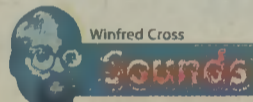


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Not much on 'Love Experience'

Raheem DeVaughn
The Love Experience
Cliff Jones, Jerry Vines,
executive producers
Jive Records



Neo soul started as a fresh, revitalization of black music, producing Maxwell, D'Angelo and Angie Stone. Now the genre is filled with singers that have more style than substance. Throw together some loopy music with lyrics that have deep intentions and you've got half the current radio air play lists.

Raheem DeVaughn seems to fit in the latter category. He's likable, but there just doesn't seem much to hang your hat on. I think he can sing, but I don't know that's a fact. He never really bites into a song, just sorta wafts in and out.

DeVaughn certainly has good taste. Many of his songs are based on samples. Earth, Wind & Fire, The Isley Brothers, Boyz II Men and Switch provide loops for four of the 16 tracks. He uses each reasonably well, but "Footsteps In The Dark" and "Can't Hide Love" have been done to death.

Like Lyfe Jennings, DeVaughn like to talk between songs. He's not as chatty as Jennings, but doing so more than once is a little annoying.

There are times when this CD hits some creative peaks. "Where I Stand" has a feathery beat that hooks you from go. "Guess Who Loves You More" is ol' school slick. "Who" is the ubiquitous call for all to do better spiritually and morally.

"The Love Experience" isn't much of one, but it's a nice warmup to something bigger that may be coming. DeVaughn has potential.



Alvin Alley Dance Theatre performer Renee Robinson in "Revelations." The troupe plays the Blumenthal April 4-5.

PHOTO/PAUL KOLNIK

Ailey, Broadway shows top Blumenthal's 2005-06 season

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Blumenthal Performing Arts Center will host several firsts and debuts in Charlotte theatre.

The 2005-06 season features the first-ever North Carolina appearance of the Radio City Christmas Spectacular and the Charlotte debut of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. There are productions of Broadway plays and chart-topping music artists.

Single tickets for the more than 35 different shows comprising the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center's 2005-06 season went on sale Wednesday at Founders Hall, by phone at (704) 372-1000 and online at www.blumenthalcenter.org. Discounted group rates are available by calling (704) 379-1380.

The center will present four new Broadway musicals - "Little Shop of Horrors," "Doctor Dolittle," "Little Women" and "Bombay

Dreams." It'll also introduce a series that showcases American theater.

"We're working hard to bring the country's best and brightest performers to the Blumenthal stages," said Frances Egler, the Blumenthal's vice-president of programming. "It's important to offer a wide variety of acts to attract people from all parts of Charlotte's ever-changing community."

From Eve Ensler ("The Vagina Monologues") there's "The Good Body," an examination of how we feel about food, body image and self-esteem Nov. 1-6.

The musical "Cookin' at the Cookery" (Jan. 18-29, 2006) tells the tale of jazz and blues legend Alberta Hunter, who rose to fame in the 1920s and '30s and launched a comeback at age 82.

"Sheer Madness," which debuts at Booth Playhouse next spring, is a whodunit in which the audience gets to solve the crime.

"Theater fans have three wonderful shows

Please see BLUMENTHAL/2D

Minty fresh at Amos'



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Stokely, lead singer of Mint Condition, urges the crowd to sing along as the group performs one of its hits. Though they were late coming to the stage, it was worth the wait.

Charlotte show proves Mint Condition still has the vibe

By Cheri F. Hodges
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Maybe Mint Condition got lost. That would explain the long delay in getting their set started at Amos' South End last Friday.

Doors opened at 7:30 p.m. but it was about 11 p.m. before the band took the stage. And it was worth the wait.

Seeing Mint Condition live is an experience. Because unlike an R&B group, these guys are a band and you don't just hear the music, you feel it.

Dressed in camouflage pants and tee-shirts, Mint isn't the flashiest band around, but they sound as good live as they do on CD.

Stokely's vocals are smooth like velvet. The band has been around since the late '80s, they have a wealth of hits and the crowd at

Amos' went crazy when the band sang its old hits like "U Send Me Swinging," and "So Fine."

And it's obvious that their new disc, "Living the Luxury Brown" has been selling well in Charlotte, because as the band sang the new single "Whoa," everyone knew the words and sang right along.

With the crowd Mint Condition drew, I wonder why the promoters didn't use a larger venue, which would have made the concert experience more comfortable and enjoyable for their fans. And there would have been less shoving and pushing. Since this was an adult crowd, there were only ugly looks exchanged.

I guess in order to make concertgoers feel as if they've gotten their money's worth there has to be an opening act. But did it have to be Renee?

If you're saying "who's Renee,"

allow me to refresh your memory. Remember Renee and Angela from the '80s? He's Rene. While Angela Winbush went on to have solo success and write songs for the Isley Brothers during her marriage to Mr. Biggs, a.k.a. Ronald Isley, Rene got lost in the past.

His set, which was three songs long, consisted of him singing the Rene and Angela hits without Angela or a decent backup singer that could make the crowd forget about Angela. He sounded old, outdated and played out. And it didn't make much sense that he had more or just as much equipment on stage as Mint Condition.

But all is well that ends well and seeing Mint Condition do their thing onstage and sound as good as they did made Rene a distant memory.

Maybe next time they will play a bigger venue.

It's OK to Scream IV more on tour

By Cheri F. Hodges
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When the Scream IV tour rolls into Charlotte, girls will do just what the name suggests, scream.

The tour, which stars Bow-Wow, Omarion, Marques Houston, and Bobby Valentino, will be at the Cricket Arena on Sept. 1.

And if "newcomer" Valentino sees a pretty girl walking down the street, he just might write a song about it.

Well, that's what happened to inspire his hit "Slow Down."

"Well actually, I was driving down Melrose and I just saw this pretty girl from the back. I never got a chance to catch up with her.

She'd dip into a couple of stores, then I'd see her again, then she'd disappear. So when we went to the studio, we just came up with that whole little concept and we wrote the record about that," he said.

Valentino, whose real name is Bobby Wilson, hit the music scene in 1996 with the group Mista. The Boyz II Men-styled group had a hit with the single "Blackberry Molasses" but the album didn't follow.

Valentino looks at his experience with Mista as a time to learn. So he took some time off, went to Clark Atlanta University, got a degree in mass communications and wrote two albums worth of material.

"DTP (Disturbing the

Peace, his record label) loved my material and my work ethic," he said.

That hard work landed him on one of the summer's hottest tours.

"I'm excited," he said.

"This is a blessing."

Also on the tour are two new groups, Pretty Ricky and B5. Pretty Ricky will perform tracks from their smash Blue Star Entertainment/Atlantic debut, "Bluestars," including the hit single "Grind With Me." The Miami-based sibling quartet - rappers Slick 'Em, Baby Blue, and Spectacular, and singer Pleasure - exploded onto the Florida music scene in late 2004, when "Grind With Me" became the most requested song in the history of Miami

radio station Power 96.

Bad Boy Entertainment's B5 are new teen group. The Atlanta-based brothers - Dustin, Kelly, Patrick, Carnell, and Bryan Breeding - merge the old school flair and finesse of the Jackson Five with the modern-day pop appeal of *NSYNC and the raw energy of New Edition to create a musical phenomenon that carves a unique niche in the music industry. B5 have drawn acclaim for their electrifying, high-energy stage show - complete with street dancing, old school stepping and eye-popping acrobatics - and have already performed with the likes of Mario Winans, Kanye West,

Please see SCREAM/2D



'Cosby' the best of '80s TV shows

The Cosby Show
Bill Cosby, Phylicia Rashad,
Lisa Bonet, Malcolm-Jamal Warner,
Keshia Knight-Pullman and Tempestt Bledsoe
Jay Sandrich, director
Urban Works
Entertainment



For some reason, I don't remember a lot of the '80s. I do remember I would be very angry if I missed "The Cosby Show," by far one of my favorite shows.

Nothing, I mean nothing, was better than Cosby. I remember the first episode and I was hooked for the duration. Nothing came between me and Cosby. I bought a VCR because of Cosby.

There are folks who are arguing on the internet that these are not the original episodes, but the edited versions shown in syndication. The box set does not indicate which are used. I guess I'm not a purist, because it doesn't bother me. This is a groundbreaking show that deserves a boxed set.

Twenty-four episodes are spread across three discs. There's some monumental stuff. Dizzy Gillespie appears as Vanessa's (Tempestt Bledsoe) music teacher. Legendary producer Sheldon Leonard - the guy who gave Cosby his role in "I Spy" - guest stars as the doctor who hired Cliff Huxtable (Bill Cosby). Lena Horne, Clarence Williams III, Angela Bassett and Adam Sandler also make appearances.

What made the Cosby work, however, was the family. Malcolm-Jamal Warner, Bledsoe, Lisa Bonet, Keshia Knight-Pullman, Phylicia Rashad and Sabrina LeBeauf were the perfect compliments to Cosby's laid back approach to parenting.

My only problem is with the extra disc. It's a special that aired on NBC looking back at the show's impact on society. Bonet is mentioned once and in a few clips. It's almost as if she wasn't on the show. Pity. Bonet was the affection of many a teenage boy in the '80s.

Ratings

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