

## Arts and Entertainment

# DALLAS BLACK DANCE THEATER HITS STAGE AT ECSU

**McKeith Cordell**  
mckcordell@hotmail.com

The Elizabeth City State University's Lyceum Concert Series presented the Dallas Black Dance Theatre on September 26. This event was held in the Fine Arts Complex and admission was free to all students as well as the public. The concert began at 7:00pm and lasted two hours. There was a twenty-minute intermission between the six pieces that were performed. Over the course of the evening the 12 Dallas Black Dancers performed sundry dance styles including ethnic, jazz, modern and spiritual works.

The dancers have worked with many different well-known choreographers, including Jamal Story, Robert Battle, Darryl Sneed, Earl Mosley, Melvin Purnell, and Fred Benjamin. The music they used was very diverse and ranged from classical compositions by Rachmanioff to the highly befitting "What's Going On" by Marvin Gaye, which has since then been turned into a tribute in wake of the September 11 tragedy.

The members of the dance troupe come from across the nation and Mexico. They have been preparing for their present tour since October of last year.

Darrell Cleveland, a graduate of Morehouse College, talked about his travel with the group. Asked about the most exiting places he has performed, he said: "When we went to places like South Africa, West Providence, Cape Town, Zimbabwe, and Austria."

Following this tour, the Dallas Black Dance group will continue doing what they enjoy most, which is dancing and traveling. "We're going to be teaching a couple of classes at Howard University, to Dallas for Choreographer's Choice and then we'll prepare to tour again after that," he added. Just by watching this performance, one could see that it takes time and true skill to be able to dance professionally. Rehearsal Director and dancer Armando Silva, a native of Mexico, gave advice to

anyone who wishes to pursue a career in professional dance, "Be true to yourself. You can't do this without knowing that it is what you want to do. Because if you are not sure of what it is that you want to do, then you really cannot commit yourself."

Dale Flemming, a Boston Native who is currently participating in her fourth season with the Dallas Black Dance Theatre added, "You've got to enjoy it! It's as simple as that. Find a teacher that you look up to. Find a teacher that will motivate you to want to motivate yourself. Also, work hard everyday to get where you want to be." At the end of the show the Group received a standing ovation and returned to the stage after changing on final time to sign autographs and talk with the members of the audience. The students, faculty, and public appeared very captivated with the overall performance.

Kim Blackwell, an Elizabeth City State University Junior, said, "I really enjoyed the performance. My favorite number was the first one, 'Girl Problems'. They did it in a way that I could really comprehend."

Rich Harvey, of Elizabeth City, heard of the event through our campus radio station and decided to come out and support the event.

"The dancers obviously came ready to perform. Really good work on the part of the University in terms of lighting and the facility used. Everything is excellent. Hopefully, we'll see more things like this. I'm sorry for anybody who missed it, they're really missing something right now," Rich Harvey.

"I think the show was phenomenal. I think it's something the University has yet to see. I wish we could see more," said Damond Nollan.

Hopefully, in the coming years, ECSU will continue to bring superb events like this one to Elizabeth City for a positive cause. Being diverted with activities of this sort is sure to draw more attention and members of the community to the campus. On behalf of all those who attended and those who could not, we are all gratified for this delight.



-photo courtesy of Rich Harvey

Dallas Black Dance Theater Dancers

## ECSU AND RUFF RYDERS COLLABORATE

**Tony Griffin and Rukiya Williams**  
bigtone@prontomail.com and  
kiyawms@hotmail.com

Elizabeth City State University recently furthered its cause in "preparing leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> century" as its Music Industries department began collaboration with the entertainment label Ruff Ryders. The Ruff Ryders, the current best-selling hip hop record label, recently held a talent show Thursday, October 4<sup>th</sup> in the new ECSU Fine Arts building sponsored by the ECSU Music Industry majors.

The music industries club at Elizabeth City State University provided the students on campus and the community with an invigorating showcase of talented individuals. On a chilly October night, the Fine Arts auditorium was closely packed by 7:30 pm. The show was scheduled to begin at 7:00pm, but floods of people continued to pour in. The show did not start until most of the seats were taken. The host, John John, a sophomore, attempted to intensify the very patient crowd with a t-shirt and compact disk giveaway. The Ruff Ryders of Virginia, an entourage of about 12 members, entered the auditorium and a few moments later the show began. At approximately 8:15pm, the first act took their place on stage. The group, called Angry Mecca, had a wonderful stage presence that enabled them to finish their song without a negative vibe or gesture from the audience. The next few acts were diverse; using many soulful sounds and alluring beats to make heads nod and fingers snap. Many genres of music were transformed into crafty, unorthodox performances. Steelo, of Strong Arm entertainment, executed a flawless par rendition that put some of the crowd on their feet. Tiffany Nichole, a native of Virginia, graced the stage with a mix of Rhythm and Blues with a touch of hip hop. Mahogany, a singing duo, dispatched beautiful piece of music with the accompaniment of a piano. Their strong voices

caused the majority of the crowd to award the two with a standing ovation. Louis Giles, crowned the "Illest Emcee" on the yard in 2000, proved his immeasurable talent cannot be touched. He mesmerized everyone with original songs that left the crowd begging for more. The females also represented in the rap category with such acts as the truth and babygirl, who presented the Ruff Ryders with a unique twist of words and beats. The show did not stop there; inspirational songs and dance routines were also blended into the mix. This made a wonderful recipe for those who starved for a particular type of entertainment on campus.

The Fine Arts auditorium was overflowing with talent that night. Many performers were satisfied with the show and, of course, the audience did not feel cheated. The show ended at 11:30pm and the crowd was buzzing. Unfortunately, the winners were not picked after the show; however, a promise was made to the performers to expect a phone call from the Ruff Ryders to the acts that will be chosen to perform in a national competition. Thanks to the Music Industries Club, students were able to attend a delightful program that was undoubtedly, wonderfully entertaining.

According to Penda Wilkins, a member of the Music Industries Studies Club, Mr. Corzene, a music professor here at ECSU, said that the Ruff Ryders were coming to Virginia in search of new talent. He mentioned it to his students. Music industry major, Jerome McMillian, took the initiative to call and set up a meeting with Virginia's Ruff Ryder representative, Jody Joppo. Mr. Joppo informed him that the Ruff Ryders were looking for new talent. With help from Penda Wilkins, who produced a bike fest in Roanoke Rapids last year, they set up the talent show with the winner to be contacted and possibly given a contract by the Ruff Ryders.

## JAY-Z'S "BLUEPRINTS"

**Clayton Mercer**  
claydoggmrcer@hotmail.com

With the success of his 1996 debut album *Reasonable Doubt*, Jay-Z introduced a style that was full of intelligent lyrics and silver-tongued wit. The result: multi-platinum record sales and a place at the top of the hip-hop world. With the release of *The Blueprint*, his sixth album, Jay-Z solidifies his claim to be the best.

Months after releasing *The Dynasty: Roc-La-Familiar*, Jay-Z made his return to the studio to produce an album that would reply to all of the artists who felt the need to throw shots at him. The finished product is an album that is the artist's best since *Reasonable Doubt*. "Jigga That N\*gga" has got to be one of the best beats Track masters has ever produced. In return, Jay drops a nicely timed bit of old school braggadocio.

Virginia Beach, VA native producer Timberland turns in just one track for the album. Moving away from the digital beats that characterize his style, "Hola Hovito" sees Tim build around a more traditional hip-hop beat and layer-dense guitar into the kind of track that doesn't even need to ask for your love. Recognizing that

the usual style would have stood out like a sore thumb on this album, Timberland proves he's really in a class of his own.

The first single from the album, "H.O.V.A." uses a sample from the Jackson 5 song "I Want You Back". Jay-Z allows the public to look at his life and how he came to where he is today. The album's most talked about song is "Takeover", where Jay-Z gets to reply to harsh statements made by other artists, specifically Nas and Prodigy of Mobb Deep. "Went from, Nasty Nas to Esco's trash/ Had a spark when you started but now you're just garbage".

Missing from *The Blueprint* are guest appearances from other artists. Superstar Eminem is the only artist to appear, and he is a great addition to an already superb album. The collaboration of Jay-Z and Eminem on "Renegade" is a dream come true for hip-hop fans as both artists bring their best lyrics to the microphone.

Other songs such as "Song Cry", "U Don't Know", and the current single, "Girls, Girls, Girls" help make *The Blueprint* a masterpiece. Jay-Z is in a class of his own and solidifies his claim as the best in hip-hop!