

1B ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Sista Productions putting best foot forward with 'For Colored Girls' this weekend

By Winfred B. Cross
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Shelby Lewis and Kami Davis are two sisters who are doing it for themselves.

The "it" is a production company called Sista Productions, emphasizing dramatic presentations, musicals and art education.

What it's doing is holding Sista's first performance, "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow is Enuf," 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and again 5 p.m. Sunday in the Afro-American Cultural Center's Attic Theater.

A portion of the proceeds will go to the The Battered Woman's Shelter.

Lewis and Davis started Sista after meeting last year.

"We were in a play together the end of last year. We just kind of clicked, not as friends first, but on a business level," Lewis said. "We just kind of happened."

But picking "For Colored Girls" as its first production was calculated, Lewis said. The cast - Gerri Chisolm, Kimberly Kendall, Tre Taylor, Davis and Lewis - has been working on the production since February. "For Colored Girls" is a choreopoem by Ntozake Shange that's been around since the '70s and audiences are familiar with it, so it should draw a big audience.

"It's about the lives of seven



Sistas act: Gerri Chisolm, Kimberly Kendall, Kami Davis, Tre Taylor and Shelby Lewis.

African American women. This particular production we are only having six women in the cast," Lewis said. "It's just kind of the way it happened. The first set of auditions we found everyone we needed. And we liked the vibe, so we kept it like it was. Everyone seemed to click right away."

"For Sista Productions, our biggest goal is to promote positive images for women, that's part of our mission statement. Everyone can relate to something in this play."

The play could also draw big criticism. There have been lots of very good productions of

"For Colored Girls," so criticism might be harsher. That doesn't worry Lewis.

"No, it really doesn't. People are already talking about this play," she said. "The message in this play is so powerful that people embrace it. We try also to add some contemporary music. We did keep the original pieces which were set back in the '70s. We did minor updates to the show."

Although Lewis says the play's message is positive, some men may disagree. The play also had women exhaling long before Terry McMillan. So is it man bashing or art?

"I think it's very fair to say it's not man bashing," Lewis said. "This has to do with the choices that women make. It says that women have to learn to love themselves first. In each poem we go through, each woman has to affirm another woman through her dilemma in the play. It basically all boils down to women need to learn to love themselves and they need to get rid of the excess baggage from past relationships. Every man is not going to be the same way towards you."

"We dedicate this production to the men in our lives," she

said. "We know for a fact that they are very, very good men and we know that the men in this play are very few. We just need to let them know that there are men out there, but we realize there are not that many. My husband is very good to me. I've never had experiences like this."

"The majority of our production staff and people working behind the scenes are men. It kind of happened that way," Lewis said. "We had a lot of men come to us and say, 'look we love the play and we want to stand behind you.'"

Sista hopes the production is

a success, but is making plans for further productions regardless of the outcome.

"People have been coming to us with their scripts, so we plan to do some original productions," Lewis said. "We do not want just to be a theatre company, we want to be a full-service organization, specializing in art education for adults and children, in addition to doing theatre and musical productions."

Tickets are \$13 general admission, \$10 for students and senior citizens. Tickets for seniors and students are limited.

Feelin' happy



PHOTO/MARK PENDERGRASS

Frankie Beverly made what seems to be an annual stop in Charlotte this weekend at the Queen City Music Festival. Luther Vandross, Shirley Murdock and Regina Belle performed also.

Tevin Campbell comes back with solid new offering

Tevin Campbell Back To The World Jamey Jaz, Keith Crouch, Derrick Edmondson, Justin Combs, Boom Brothers, Sean "Puffy" Combs, producers Quest/Warner Bros.

☆☆☆ 1/2

Tevin Campbell's three-year absence from the recording studio has been well spent. Instead of rushing a follow-up to the multi-platinum *I'm Ready*, he decided to continue to learn the art of singing.

Not that he needed to know a whole lot. Campbell possesses a tremendous tenor that stretches to the soprano range.

But on *Back To The World*, his third solo outing, Campbell is more concerned with what's

happening on Earth than in the stratosphere. His lower register has more oomph now, which is most prominent on "Tell Me Where," a Babyface collaboration. He gets a bit lower and decidedly more funky on "I Need You" which samples B.T. Express' "Do It (Till You're Satisfied)."

Those who still enjoy Campbell singing amongst the stars will not be disappointed, either. Campbell shows off considerable range on "Back To The World," the first single. He's as free wheeling on "Could You Learn To Love," another Babyface tune.

The most noticeable thing about this CD is that it's more Campbell-driven than producer-driven. Younger folks like Keith Crouch and Sean "Puffy" Combs give him lots of room to flex his voice. Campbell's singing with far more control and restraint.



TEVIN CAMPBELL

SOUNDS

By Winfred B. Cross



FRED HAMMOND

He takes something as low-key as "Till The Break of Dawn" and makes it spicy. His low-key approach on "I'll Be There" is stunning.

This CD is not quite as dynamic as *I'm Ready*, but it's more than good enough to keep Campbell near the top of the charts.

Fred Hammond & Radical For Christ Spirit of David Fred Hammond, producer Benson Music Group

☆☆☆ 1/2

Fred Hammond's departure from Commissioned has been a fruitful one. He's a highly sought-after producer and continues to be one of gospel's

most dynamic writers.

His second outing with Radical For Christ titled *Spirit of David* sounds much like the first effort. That's certainly not a bad thing because this is very nicely done. There's plenty of stuff to make you jump to your feet or sit and reflect.

The CD is divided into three movements: Praise and Thanksgiving, Adversity & Triumph and Restoration & Justification. Each movement is distinct; the first being rooted in hard driving rhythm. You could play this stuff at a club and it would fit in with no problem. The difference, of course, is the music's message. There's no doubt who Hammond is talking about.

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Cover 2 Cover

Money For College: A Guide to Financial Aid for African American Students Erlene B. Wilson \$12.95 Plume Trade Paperback

Former TV reporter and Glamour magazine advice columnist Erlene B. Wilson has written the companion guide to her excellent first work, "The 100 Best Colleges for African Americans."

"Money For College: A Guide to Financial Aid for African American Students," picks up where "The 100 Best Colleges for African Americans" leaves off, describing in detail how to finance a college education.

Exhaustive research and a good working knowledge of private and public financial aid sources makes Wilson's book a must read for all parents and students.

Wilson's book, which is divided into four easy to understand sections, begins with a brief description of the various types of financial aid programs. Wilson covers everything from college savings plans to military grants.

Section II explores the financial aid process, with emphasis on federal aid and working with your child's guidance counselor to ensure that you explore every option. Wilson also stresses professional programs for alternative funding, an option many African American parents overlook.

Section III, however, is the gold mine. Wilson takes over 100 disciplines and details the scholarship and financial aid sources available in each. Also included is an expansive list of Students of Color scholarships awarded by individual colleges.

Wilson also stresses "no payback" programs that help young people avoid expensive loan repayment programs.

Well-organized and chock full of good information, Wilson's "Money For College: A Guide to Financial Aid for African American Students," is well worth picking up, whether you are a parent of a child in college or heading to college in next few years.

