

# Langford abstracts daring

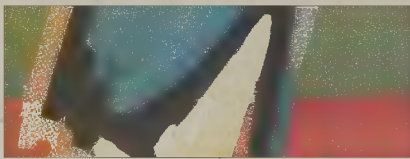
Continued from page 1D  
me of the bold, black lines of abstract expressionist Franz Kline.

And in the painting, "Young and Daring," the painter illustrates the wisdom that less is more. He has built a beautiful open vision using a few solid shapes some of which feature

cutouts and two or three bold, black lines.

The exhibit continues at Modern Eye Gallery through August 31. Hours are Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

For additional information, call the gallery at (704) 333-3190.



Robert Langford's "Being Authentic."

PHOTO/MODERN EYE GALLERY

MOVIE REVIEW

## 'Night Listener' taut, but predictable

By Cheris F. Hodges

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I've come to the realization that big summer blockbusters are usually big disappointments.

That's why going to the movies lately has been a big yawn (I still want Michael Mann to give me those two hours of my life back that I lost watching "Miami Vice.")

Imagine my surprise when I went to see "The Night Listener." This was a smart, though predictable movie starring Robin Williams, Joe Morton and Toni Collette.

Williams plays a gay

National Public Radio host, Gabriel Noone. He's going through a break up with his boyfriend and his publisher (Morton) gives him a manuscript written by a 14-year-old boy named Pete. His story is one of sexual slavery, HIV and other STDs.

Noone and Pete develop an intense phone relationship. But when things start to stop making sense, Noone tracks down Pete and his adopted mother Donna (Collette). Things spin out of control as Noone travels to Wisconsin to find Pete and Donna. While he finds Donna, she doesn't

allow him to see Pete and tells him the boy has died. That seems like it would be the end, but it isn't.

Noone continues to look for Pete, but ends up getting arrested and beat up by the police, who mistake him for one of the people who abused Pete. As the story unravels, Donna travels to New York and approaches Noone with one last chance to meet Pete.

As the movie continues, it gets a little more predictable, but the story is smarter than anything I've seen on the big screen lately.

What's perhaps more striking

about the film is it is based on a true story adapted from a book written by Armistead Maupin, a Raleigh native. Maupin read a manuscript by Anthony Johnson and got in touch with him and his adopted mother Vicki Johnson in New Jersey. Johnson's book was published in 1993 before the James Frey scandal that rocked Oprah Winfrey's Book Club.

To this day, no one has seen Johnson. If he's a real person, he'd be 28 today.

## Bright stars at Sunset Jazz fest

By Cheris F. Hodges

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Jazz in the Park may be a distant memory, but the Pride Sunset Jazz Festival is back as a part of Charlotte Shout.

Starting September 8, the 15th Sunset Jazz Festival kicks off with an indoor concert featuring Carla Cook, Maceo Parker, who played with legendary artists like George Clinton, James Brown and Prince, and Fred Wesley. The concert will be held at Halton Theater at Central Piedmont Community College, 1206 Elizabeth Ave.

The concert, which is called "The Reunion" will be a historic jazz performance. The artists haven't performed in Charlotte since early in their careers, according to the Sunset Festival web site.

Saturday, The Afro-American Cultural Center hosts a jazz workshop with vocalist Carla Cook and Wesley, a trombonist who has played with funk giants Bootsy Collins Clinton and Brown.

Also, there will be a free outdoor concert featuring Dave Goldberg and the Duane Allen Quartet, Ziad featuring Mandyl Evans and Puncho Brown and the Latin Soul Brothers. The concert is free and will be held at the Green, located at 435 S Tryon St.

On Sunday the series wraps with another outdoor concert at the Green, featuring Tyrone Jefferson w/A Sign Of The Times, Saltman & Knowles and Cedelia Smith. The show is free.

Torrey Feimster, the event organizer and publisher of Pride Magazine, said that the

event is a community affair.

"Before we were just reaching our readership, but now the goal is to reach all of Charlotte," he said.

Reaction to the change in format of the Pride Jazz series has been mixed, Feimster said. Some people miss the Sundays in the park in July, while others enjoy one weekend of jazz events.

New to the festival this year is the partnership between Pride and the Afro-American Cultural Center.

"Their programming year for 2006-2007 features jazz," Feimster said. "And they wanted to produce the workshop and give the event a more festival feel."

To get a schedule of events, log on to [www.pridesunsetjazzseries.com](http://www.pridesunsetjazzseries.com).

## Midnight Star compilation is strong



SOLAR (Sound Of Los Angeles) Records got its humble start as Soul Train Records in the early 1970s. A few hits were scattered about by Shalamar and the Soul Train Gang, but started picking up steam with the Whispers.

Midnight Star became one of the label's biggest artists. Its "No Parking On The Dance Floor" became a smash dance album (wow, remember vinyl?) that pro-



duced the title song and "Freak-A-Zoid." Every black college marching band must have played that song during halftime at football games.

The group also produced the Calloway Brothers, who produced hits for LeVert and others. They also scored a huge hit called "I Want To Be Rich," which sums up the '80s in a nutshell.

Midnight Star started making hits in the late '70s

("Make It Last") but had most of its biggest hits during the '80s, which means electronic drums run amok throughout this hits package. Some of the stuff is throwaway ("Headlines," "Luv-U-Up," "Snake In The Grass" and "Scientific Love"), but there's some dance gems included: "Don't Rock That Boat," "Midas Touch," "Wet My Whistle" and "Operator" still jam. This is the kind of stuff that took a few pointers from bland synth pop and made it memorable by chucking in a good dose of urban.

Curiously absent is "Slow Jam." It's the band's best ballad. It's typical '80s—very big vocals with a big beat—but one of the most requested songs on Quiet Storm formats. What? The collection loses points for that omission.

## Former hustler turned rapper with grimy CD

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK—For Miami hustler-turned-rapper Rick Ross, the rise to the top hasn't exactly been meteoric. He toiled for more than a decade in the city's music scene, appearing on mixtapes and albums by fellow hometown rappers, including Trick Daddy and Trina, before having breakout success.

So when Ross recently got his first chance to flip through the liner notes of his debut solo CD, "Port of Miami," the laidback, bald MC was nearly giddy.

"Just seeing the album, just looking at it... It's legendary," the 28-year-old Def Jam artist says, sitting in offices of the record label, transfixed by the disc's artwork.

"When you're young, first having dreams about being a rapper. I remember going into the local mom and pop stores, and seeing the Def Jam logo

on the vinyl. Being a fan of LL Cool J and now being on this level, it's an honor."

Ross, who stands 6 feet tall and weighs 300 pounds, acknowledges that his good fortune is largely due to his runaway hit, "Hustlin'." A local sensation that eventually gained national attention, the song features ominous organs, stuttering handclaps, a hypnotic chorus ("Every day, I'm hustlin'") and Ross' deliberate rhymes about Miami's grimy side. He declares, "See all these killers around me? A lotta drug dealing 'round me/going down in Dade County."

Upon recognizing the record's buzz, several labels vied for Ross' signature. But after talking a meeting with Def Jam President Shawn

"Jay-Z" Carter and its chairman, Antonio "L.A." Reid, Ross joined the label's roster, which includes rap luminaries such as LL Cool J, Kanye West and Nas.

"It was the ultimate motivational record," says Shakir Stewart, the label's senior vice-president of A&R who also recently signed Atlanta rapper Young Jeezy. "The hook is not just about drug trafficking. Everybody hustles. Every day people hustle."

Still, Ross' gritty depictions—more "Scarface" than "Miami Vice"—are a far call from the glamorous images of bikini-clad models, expensive resort hotels and pastel Art Deco architecture most associated with South Beach.

Instead, "Port of Miami" reflects a hard-knock life in Carol City, the lower class, predominately black suburb where Ross, born William Roberts, was raised.

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