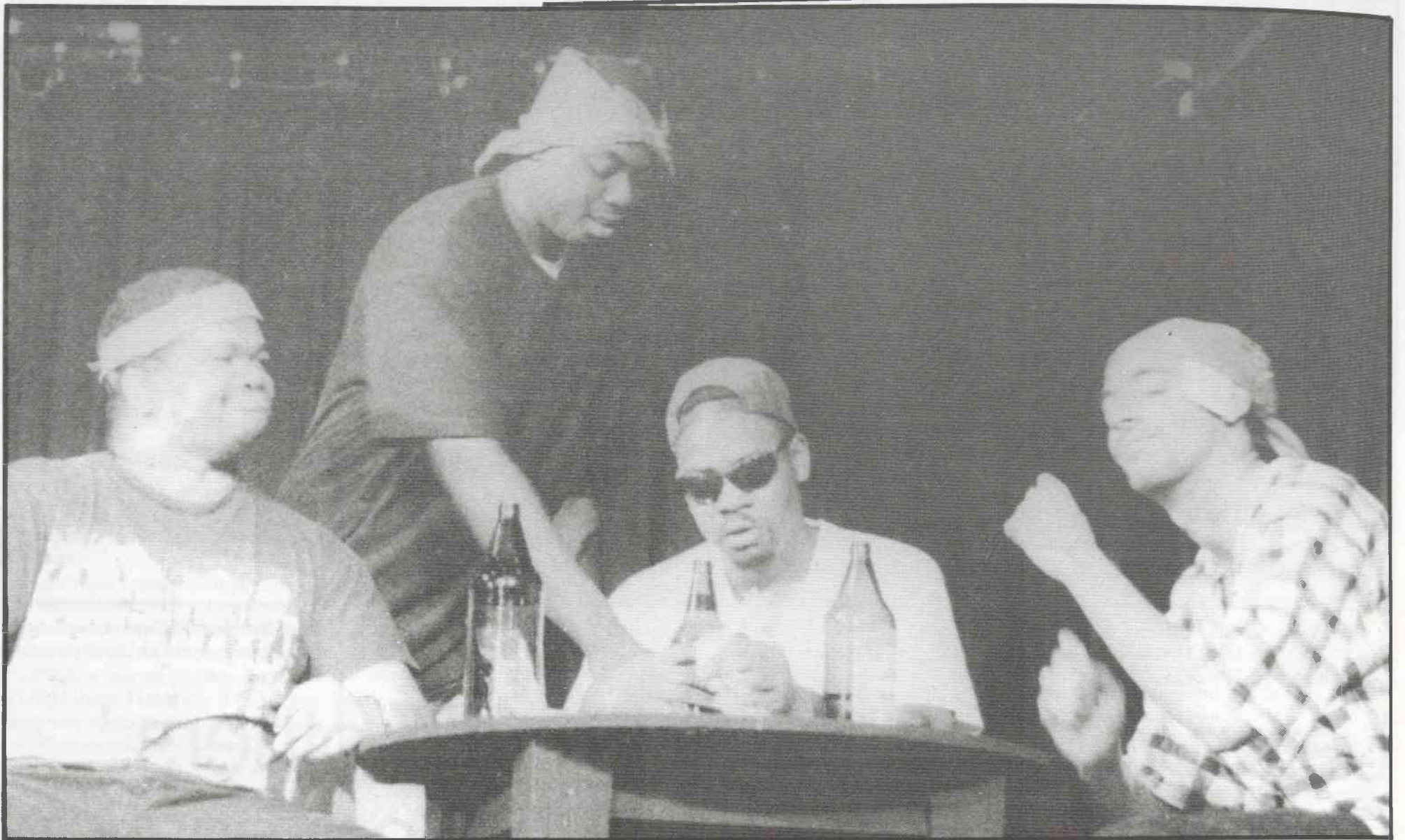


## ENTERTAINMENT



Brian Jordan (T-Bone), Damon Freshwater (Marlowe), Cliff Vanderpool (G-Money) and Ramesh Rampersand (Romello), portray "The Fifth Street Gang" in *A Gangsta's Paradise*, performed during the One-Act Play Festival. The play, written by ECSU student Joel Parker, tells the story of four hoodlums who struggle to control drug dealing in their 'hood.

## One-Act Play Festival a showcase of student talent in writing, directing

by Leslie Brown

The University Player's One Act Play Festival was a showcase of student talent at its best. Written, directed, and produced by students of ECSU, the five one-act plays examined a diverse range of topics—homosexual acceptance, race relations, drugs and violence, the pursuit of dreams, and the Apocalypse.

In the opening play *Hall Rats* writer/director Michelle Lewis probes the social ills between blacks and whites among contemporary high school students. Patrick (Damon Freshwater) a pro-black, afro-centric member of the Nation of Islam, debases whites and friend Willie (Gary Walton) for having a white girlfriend and living around white people. Willie, on the other hand, feels there is nothing wrong with dating and interacting with white people. Although Lewis's script is generally well written, at times the dialogue seemed to be wondering aimlessly.

Old conservative religious beliefs and modern non-conservative beliefs clash

in Phillip Puryear's *For the Love of God*. In Puryear's emotional drama Reece (Puryear) returns to his mother's home following a two year absence. In his return he hopes to reconcile with a mother who has completely shut him out of her life because he is gay. The mother (Kendra Bradshaw) is unwilling to allow herself to accept her son back in her life.

Bradshaw gives a splendid performance in her portrayal of the stubborn, religious mother unable to cope with her son's life-style. *For the Love of God* is a superbly written, sensitive look at how a family is being torn apart by an inflexible mother.

Joel L. Parker's *A Gangsta's Paradise* explored the harsh reality of drug dealing and killing. Four thuggish-ruggish hoodlums battle for drug dealing supremacy as they keep their neighborhood on lockdown.

The only things that matter to T-Bone (Brian Jordan), Romello (Ramesh

Rampersad), G-Money (Cliff Vanterpool), and Marlowe (Damon Freshwater), are respect and money. However reality kicks in when G-Money's cousin is mistakenly shot and killed. The death sends Marlowe over the edge while it causes a distraught G-Money to search for a better life. A death of a mutual friend brings the old crew together after 10 years. Three members of the former crew find that they are living respectful lives away from drugs and violence. Marlowe, however, has yet to repent from his old ways; this leads once again to tragic consequences.

The most surprising and delightful play of the evening was *Ezekiel Jacobs*. Written and directed by Troy Lewter, the play explores the relationship between an elderly uncle and his nephew. Khalid Baum gives a sensational performance as Ezekiel Jacobs, the elderly uncle who took responsibility of raising his nephew Daniel (Shaunell

McMillan) after the death of Daniel's parents. McMillan gives an equally superb performance as Daniel, an aspiring writer pursuing his dreams.

Michael Wellman's *The Doomsday Saloon* took a ride on the wild side. Centered in a bar, the story focuses on a motley assortment of characters and the supposed final day. Straight out of a scene from the film *Pulp Fiction*, the bizarre but entertaining tale follows Dante (Michael Wellman) a bartender who attracts some peculiar patrons. As the final hour approaches, tension builds around acts of lust, confessions and a murder. ECSU Drama professor Shawn Smith makes a guest appearance as the Reverend Schwab, a con artist/preacher.

The University Players One-Act Play Festival was co-produced by LaVonne L. McClain and Joel L. Parker. The technical supervisor was Mattie Perry, and the general stage manager was Terrel Silver.