

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## Soul Festival draws thousand to islands

By JEANNINE RELLY  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**CHARLOTTE AMALIE, U.S. Virgin Islands** - The crowd was transported back to an era when music was the message, blue basement lights flickered as teens slow-danced for the first time, and endless possibilities seemed just around the corner.

Ride the love train, sisters and brothers.

Thousands of well-heeled fans from the U.S. mainland grooved to the '70s music of Chaka Khan and Smokey Robinson at the fifth annual Sinbad Soul Music Festival in the Caribbean.

They screamed their remembrance when The Stylistics went into their classic, "Love Train."

Basketball's Magic Johnson made a guest appearance.

"It's like a black family reunion," says the festival's organizer, Sinbad, the actor-comedian who had a brief career as a late-night syndicated talk show host. "This is not just about going to a concert - it's about the renewing of spirit."

Karen Stanley, an account executive from Huntsville, Ala., says she made her second soul festival pilgrimage to meet new people.

There was a bonus: "I ran into five friends on the beach from New York and Washington, D.C., and we didn't even know that the others were coming," she says.

Local businessmen and the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands plan to capitalize on the festival's faithful following of mainly African-American "funkateers" who've followed Sinbad from Dutch St. Maarten in 1995 to French St. Martin, on to Jamaica and, last year, to a smashing suc-

cess on the Dutch island of Aruba.

The fest here May 26-30, which packed more than 6,000 tourists into comedy acts, beach parties and nightclub shows, was a godsend for tourism officials looking to broaden the appeal of a territory that attracts mainly white Americans even though most islanders, like their latest visitors, are blacks descended from African slaves.

"We're promoting the islands (among African-Americans) for the long term; Sinbad is just the context," says Amy Atkinson of Virginia-based Martin Public Relations.

Sinbad says he likes the idea of black people traveling en masse. He was inspired in part by an experience in Park City, Utah, at a National Brotherhood of Skiers Summit.

"The city was not too happy about all of these black people coming in, but at the end of the day they spent more money than any group before them," he says. "It's funny, when it comes down to green (dollars), nobody looks at color."

Sinbad says he has also dispelled some Caribbean myths about African Americans.

"I remember in St. Martin, they thought we were all gangsters. They were amazed we were doctors, lawyers, businessmen."

The 40-year-olds and 50-year-olds, who are romanced with the songs of their youth at the Sinbad festivals, are a particularly well-off crowd.

"These are the baby boomers, an intelligent market," says Eli Clarke, a cameraman who has filmed the past four festivals for Pay-Per-View TV.

African American travelers

spent \$43 million on cruises in 1997, says Target Market News' report, The Buying Power of Black America. The U.S. Virgin Islands' \$2 billion tourist industry is split evenly between profits from the cruise industry and overnight guests.

The festival came at a time when teen-agers in the States are humming along to current hits, unaware that they are songs popular with their parents 25 years ago, such as last year's hit from Lauryn Hill of the Fugees, a remake of Roberta Flack's "Killing Me Softly."

While parents on St. Thomas were wowed by The Stylistics "Betcha By Golly Wow," their children could be listening to a remake by The Artist Formerly Known as Prince.

With the globe to choose from, why would African-American tourists select the U.S. territory?

National tourism experts say it offers mainlanders who've never traveled off the continent the comfort of the same language and currency, and no immigration requirements, just a 2 1/2-hour plane ride from Miami.

"It's warm and it's black and it's surrounded by water," says Karl Rodney, publisher of the New York City weekly *Carib News*.

But the Virgin Islands only began wooing African Americans two years ago and must compete with regional leaders who've been aggressively chasing that market for years - the Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, Martinique, notes Solomon Herbert, publisher of California's *Black Meetings and Tourism* magazine.

"If someone sends away for a brochure and they get one without



Photo by Virgin Islands Daily News / Ed Jones  
**Chaka Khan performs during The Sinbad Soul Music Festival in Charlotte Amalie, U.S. Virgin Islands. Thousands of well-heeled fans from the U.S. mainland jammed to '70s soul at the fifth annual festival, which was held last month.**

anyone in it that looks like them, they'll feel like they aren't welcome," Herbert says.

In the past, he says, the cruise industry was "one of the more serious offenders."

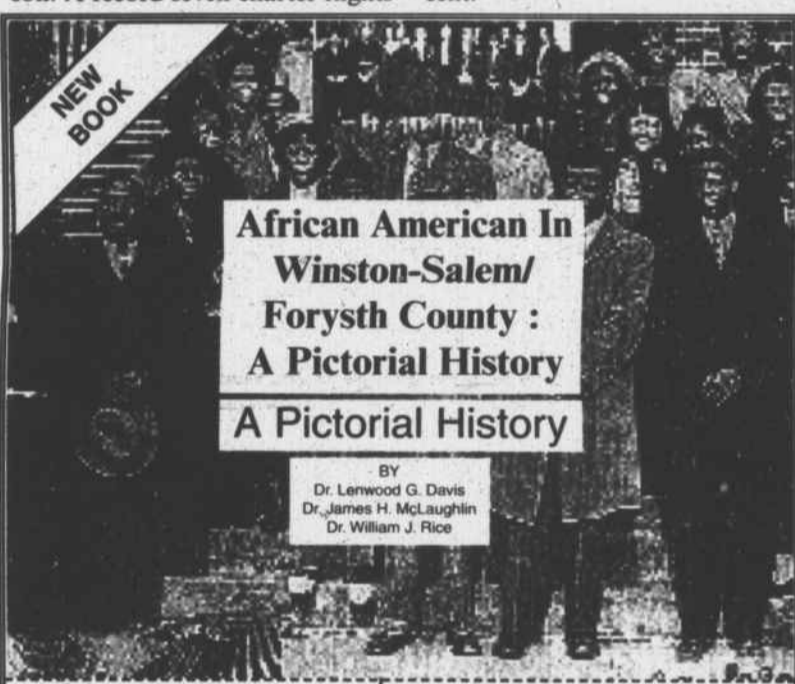
But it has published more racially diverse ads in the past five years.

The U.S. territory's government and business leaders invested more than \$1.4 million in cash, goods and services to attract Sinbad, encouraged by market surveys reporting regional four-year profits totaling \$69 million from

the festival.

The investment met mixed public reviews despite a boost following a sluggish tourist off-season. A record seven charter flights

flew in on the festival's opening day and St. Thomas hotels boasted near-full occupancy in a season that usually reaches only 40 percent.



**African American in Winston-Salem/ Forsyth County: A Pictorial History**  
A Pictorial History

BY  
Dr. Lenwood G. Davis  
Dr. James H. McLaughlin  
Dr. William J. Rice

**ORDER FORM**

8 1/2x11, hard-cover, limited edition collector's item, 192 pages, Over 250 photographs-many never before published.

**PREPUBLICATION-INTRODUCTORY SALEPRICE:**  
(Must order before September 1, 1999 to receive the 15% discount)

\_\_\_\_\_ copies of the regular limited edition at \$29.70

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ plus \$6.00 S&H

\_\_\_\_\_ copies of the leather-bound limited edition with slipcase, signed and numbered by the authors with free personalization (limited to one line please) at \$100.00 each.

(must be ordered by July 1, 1999)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ plus \$6.00 S&H

Personalized name: \_\_\_\_\_

(please type if possible)

**POST-PUBLICATION PRICE:**

\_\_\_\_\_ copies of the regular limited edition at \$34.95

(after September 1, 1999)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ plus \$6.00 S&H

(Leather & Bound edition not available after July 1, 1999)

TOTAL AMOUNT DUE: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**PAYMENT CHOICE**

Check/M.O.  Credit Card

Check enclosed made payable to SSAAH

Credit Card choice:

Visa/ Master

American Express

Credit Card number \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

ORDERED BY: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this form to:

SSAAH P.O. Box 19427

Winston-Salem, NC 27110

allow 3-5 weeks for delivery after publication (September 1, 1999)

For information please call 1-800-331-7018.

**The Society for the Study of Afro-American History**

Generously sponsored by Integon Corporation, Sara Lee Corporation, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, BB&T Bank, Winston-Salem Journal, The Chronicle, WXII-TV

## New show reveals inner workings of 'Hoop Life'

By BOB THOMAS  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**LOS ANGELES** - So you thought the basketball season was finally over. Not on Showtime Networks, where you can spend the summer and much of next season following the on- and off-court antics of the New England Knights of the United Basketball Association.

The New England who of the United what?

The weekly dramatic series is called "The Hoop Life," brainchild of writer Sean Jablonski, and begins with a two-hour movie this Sunday at 10 p.m.

But send the kids out of the room if you don't want them to see female nudity or hear locker-room language.

These New England Knights couldn't be more dysfunctional if they had a starting lineup of five Dennis Rodmans.

Among the players: Marvin Buxton (Mykelti Williamson), who blew the seventh game of the championship by brawling with a hated opponent; heartthrob Greg Marr (Rick Peters), a womanizer going through a messy divorce; high school sensation Curtis Thorpe (Cirroc Lofton), a rookie tryout plagued by his pushy uncle-manager.

There's trouble in the front office, too. A conglomerate has bought the Knights. The beleaguered coach (Dan Lauria) faces big changes.

Two of the real coaches behind "The Hoop Life" are executive producer Joe Cacaci and Tom Fontana, partner in a producing company with director Barry

Levinson.

Both were asked if they qualified as jocks.

Fontana laughed. "The only sport I have done religiously is rowing. In my family, being an oarsman was a rite of passage into manhood."

"I used to be a center on the Knicks; I was the only Italian center," Cacaci claimed unconvincingly.

"I played baseball mostly when I was a kid. I was 5 feet 8, so I didn't have much of a chance at basketball."

Casting "The Hoop Life" presented a challenge. The stars had to be professional actors as well as look credible on a basketball court.

Williamson, who played Bubba in "Forrest Gump" and is 6 feet 3 inches tall, "was the only guy we went to and made an offer... We knew he had played a little ball and knew his way around basketball courts," Cacaci said.

"The other two lead players, Rick Peters and Cirroc Lofton, really stood out when we auditioned actors. One day I went to see Rick play at the Y in L.A. He had all his friends there to make him look good.

"Cirroc, who plays the high school star who gets into the league early, is actually a phenomenal player. If he weren't acting, he'd be on the UCLA basketball team for sure."

At 6 feet 4 inches, Peters is half an inch taller than Lofton.

The company hired an Olympic basketball star, Sylvia Sweeney, who trains actors to play the game. She conducted a "boot

camp" for the recruits, and she choreographs the court action.

Like many of today's TV movies, "The Hoop Life" is filmed

in Canada, where costs are lower.

The show hires a semipro ice hockey arena in Toronto for the basketball scenes.

**Have the arts touched your life this year?**

**We Are 12% Away From Reaching Our 1999 Campaign Goal and We Need Your Help.**

**This Critical 12% Of The Arts Council Campaign Directly Impacts Our Ability To Financially Assist our member organizations that bring you the arts you enjoy.**

**You Can Help By Making A Contribution In The Next 7 Days.** In return, your gift will go towards **The Arts That Touch Your Life.**

**PLEDGE BY PHONE: CALL 722-2585**

**MAIL YOUR CONTRIBUTION:**  
The Arts Council  
305 West Fourth Street  
Winston-Salem, NC 27101



**ARTS COUNCIL**  
WINSTON-SALEM FORSYTH COUNTY

Associated Artists Of Winston-Salem, Children's Theatre, Kernersville Little Theatre, Little Symphony Of Forsyth County, Little Theatre Of Winston-Salem, NC Black Repertory Company, Piedmont Chamber Singers, Piedmont Craftsmen, Piedmont Opera Theatre, Sawtooth Center For Visual Art, Southeastern Center For Contemporary Art (SECCA) And The Winston-Salem Piedmont Triad Symphony

## Artist wins lawsuit over symbol

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**CHICAGO** - Five years after suing the artist formerly known as Prince over his symbol-shaped guitar, a Chicago man has come up empty.

U.S. District Court Judge Rebecca Pallmeyer found no merit in the fraud claim of Ferdinand Pickett, a guitar designer and self-proclaimed fan of the musician.

Pickett claimed that he created the guitar in 1993 and

showed it to The Artist Formerly Known as Prince, hoping he would buy it. He filed the suit in 1994, after learning that the artist was performing with a similarly shaped instrument. In 1996, he amended the suit to charge copyright infringement of the "three-dimensional sculptural work."

There was a problem, though. The Artist Formerly Known as Prince began using

See **Artist** on page C9