



University Players Perform "The Old Settler"

The University Players, Elizabeth City State University's theatre troupe, presented John Henry Redwood's award-winning play *The Old Settler* for a five performance run on February 14-18, 2001 in the G.R. Little Library on the ECSU campus in Elizabeth City.

"*The Old Settler*" is Redwood's comic romance about life in Harlem, New York in the 1940's. An off-Broadway hit starring Leslie Uggams in the title role, the play received glowing critical acclaim.

Leon Rouson, director of ECSU's Mathematics and Science Education Network program, directed "*The Old Settler*." Rouson, who staged memorable productions of "For Colored Girls ..." and "The Children's Hour" for the Players, assembled a first rate cast.

Rosa "Dee Dee" Riddick portrayed Elizabeth Borney, who was the old settler because she had never been married. Riddick, a graduate of ECSU, is no stranger to the Little Theatre stage. She has played major roles in productions of "The First Breeze of Summer," "Of Mice and Men," "Dracula" and

"*The Crucible*." Dorothy Wills Downing, another veteran of the Little Theatre, played Elizabeth's sister, Quilly McGrath. Downing was recently seen as the mother, Mrs. Banks, in last season's "Barefoot in the Park." She has also acted leading roles in "A Raisin in the Sun," "Nonsense II" and "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom."

Damond Nollan appeared in the key role of Husband, the border who disrupts the lives of Elizabeth and Quilly. Nollan received praise for his performance as the Commissioner in "Lysistrata" last November. The sole newcomer to the stage was Kizzy V. Crawford, an ECSU senior from Rocky Mount, who appeared in the role of Lou Bessie, Husband's girlfriend.

Darius D. Eure served as production stage manager, and the lighting was designed by Michael Ludden and Tristan Ludden.

University Players is currently preparing for its upcoming production "The Colored Museum." Performance dates are Mar. 28, 29, 30 and 31 at 8:00 p.m. in the Little Theatre.



Left to right: Kizzy Crawford, Rosa Riddick, Dorothy Wills Downing and Damond Nollan.

Cosmic and Pure: Badu's *Mama's Gun* A Hit

Michael Fournier

Arts and Entertainment Editor

In 1997, a breath of fresh air named Erykah Badu enchanted the music world with her debut album, *Baduizm*.

And now, four years and a label change later (from Universal to Motown), the purity that Ms. Badu previously presented in her music has not diluted at all. Her new album, *Mama's Gun*, is every bit as creative, honest and gratifying as music can be.

In the album's first single, "Bag Lady," (minus the Xplosive loop) Erykah warns the women of the world to stop carrying the baggage of previous experiences before they wind up alone. Floating through the jazzy atmosphere of the second single, "Didn't Cha Know," the southern girl tries to find her way through life while remembering to enjoy the ride. An "Orange Moon" becomes a beautiful metaphor for Erykah, who now shines bright because she reflects the light of her sun.

Erykah's cosmic wisdom and unique perspective are spread throughout *Mama's Gun*. She projects an intelligent woman's point of view and speaks to the sophisticated listener, a

demographic often neglected in R&B music today.

But although Erykah Badu's music contains more depth than her contemporaries, she reveals her playful nature in "...& On," the hip-hop influenced continuation of her breakthrough single "On & On," as well as "Cleva," in which jazz great Roy Ayers plays the vibraphones.

The soundscape of the album is provided by a handful of people who are literally creating the sound of the new soul; Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson of the Roots along with The Soulquarians-James Poyser and Jay Dee-fuse together pieces of jazz, soul, the blues and hip-hop in order to create the sweet rhythms that underscore Ms. Badu's distinct vocals. The result is bliss.

Young folks will not understand this album; the average twenty-somethings won't appreciate it. Erykah Badu knows this. But mama's gun has her sights set on something more meaningful than mass appeal.

In "...& On," she sings, "What good do your words do if they can't understand you?"

Some of us do understand Erykah. Continue on.

Funkmaster Flex: 47 Minutes of Funk

Michael Fournier

Arts and Entertainment Editor

Loud Record and Funkmaster Flex have combined on a new album called 60 Minutes of Funk, Volume IV: The Mixtape, and I have problems with it.

First of all, the cd is seventy-four minutes long, not sixty. Out of those seventy-four minutes, there is seventy-four minutes of funk at best (I might even be stretching it a tad). Forty-seven minutes isn't too bad, especially nowadays, but I was just expecting more.

The lead single, "Do You," is a good concept song and features some of DMX's better lyrics (and least amount of growls). Saukrates' "Fine Line," although too short, is easily one of the best tracks on the tape and shows what the future of rap music will sound like. And Faith Evans' "Good Life" is nothing but good, solid R&B music. Nelly, Ludacris and Eminem with D-12 also do their thing-thing.

Unfortunately though, the better tracks on the tape get cut short. Nature and In Essence only get about two minutes a piece, and The Bad Seed's "Uhhnnh," produced by soon-to-be superstar Nottz of the Norfolk based Teamstas, gets cut off after one verse. Meanwhile, Capone N' Noreaga's mo-

notonous "What Son What" and Ja-Rule and The Murderer's equally monotonous "Feelin' the Hate" combine for nearly ten minutes of play time.

My second problem with Flex's new joint is that it's supposed to be a mixtape and it just plain is not! This cd is nothing but a compilation of new songs put together under the name of one of the country's best known deejays as a marketing ploy to create more revenues.

If it weren't for the extra-wack interludes and Flex popping in to yell all the profanities he's ever learned, you'd never know this was even intended to be a mixtape. There are no cuts, scratches, blends or mixes to be heard on this new "mixtape." There are actually several occasions where songs just fade out! That's more than disappointing; it's pathetic.

The tape, as a compilation album, is not all that bad. The beats are bangin' all the way through, and there are several choice cuts in there. I just happen to know that Flex is capable of making a better product-I have his last three volumes. Hopefully, next time he'll take it back to the streets and do things the way they're supposed to be done.

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