

1B ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Pandemonium hits the Apollo Saturday



PHOTO/CALVIN FRERGUSON

Causing Pandemonium at the Apollo: from left to right Erren, D.J., Bukeeus, Ebriel and Leon. The group is to tape "It's Showtime At The Apollo" Saturday morning. They'll sing "Feel The Funk."

By Winfred B. Cross
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Pandemonium is its name and that's exactly what group members hope to cause at New York's famed Apollo Theater. The group — Bukeeus Sadler, 11; Leon Potts, 7; Don (D.J.) Wright, 11; Erren, 11; and Ebriel Woodson, 9 — will try its hand at the kids section of "It's Showtime At The Apollo." It will perform Immature's "Feel the Funk." "We asked our manager if we could do it," said D.J., who serves as group spokesman. "She said we could, so we started working on it." The members left for New

York yesterday and will tape the program Saturday. If the group wins, it will return for a year-end competition. "We're very excited because we are going to be in a place where many legends have performed," D.J. said. "We signed up two year's ago. We sent in a tape and some pictures." Shona Anderson, the group's manager and Leon's sister, said: "It was a long wait, but (Apollo officials) did want them on the show. About fifteen people are going. We're going to put as many people in the audience as possible." Maxine Lewis, producer for Showtime's Amateur and Apollo kids sections, liked what she saw in Pandemonium.

"They were the right size, had harmony and I liked their look in the picture," Lewis said. "We're trying to improve on the Apollo Kids and give them national exposure." Lewis said contestants are selected through submissions, auditions and talent searches. She said this weekend's winner will get one-time national exposure and "a kid's prize." Twelve shows will be taped this weekend for later air dates. These shows will air as part of "It's Showtime At The Apollo's" 10th year. It's seen in 77 percent of the nation's television markets. Pandemonium has been together for two years. D.J. said the group "just kind of came together" after auditions.

It's performed at Westfest, several talent showcases, Coca-Cola Culture Jam and The Connie McGill Show, a cable access program. It's a fairly close-knit group. When they are not practicing "we usually hang out, mostly together," D.J. said.

Those experiences have been coupled with lots of practice and sacrifices, said Don Wright, D.J.'s father.

"I've been there ever since the kids started," Wright said. "They've given up a lot of play time — playing football and basketball. Shona has tried to fit all this in and make them normal kids."

The group practices twice a week during the summer, but will practice once a week when school starts. Also, it has a mandatory tutorial session once a week.

"One thing that's stressed is that they have to maintain a B average," Wright said. "We want them to be academically gifted as well as musically gifted."

Musically, the group concentrates on r&b with a little gospel thrown in the mix. That's something that Apollo audiences eat up. But those audiences can be vicious. They've been known to boo, and years ago, throw stuff at people they don't like.

And there is the problem with Sandman, the Apollo clown that will sweep booed contestants off the stage.

D.J. isn't worried about any of that.

"We know we're going to be good," he said. "We have faith in ourselves, self confidence."

Cover 2 Cover

By Jeri Young
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Crossing Over Jordan:
A Novel
Linda Beatrice Brown
Ballentine Publishing
Group
1995
\$11



Brown

Greensboro author Linda Beatrice Brown has hit her stride.

A professor of humanities at Bennett College, she is a poet and lecturer as well as the author of the novel "Rainbow Roun' Mah Shoulder" and a collection of poetry, "A Love Song of Black Men."

Brown truly out does herself with "Crossing Over Jordan." Set in North Carolina, it is the poignant story of the daughters of emancipated slave Georgia McCloud.

Moving effortlessly between the future, 2012 and the past, Brown traces the legacy of Georgia's children, their loves and losses.

Centered around two women, mother and daughter Story and Hermine, "Crossing Over Jordan" details almost every aspect of Southern life from slavery to civil rights, with all parts in between covered in detail.

Brown is catapulted into the ranks of Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison. "Crossing" is a stunning cross between Naylor's "Mama Day" and Morrison's "Beloved," with shades of the Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" thrown in for good measure.

Moving and often sad, "Crossing" details the trials of mother and daughter, Story and Hermine, as they struggle to come to terms with the ever evolving South, and their own inability to openly care for one another.

Hermine is cajoled by Story to move back to North Carolina to care for her in her old age. Their relationship, always tense and unloving, becomes even more so as Hermine makes startling revelations about herself and her family.

Story is also coming to terms with her own childhood of

See Brown on page 2B

Is the blues losing color to wannabes ?



Bonnie Raitt

By Paul Shepard
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — William McDaniel remembers when Memphis' Beale Street was the blues capital of the world and the funkiest thoroughfare in the nation — a teeming black cauldron of juke joints, pool halls and unvarnished blues music.

"It was called 'Little Harlem.' It was a rough, raw area. It was the black mecca for music," said the professor of African American music studies at Ohio State University, who grew up on Beale Street.

But the Beale Street McDaniel returned to recently was anything but a black mecca.

"I was walking the streets with friends and stopped into a few clubs and saw several all-white bands playing the blues — trying to sound black. I didn't remember ever seeing that on Beale," he said. "Then it dawned on me that more than half the people walking around were white, too."

Samuel Charters, Connecticut-based author of nine books on the blues including the ground-

breaking "The Country Blues" in 1975, agrees that blues music has lost its bite.

"It's all frat music now produced for a white audience," he said.

Critics like Charters say the blues, America's blackest music steeped in rural tales of heartbreak and poverty, is moving away from its early traditions and is being altered by today's performers to appeal to white listeners.

"When blues was vital, it expressed life in the ghetto or the countryside, but the text mattered. The words no longer have any meaning for the white kids who are buying most of it," Charters said.

Blues lyrics have become "meaningless," and the musical underpinning of blues has changed, he said.

"It sounds like rock 'n' roll with blues flavoring," Charters said.

McDaniel said he welcomes increased white interest in blues music if it means greater recognition and financial security for old impoverished black blues masters. But he fears those benefits will come at a

price. "I call it the Eric Claptonitis of the music," McDaniel said, referring to the white British blues-rock guitarist. "From observing the music scene, it seems a large segment of the white community prefers the white imitators to the black originators. It's becoming white."

Frankie "Mr. Lucky" Halfacre, host of a blues radio show aired in Youngstown and Columbus, Ohio, agreed that blues has lost much of its swagger over the years. But he blamed blacks for neglecting the music.

"Real blues is more than just playing the guitar well. It has to have real-life experience behind it, and it's real hard to find that in white blues men," Halfacre said.

"But I think we kind of have given it away," he said. "When I take calls on the program, it's mostly white kids who want to learn about what I'm playing. When you go to shows, you see almost all whites."

White appropriation of black r&b licks goes back to Elvis Presley, who was a regular Beale Street visitor, and early British Invasion groups like The Rolling Stones and The Animals, whose renditions of blues classics like "Boom! Boom! Boom!" and "King Bee" swayed the hips of young whites.

Charters said the heavy, rootsy Mississippi Delta blues style held sway among black blues fans through the 1950s, but few whites liked the style.

"It was a bit intimidating for most white listeners," Charters said.

But that all changed when the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, led by a white harmonica player, caused a sensation at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival with blues electric guitar riffs played by a white artist.

"To that point, blues wasn't transferable to whites," Charters said. "The moment the electric guitar moved to the forefront, blues began to be associated with a young, white male audience."

For years, actual playing and signing of blues was one of the few aspects of the music dominated by blacks because the business side of the music, from club ownership to booking agents to record distribution, has generally been a white domain.

"For authors like me, agents, producers, blues music was a good way for whites to look into the African American community," Charters said. "Blues would open the door and we could walk through. I don't see that door being there now."

Accurately quantifying blues sales isn't easy, but it may have a long way to go to catch the top-selling rock and country genres.

America's top-selling album, by rap artist Nas, sold 144,000 copies in the week ending July 21. The top-selling blues album sold 7,000.



B.B. King

