

Lyfe hurdles obstacles on way to solo career

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ents of Lyfe's two cousins and older brother, Jay.

But it was prison where Lyfe honed his musical skills.

"When I was in prison, I started playing the guitar," he said, "I just wanted my own music."

Lyfe said he was influenced by artists like Tupac Shakur,

Biggie Smalls and Mary J. Blige. His biggest influence though, came from Lauryn Hill.

"She's the reason why I picked up a guitar," he said.

Life for a black man fresh out of jail trying to find a regular 9 to 5 is hard. For Lyfe finding a record deal after doing time was difficult.

"I did go through problems. When I first got out, it was a money situation. I thought about going back to hustling but I would write a song about how I felt wanting to go back to hustling," he said.

And in an industry not known for taking chances, Lyfe said doors were slow to open because record labels

didn't know what to do with him.

"The songs that I wrote, they said they were more gospel orientated and they didn't know what to do with me," he said.

That all changed in January 2003.

Lyfe had showcased his talent to a nationwide audience

on "Showtime In Harlem" from the Apollo Theatre. He received a standing ovation for his acoustic performance of original material, and made his mark by winning the amateur competition five times.

"Around New York, I won every open mic that I had ever been in and that was a lot of open mics, so finally Sony offered me a deal," he said.

Since the release of his self-titled CD, Lyfe has been connecting with audiences across the country. Now that he's touring with soul sensation John Legend, anyone who doesn't know Lyfe is about to meet him.

"There are not a lot of people out there talking about them bottom level situations," he said. "Everybody is talking about the ice and a lot of time people feel left out."

Comic goes solo with national TV appearance

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formers and became a staple on the open mic set.

Wanting to expand his career, Martin headed to Washington, D.C., to audition for BET's now-defunct comedy show "Coming to the

Stage."

At the same time, Combs' show was holding auditions as well. "I stayed on later that night and auditioned for P. Diddy presents The Bad Boys of Comedy."

Out of 30 comics who audi-

tioned, Martin was one of two to make the cut at the end of the weekend.

Last year, Martin got a call from the show's producers to film the show. Eighty comics were called and 36 were actually filmed for the series.

"I am thoroughly blessed to be on this show," he said.

What: Dave Martin on P. Diddy Presents The Bad Boys of Comedy

When: Friday, 11 p.m.

Where: HBO, Time Warner Channel 7

CONCERT REVIEW

Sounds of Legend, band worth listening to

By Cheris F. Hodges

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John Legend must love Charlotte.

He's performed here more than Anthony Hamilton, who's a native Charlottean.

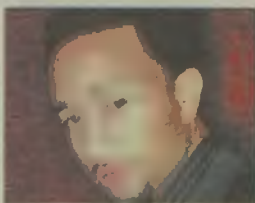
But anyway, Legend put on an OK show. He sounded great, but didn't do much for me just sitting at the piano banging on the keys. And he talked a little too much.

But Legend was still worth spending Saturday night with, if only to see his band.

Yeah, Legend's band makes that show, makes him sound as good as he does. That's not to take anything away from the man—he is a great singer and a bona fide star—but if he didn't have his band behind him, he'd be lame.

Thank goodness he recognizes that.

Legend basically sings his entire CD. And what makes his show special isn't the fact that he plays the piano. It is



Legend

the fact that his band takes his songs and changes things up a little. They gave "Used to Love U" a reggae vibe and Legend hopped off the stage into a crowd of adoring fans.

Thank goodness he realized that we love "Ordinary People" but yet yearned for something different. Legend and the band jazzed the song up, sort of the same arrangement as the time he appeared on "The Tonight Show."

One of the best things about Legend is the fact that his live show sounds just as good as his CD. He has a rich, raspy voice that draws you in. Maybe that's why he doesn't

have a "gimmick" for his stage show. It wouldn't hurt Legend to learn how to dance though. But he's young and all indications are he will get better the more he performs. With one album under his belt and the ability to sell out shows in Charlotte three times, well, dancing must not be everything for concertgoers.

Lyfe Jennings opened for Legend and honestly, before seeing his performance, I wouldn't have called myself a fan. I don't normally like gritty R&B - sing me a fairy tale. But there was something about the way Lyfe put his all into his songs. He almost made me want to cry when he sang "Cry."

He connects with audience like it's nobody's business. Despite looking like a rapper and hopping around the stage like he's spitting fire or a part of some hip-hop posse,

Lyfe has a voice that's raw and gritty. He basically had the audience eating out of his hand and when he began strumming his guitar, it was like watching a flower bloom. Lyfe is going to be a star. The best thing about him is that even though his star is on the rise, he doesn't take himself that seriously.

Lots to see and do this summer

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VERIZON AMPHITHEATER

The new and improved Queen Latifah plays Charlotte July 22.

have a nice adult night out," he said.

There will be three parties rolled into one with two djs and live music on the patio. The best white outfit wins a free trip to Miami for two.

For the cultural lover:

• The Afro American Cultural Center has workshops and events planned throughout the summer including Harambee Tuesday on July 5 and 19. The Filmmakers' Workshop is a gathering of writers, producers, and anyone who is interested in the film industry. It will be held in Montgomery/Stained Glass Gallery in the Afro-American Cultural Center, from 7-9 p.m. It's free. For more information, call (704) 374-1565.

Meeting: The Word

Writers, poets and serious minded thespians come together to share works in progress and to produce a spoken word/theatrical showcase based on a selected theme. This event is will be held in the Black Box Attic Theatre in the Afro-American Cultural Center, from 7-9 p.m. Free. For more information, call (704) 374-1565.

Tom Joyner Sky Show



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Tom Joyner brought his morning show to Charlotte last week. Soul singer, Chaka Khan headlined the "party with a purpose." (l to r) Myra J. Miss Dupree, Tom Joyner, J. Anthony Brown and Chaka Khan took the stage to dance and sing to a packed house at the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center.

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