings said he learned to play the guitar while he was in prison for being "in the wrong place at the wrong time in the wrong state of mind."

By Cheris F. Hodges

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His stage name is Lyfe, but he was born Chester Jennings.

The self-taught, 26-year-old musician doesn't look

like your typical R&B singer. There are no flashy suits, no processed waves in his hair, and no bling - just a guitar and the truth.

When Lyfe stepped on stage last Saturday at Ovens Audi-

torium, he looked more like a rapper than singer, but when he started singing about loyalty and love, there was no doubt that everyone was looking at a star on the rise.

Lyfe's musical career began as a boy in a church choir in Toledo. Music was his escape and soon led him to join The Dotsons, a young group that infused the tal-

See LYFE/2D

Charlotte comic goes solo on national stage

By Cheris F. Hodges

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Dave Martin is a bad boy and he likes it.

Martin will appear on Sean "P. Diddy" Combs' HBO series "The Bad Boys of Comedy" on Friday.

The comic, who started as a singer, is excited by an opportunity to show his skills in front of a national audience. Martin's road to comedy started when he was with his R&B group, Debonair.

"I was always the ham, joking with the crowd to keep the energy level right between selections," he said. "Whenever we did interviews I was the one (who did the talking). People that really know me, would say I don't know what's going to happen with the group, but if it doesn't work out then you should look into doing some stand up."

Martin said he blew it off at first, because he was focused on singing. But then the New Edition thing happened, and Debonair broke up.

"While I was working on the

record deal, I had an airport shuttle van and when I would take people back and forth, I'd be in there acting stupid," he said. "And people would ask me if I had ever done stand up."

Since everyone around him was sowing the seeds of stand-up, Martin decided to try his hand at it.

After taking a year off to decide if he wanted to seek a solo record deal or go into stand-up, Martin secretly went to the Comedy Zone to try out his act.

"I didn't even tell my friends. If I was going to get booted then I was going to get booted by myself," he said.

In 2001, he did the Comedy Zone and won its amateur night.

Since Martin had a taste of comedic success, he wanted more and began laying the groundwork that would take him to New York and give him a chance to meet Combs.

Martin did shows at colleges, opened for other comics and per-

See COMIC/2D



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Comic Dave Martin will appear on HBO's Bad Boys of Comedy this week.

'DREAMGIRLS'

Audition for movie version of play

Are you the next Jennifer Holiday?

Do you have a voice that will knock someone out?

Then the makers of the movie "Dreamgirls" is looking for you.

Casting directors Debra Zane and Jay Binder, will be holding open auditions for a plus-sized African American woman, with a huge gospel belt voice with great power and range.

The actress will play the leading role of Effie White and should be in her early to late 20s.

The auditions will take place at the Omni Hotel at CNN Center in Atlanta on July 16. Check-in begins at 10 a.m. and will be on a first come, first serve basis. Check in time cut-off is 1 p.m.

For more information, contact Tannis Vallely or Jeremy Rich at (323) 965-0800.

Cheris F. Hodges

Looking for something to do? Charlotte options plentiful

By Cheris F. Hodges

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Everybody always says that there isn't anything to do in Charlotte. But this summer there is. From concerts to parties, there's an event that appeals to almost everyone.

For the music lover:

- July is the month of

music. Uber sista group Destiny's Child will stop in Charlotte as part of their farewell tour. Beyonce and 'them' will play Verizon Wireless Amphitheater on July 22.

The following night, the Sugar Water Festival starring Queen Latifah, Erykah Badu and Jill Scott comes to town. Floetry, which is reach-

ing John Legend status, will make their third appearance in Charlotte to open the show. Tickets can be purchased through Ticketmaster by calling (704) 522-6500.

• On July 16 at the Visulite Theatre, located at 1615 Elizabeth Ave., Keb Darge, a DJ from the UK, will put his skills on display. Tickets are

\$15 at the door and there will be a live jazz performance from the Afrojazziacs.

• The And 1 Mixtape Tour 2005 comes to the Charlotte Coliseum on July 21. Get ready for hip hop and basketball, as the tour makes its stop in the Queen City.

Want to party?
• Executive Entertainment

and Cuzncity Entertainment will host the fourth annual "White Affair," at the Southpark Hyatt on July 16.

Tony Williams of Executive Entertainment said "you never know who you might see at the White Affair."

"We cater to the 25-and-up crowd. We want people to

Please see LOTS/2D

MOVIE REVIEW ★★

'Rize' and shine: Hip-hop documentary doesn't clown around

By Dwight Brown
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

"If you're drowning and you see a board, you get on it." So says Tommy Johnson a black street clown who travels through depressed South Central L.A. neighborhoods encouraging kids to dance their butts off and stay out of trouble.

Out of the ashes of the 1992 Rodney King riots, Tommy invented "clowning" - hip hop dancing with a lot of shaking. It's an urban elixir.

Cures the ghetto blues. Rapid-fire gyrations. Painted clown faces. "Clowning," for kids and teens, becomes a healthy, aerobic diversion from gang wars, drugs and social ills. When clowning evolves into "krumping," shaking booty, bobbing heads and quaking shoulders becomes a competitive art form. High-voltage dance-offs attract throngs; krumping stars are born and they are as sassy, self-confident and self-possessed as movie stars with names like Lil C, Tight Eyez,

Ms. Prissy and El Nino. On the surface, Rize is a carefree look at a budding dance craze. Under close scrutiny, this enlightening film archives the latest evolution of traditional, kinetic African dance. On view is our heritage. Dance as a foundation of a society. Dance as a community event. Dance telling stories. Brutally honest interviews range from tales of woe, building self-confidence and unabashed ambition. But just under the tough, know-

it-all façades are vulnerable children trying to stay one step ahead of the poverty devil. Fashion photographer turned documentary director David La Chapelle guides this project with great sensitivity and an artist's keen eye. He perfectly frames the dancing and has an excellent sense of composition. The black brown and tan skin is incandescent. The musical score makes your toes tap. Your booty won't sit still in the seat.



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Dancers in the movie "Rize" show a style of dance called "clowning."



Afu-Ra gets to 'State of the Arts'

Afu-Ra
State Of The Arts
Various Records
Life Force Records



Afu-Ra continues to bubble under the rap scene, just brushing success. He's got somewhat of an underground following but he may be ready to surface to commercial success with "State of The Arts."

It's the same kind of stuff he's been doing since 1994 - mixing East Coast with hip hop and hardcore to shape his distinct sound. But there's a more earnest attempt to please the masses without sacrificing artistic integrity.

There's a host of guest artists as well as uncredited samples. Afu-Ra uses both masterfully. You never get the feeling either idea was an afterthought. Even the samples seem to be carefully thought out. He uses The Mighty Clouds of Joy's "Mighty Cloud Of Joy" for the spunky "God of Rap." He dips into the sample vault just as deep on "Pusha" (featuring Royce Da 5'9") by using Lamont Dozier's "Peddling Music On The Side." Talk about obscure.

There are a few sexual references and some profanity, but Afu-Ra tends to be more concerned with other topics. He's much like most hip-hop artists who tend to rap for the love, not the shock value. There's the machismo factor and "my skills" thing, but most of this stuff is non-offensive to the casual listener. The CD's best song is the bouncy "Deal Wit It" which features Kardinal Offishall and Jahdon.

Even if this CD doesn't break out, Afu-Ra's core fans should be happy. It's a solid piece of hip hop and that's saying a lot in these days of commercial exploitation.

Ratings

Classic,	★★★★★
Excellent,	★★★★★
Good	★★★★
Fair	★★★
Why?	★★
No stars - A mess	★