

# BET doles out campus reality at Grambling

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homecoming—the social event of the season. That means extra practice and extra pain. It's an especially challenging time for the Tigers' starting quarterback, who is trying to prove he still has it coming off last year's season-ending knee injury.

It's no cakewalk for some of the musicians either. The female master drill sergeant can't get any respect, one of the best sax players has been kicked out of school, and a talented freshman is growing impatient over having to watch the band's perfor-

mance from the sidelines. But they endure it all because they want to be part of something great. And in doing so, "Season of the Tiger's" cast members have successfully divorced themselves from the stereotypical urban youth who adults often complain want to emulate a bling-rich lifestyle, but are seemingly reluctant to put in the hard work required to achieve it.

"Black kids are often criticized for being low achievers or materialistic," notes Reginald Hudlin, BET's president of entertainment. "But in this show, we see them trying

to measure up to the exacting standards of two great black institutions, Grambling State University football team and marching band."

The cast includes: Shunnie, the female master drill sergeant of the band who has to fight for respect. Her goal is to become the first female drum major in HBCU history.

Eva, a homesick freshman and the only girl on the drumline. Her goal in life is to be a rapper and she's involved with another member of the drumline on the down low.

Mancell, a white sax player in the band who has been

kicked out of school and subsequently the band over a drug possession bust. His life is the band and his dream is to become a director.

Bruce, the star quarterback from the 'hood with his eyes on an NFL career. But Bruce is coming off a season-ending knee injury, his father is in jail and his home was destroyed in Hurricane Katrina.

Blue, a junior walk-on running back who also has hopes of making the NFL. He's the practical joker and is also the father of a newborn who lives with his baby's mama.

During the series, Shunnie

realizes her dream of recording a single; Eva struggles with academic issues; Mancell faces jail time if he can't come up with the cash to pay his fine; Blue and his family

face eviction; and Bruce is forced to confront weight issues, having gained 30 pounds while on bed rest recuperating from his knee surgery.

## Melberg exhibit focuses on the natural

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paper painting, "Big Chair #2." Minton, of New Mexico, is a master of the surreal and her dog sits in the chair while a bird perches above. Sitting on the floor next to the chair is a large vase of calla lilies.

Donna Phipps Stout of

Arkansas paints dreamy still-lives. Her "Climbing Rose" has a most unusual perspective as if it is upside down.

Well-known contemporary New York artist Donald Baecher and Donald Sultan are here.

Baecher shows bold black silhouettes of potted plants

against a white field. His works are made of handmade paper on linen. These works have such a strong 3-dimensional quality that they almost look like sculpture.

And Sultan, who is originally from Asheville and studied at UNC Chapel Hill has a stunning large hand-made

paper pulp piece, "Yellow Flower" which may be an homage to Andy Warhol but upon careful study we see it has its own unique character.

Melberg Gallery is open Monday-Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For information, call (704) 365-3000.

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## Ancient as rapper, LL Cool J going strong

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still a viable rap act for some. I have to qualify that statement because LL has a lot of detractors these days. He's not as hard as he once was. He's lost a step on his delivery. He's soft. That's the stuff that comes up. Few folk say that to his face because the boy is still diesel.

On the surface, some of the criticism could be viewed as true. The simple truth is that this is an older, wiser LL. There's no need to talk about some of the old stuff because he's grown lyrically - but

more importantly - spiritual-ly. Sure, he talks about some of the stuff record buyers want to hear in "Freeze," "Control Myself" and "Best Dress". But LL can do things that require a bit more thought as well.

The latter part of this CD is more introspective. LL sounds almost like a stalker on "I've Changed," but a good listen shows a determined man rather than a kook. "Down The Aisle" is a committed LL settling down. "We're Gonna Make It" is LL's

spiritual side. It's from "Medea's Family Reunion" and features Mary Mary.

This CD has its share of guest appearances. Jamie Foxx, Mary Mary, Teairra Mari, 112, Jennifer Lopez, Ryan Tobby (from City High), Juelz Santana, Freeway and Ne-Yo make the rounds. It would seem LL has little to do but show up, but 12 releases deep into the game he's still in full control of his own world.

This may be a hard sell. LL is older and the rap audience only gets younger. Crunk and gangsta rap rule the day so LL's 12th may be his last. But I'm not counting him out just yet.

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## Troops ease tension with rhymes

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AC, a nonprofit group that provides care packages to military servicepeople overseas, responded. Her son, Tomlinson, won military talent shows with his poetic skills.

With Tomlinson and Mayo's help, notice of Spielman's effort spread through the cyphers—rap wordplay circles—that spontaneously spring up at military camps in Iraq.

There's ample rap talent in the war zone, says Tomlinson, who also goes by the name Prophet Troops get together and create impromptu raps over beats played on laptop computers, CD players or Xbox game consoles. Sometimes it's a competition, other times it's just to cope.

"We rhyme for hours upon hours about anything and

everything," Tomlinson says on the CD. "All your emotions can come out and everybody's equal. Ain't no ranks, ain't no sergeants or privates. Everybody's the exact same."

He adds that he can express feelings in rhyme that he couldn't in conversation.

"Rap music became my diary," says the 24-year-old, who now works as a recruiter for the National Guard. "We've been given a gift to get to speak our voices for those that don't get a chance to."

Pollard, whose rap name is Miss Flame, speaks for female fighters in her song "Girl at War."

"I could get shot, too, just as well as a boy," she raps. "You look me up and down 'cause you're thinking I'm weak, until you see me in Iraq, patrolling the streets."

Pollard, who joined the Marines at 19 because she "likes the uniform," started rapping in elementary school. She used to rhyme about "life and everything with growing up," she says. Now she focuses on her experiences in the Middle East, with the hope of educating listeners and improving her prospects for a career in music, modeling and acting.

Marine Cpl. Michael Watts, Jr., who goes by the rap name Pyro, has been rhyming since he was 10. Back then, it was about "fancy cars, money and women," he says. Now it's all about Iraq.

His songs help fill in what news reporters might leave out, Watts says.

"They know what it's like to be in Iraq but they don't understand the brotherhood,"

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**COCA-COLA "TEACHER" OF THE MONTH**  
**"Tanya Pitts"**  
First Grade Teacher,  
Winterfield Elementary School

Motto:  
**"Practice doesn't make perfect, it makes permanence."**  
- Tanya Pitts

Our "Teacher of the Month," **Tanya Pitts**, was selected 2005-2006 "Teacher of the Year" at Winterfield Elementary, which speaks loud and clear to her gifts and talents as an educator. A chip off the old block, Pitts is following in her mother's footsteps. She's aspired to be a teacher since childhood. Watching her mom interact with students laid a solid foundation. In fact, she would line her dolls and animals up in classroom style while she gave instructions. It has all paid off, and Winterfield Elementary children are the beneficiaries. Involved in Winterfield's advancement, Pitts serves on the faculty advisory council.

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, Pitts is one of five children born to Lynn and Marjorie Pitts. She has two sisters, Tracy and Tricia, and two brothers, Tony and Timothy. She graduated from Cincinnati Christian High School in 1994, received her BA in elementary education in 2000 and masters in education in 2001 from the University of Tennessee. Pitts began her teaching career in Nashville, Tennessee.

Committed to spiritual growth, Pitts is a member of City of God Ministries, where she is active as the teacher of Children's Church. And, as a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc. She finds many opportunities to give back to the community. In her spare time, Pitts enjoys reading, movies, shopping, eating and hanging out with friends.

**Best Wishes "Tanya" from**  
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