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PHOTO:WADE NASH

Mason Price brings the Hollywood shuffle to Charlotte as he films his indie flick "From Tragedy to Triumph." He's looking to cast acting hopefuls this Saturday at CPCC in uptown.

A dream for film

Charlotte filmmaker financing first feature movie effort

By Cheri F. Hodges
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Mason Price has taken a page out of Robert Townsend's movie making book and financing his own film.

"From Tragedy to Triumph" is about a man who has a string of bad luck and ends up in prison, yet turns his life around to become a millionaire.

"When he goes to jail, he

meets a drug dealer who tells him when he gets out of jail don't make the mistake that felons make and commit a crime," Price said. "I want to show you how to hustle the legal way. So he learns tricks of the trade and turns something into nothing."

The man becomes a licensed barber and opens a shop.

"He turns tragedy to tri-

umph," Price said.

Price, who has filmed commercials and videos, knows that the road to stardom is going to be difficult, but he's ready for the challenge of producing a hit movie. He's pulling a Spike Lee because he also directs, produces and stars in the movie as well as wrote the script. He's also keeping it clean - there isn't any profanity.

But before he can put the film into action (shooting is scheduled to begin the first week of March), Price needs to find actors. He's holding a casting call at Central Piedmont Community College Saturday in the lobby of Bojangle's at 10:30 a.m.

Price said it doesn't matter if you've acted before or

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'Blues' are all right

Hill St. Blues
Daniel J. Travanti,
Taurean Blaque,
Michael Warren,
Lynne Moody,
Rene Enrauguez and
Joe Spano
**MTM Productions/
Steven Bochco, creator
20th Century Fox**



"Hill Street Blues" was nearly ignored by the public when it debuted in 1981. Most viewers didn't get the shaky, hand-held camera angles and the leapfrog story lines.

But an Emmy for best drama and NBC settling on a viewing night jump-started the ratings for this, the granddaddy of ensemble cast television. It was so different from any cop show because it was actually character-driven. Every story line was not wrapped at the end of the hour. Some ran for the entire season. Dialogue was layered and everything seemed to be in perpetual motion.

Yet Steven Bochco's "Hill Street Blues" did more for television - they made it appealing. This show expanded the horizon for minorities. The show was based in a Chicago-like city and the cast and stories, reflected a diverse, urban setting. Former UCLA basketball star Michael Warren was a lead character, the sympathetic officer Bobby Hill. The character's interaction with the cowboy cop Andy Renko (the wonderful Charles Haid) was one of the biggest breakthroughs of black and white relations on television. Taurean Blaque was a detective, maybe the first African American in such a recurring role. Rene Enrauguez's Lt. Ray Calentano avoided a lot of the hispanic stereotypes.

But the glue for this program was Daniel J. Travanti as Captain Frank Furillo. He had the tough job of keeping everything from exploding as well as his own emotions for hottie Grace Davenport, the lovely Veronica Hamel.

This three-disc set is just the beginning. Its features are a bit skimpy, but still a worthy tribute to this groundbreaking series.

Ratings

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



**Temptations
Reflections
Various Producers
Motown Records**



The Motown label is only a shadow of what it used to be. There's hardly ever new product released and when it is, who knows it's out? The label must have a promotions budget of \$10.

At least it still has to do some hyping in order to keep the artists that made it famous. Stevie Wonder's "A Time 2 Love" was one of the best surprises of last year. Now it's the Temptations' turn.

The historic group's latest effort is a collection of remakes - all Motown - that are familiar, maybe too much so. Most of the songs are from the early '60s to '70s with one dip into the disco bin. The Tempts do an interesting take on "Don't Leave Me This Way," a '70s smash for Thelma Houston. The Tempts version sounds more like the Harold Melvin original.

The rest of the CD stays in a mid-tempo to ballad groove. The classic Temptation harmony is present, but I would have preferred more of the frequent lead vocal changes that made the Tempts famous. You get that on "I'll Be There," but I would have liked more songs with these exchanges.

Most of songs are updated, but stay amazingly close to the originals. When the group departs the results are more pleasing. "This Ol' Heart of Mine" is more syncopated. "I Hear A Symphony" is a little softer with Ron Tyson's falsetto as the anchor. "Never Can Say Goodbye" pulls Michael Jackson's boy soprano range to a more soothing baritone register.

Even when the Tempts stay closer to the original arrangements, this CD works. There's not a bad version

See TEMPTATIONS/2D

Producer shops for full-length feature

By Aisha Lide
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Dee Thompson is still hung up on "Barbed Wire."

The Harding High School graduate and acting coach hopes to turn his short film into a full-length motion picture. "Barbed Wire" was written 10 years ago and is now being submitted at several

film festivals, including Spaghetti Junction, an urban film festival in Atlanta. As of now, "Barbed Wire" is a 6 minute, 7 second short from a 90-page script. Thompson hopes to have "Barbed Wire" turned into a full-length feature with proper funding. "Barbed Wire" is about a young woman, Barbara, struggling with drug addic-

tion and rehab. She has a boyfriend, Michael, who tries to stand by her but eventually moves on with his life and finds a new love, Andrea. Andrea and Michael eventually become engaged and Michael gets a big promotion at his job. After a night of celebrating, they get home, and there is a knock on their door - Barbara. She finally has her

life back on track and is hoping that she and Michael can reconcile, but Andrea is not having it. The women have what Thompson calls "a showdown."

The Charlotte premiere of "Barbed Wire" will be shown in February at a film festival hosted by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. "There is no guaran-

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CODE RED

Rapper aims for success with indy label

By Aisha Lide
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Code Red has made mistakes, but is motivated to get on the right track.

The 21-year-old Charlotte rapper (birth name Marico Dalton) dropped out of Olympic High School and hustled drugs at 17. After a series of scrapes with the law, including jail time for intent to sell marijuana, Red decided to follow his dream as a rap artist. He records on Huntersville-based Fero City Records, where he wrote every track on his debut CD "Born to Die."

"I am happy to be alive and telling my life in my songs," he wrote on his website.

The Carolinas is not a rap hotbed. Greenville, N.C. native Petey Pablo ("Raise

Up," "Freek-a-Leek") is perhaps the best known artist the state has produced. While Los Angeles and New York produce rappers routinely, how can a North Carolinian break in? "It can be done," says Dalton. "It ain't hard, it's just got to be done right."

Red also envisions creating an identity beyond music. He would like to get into real estate, host a football camp, and eventually start a clothing line.

"I'm trying to be a mogul," he said.

Of course, to become a mogul, he'll need to be heard. That's difficult for relative unknowns in commercial radio, which is programmed to favor established stars. An alternative is college radio,

Please see CODE/2D

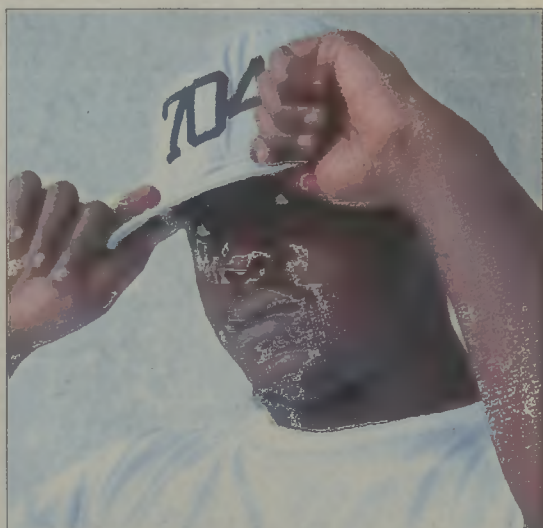


PHOTO:GEORGE SCOTT

Rapper Code Red wants to be rap's next mogul.

Home girl basks in glow of local star status

By Cheri F. Hodges
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With long blond hair flowing, skin showing and boots glittering, Rhonetta Johnson sang (if you want to call it that) her way onto "American Idol."

But it was a tirade against Idol judge Paula Abdul that lifted Johnson from rejected to revered.

There's a web site dedicated to her - www.rhonettajohnson.com - and her own web site - www.rhonetta.net, where you can buy T-shirts and sunglasses with her name on them.



PHOTO:WADE NASH

"Bow down" Rhonetta Johnson plans to be a success despite being rejected by "American Idol."

And then there are her TV appearances. Johnson has been on WCCB-TV's "Fox News Edge" twice and according to executive producer Reed Sartin, Charlotte can't get enough of Johnson's funky stuff.

"We got five times the amount of calls that we normally get after her appearance," he said.

And why wouldn't they? Johnson's "bow down" speech has become an instant part of pop culture, just like tone deaf William Hung's "She Bangs" performance last season.

Please see RHONETTA/2D