

# 1B ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## Jakes CD offers good singing



By Winfred B. Cross  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

**T.D. Jakes Woman, Thou Art Loosed! Steven Ford & Marcus Dawson, producers Integrity Music/Word/Epic**

☆☆☆ 1/2

T.D. Jakes is one of the more popular television evangelists of the day. He makes a living from holding huge crusades or conferences on a variety of subjects. None are as popular as his "Woman, Thou Art Loosed!" series which was a class, then a book, a crusade. The crusade, held in the Louisiana Superdome, is now available on CD. It features Jakes, a superb choir and a host of women soloist who nearly raise the roof on the Superdome.

The title song is offered in three versions. Jakes delivers the lyrics as a sermon. It's powerfully moving without being overly preachy. The other versions are done by Sheryl Brady and Vickie Winans. Both are nicely done.

Jakes offers his vocal abilities on a worship medley "Sanctuary/Give Thanks." He's not a great singer, but he has a James Cleveland quality about him. He's knows how to sing.

But it's the women who take center stage on this effort. Juanita Bynum offers an inspiring a Capella version of "I Worship You Almighty God." Vickie Winans gets the audience clapping with "What A Mighty God We Serve." Betty Nelson's interesting soprano tackles "I'm Your First Husband." She twists notes in an odd way, but boy, does she sing this song.

Shirley Caesar has the standout performance. She's about the best there is at singing shouting songs and this is no exception. She whips the choir into a frenzy, even pulling Jakes into the fray on additional vocals.

Jakes fans will buy this just for the name, but anyone looking for a group of strong performances will appreciate this CD.

**Spearhead Chocolate Supa Highway Michael Franti and Stephen Marley, producers Capitol Records**

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A growing number of artists are combing different musical genres with varying degrees of success. Branford Marsalis and Guru come to mind as the most successful. Spearhead should be the next in line for such success.

The group combines reggae, hip-hop, jazz, funk and r&b into a wonderfully delicious mix. The lyrics get a bit spicy (the "f" word and a couple of others are banded about), but generally have something meaningful to say, especially

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## Artist offers three - dimensional art exhibit

By Winfred B. Cross  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Bill Hutson is a painter, not a sculptor. But you wouldn't think that by viewing his work.

Hutson never uses a flat canvas. He'll cover a shape with canvas and paint it, or maybe vice-versa.

Three-dimensional art is what he calls it. Visually stimulating is what it is. Hutson and his exhibit titled "Objects from Paris: 3 dimensional interactive paintings" will be on display Friday at Noel Fine Art Acquisitions in Hodges Taylor Gallery on Seventh Street. The exhibit runs through April 30. A reception for the artist is 6-8 p.m. Friday.

"Oftentimes we think of sculpture as any material that isn't canvas," said B.E. Noel, the space's owner. "Canvas covers the objects and he paints it. You almost have the extra gift of sculpture."

Eleven pieces will be on display and for sale. Some are designed to hang on walls, others to sit on a table. Most can be manipulated in different ways.

"That doesn't mean that every person which comes to the exhibit will be allowed to move them. If you own it, that's your option," Noel said.

Hutson, born and raised in San Marcos, Texas, believes art need not be a hands-off experience.

"Paris Objects" is the second exhibition in which I attempt to address the issue of touching art or 'viewer participation' in visual art," Hutson



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUNSON

B.E. Noel examines one of Bill Houston's unusual paintings.

said in his artist statement on the exhibit. "Inviting viewers to touch art is not new. Effective systems exist and numerous experiments have been conducted, designed for

people who suffer visual impairment or blindness. However, my work is addressed to viewers who can see, and it presents a chal-



HUTSON

lenge to viewers who may have forgotten or never knew how to look at art. This art invites viewers to 'look' with their eyes, and hands!"

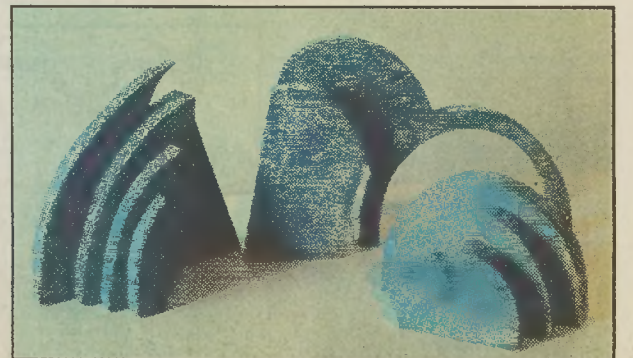
"Triple Arc" is such an invitation. The pieces can be sat upon a table close to each other or set in opposite corners of a room. It depends on the owner's mood. All are covered with canvas and painted. The end results look like denim, but with a calming effect.

"While many of my paintings are traditional-abstract images (not made to be touched or moved), several works presented in 'Paris Objects' precede art I intend to make; that will move-change or otherwise 'respond' when 'approached' by the viewer - in the same way, for example, a laser-controlled door opens or closes when approached," Hutson said. "I intend to make art that is painting, but will look back at you, show you an image of yourself looking, smell, make sounds or invite you to change it: for example, to satisfy or correspond with what you feel about the image as you see it."

Noel said artists such as Hutson are helping to reshape the image of African Americans in art.

"African Americans are generally not considered when we are looking at abstract art," she said. "We have a culture that's unique. Many of our artists have studied side by side with other artists at the great institutions."

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PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUNSON

"Triple Arc" is one of the many pieces featured in the exhibit.

## Singer grounded in '70s style

By Winfred B. Cross  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Eric Benet (pronounced ben-nay) is sitting at the bar of the Chop House, the new Charlotte night spot he's going to perform in, eyes transfixed on the television. Talk show host Rolanda Watts is doing a '70s show - in a crooked afro-puff and suede hot pants suit.

It's not Watts who's got Benet's attention, it's her guest Blue Magic, decked in blue Nehru collar suits. The group breaks into pure '70s choreography, gliding effortlessly into four-part harmony.

"You like that, don't you," I asked? He smiles broadly and shakes his head. "Yeah, that's when it was real," Benet said.

That's how I describe Benet - real, genuine, committed to his craft. His Debut CD **True To Myself** is filled with passionate music - all new except a remake of Sly Stone's "If You Want Me To Stay" - and honest singing.

He's one of a handful of new artists leading a return to real singing, real songwriting and, well, real talent. His stage show features real instruments, including a Hammond organ and drummer. Drum machines need not apply.

Benet refutes the idea that r&b has gone somewhere and found its way back. It's always been here.

"I think there have always been artists like Terrence Trent D'Arby... and Maxwell," Benet said. "It's a matter of corporate politics. We just weren't really being pushed."

But it doesn't bother him to be called an 'ol school artist.

"The standards I keep referring to are 'ol school," he said.

"For me, urban black music reached a creative peak in the '70s. For me to be compared to something in that era is nothing but a compliment."

Benet, 27, credits his influ-



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUNSON

Eric Benet chills before a sound check at the Chop House.

ences as Stevie Wonder, Donny Hathaway, Al Green and Earth, Wind & Fire. He also sang in church.

"That was the core, but I had a big classical musical collection. I also listened to the Beatles, Steely Dan, Joni

"I'm a huge Sly fan," he said. "Someone else suggested I do the song. I like the song because it's so crazy, it has no structure. It sounds spontaneous. There's no chorus, but it all works."

Benet loves to work. He's

*"For me, urban black music reached a creative peak in the '70s. For me to be compared to something in that era is nothing but a compliment."*

-Eric Benet

Mitchell and Queen."

Benet describes his music as "soul."

"It's honest, sincere. It's really just soul. But that doesn't necessarily mean urban music. I didn't approach that album with any particular theme. I just did the kind of music that made me fall in love with music."

Benet doesn't copy any of the artists he likes, but you can hear the influences. The greatest may be Sly Stone. Benet's use of rock guitar licks and funky horn arrangements harken to the day when Sly and the Family Stone ruled airwaves. Benet's take on Stone's "If You Want Me To Stay" is an absolute killer.

going out with Erykah Badu this month through May. His CD is gaining popularity with the singles "Spiritual Thang" and "Femininity." There's a possibility it could strike gold. Whatever happens, Benet will remain grounded.

"Musically, the standards I set for myself were established a long time ago. I would listen to (Stevie Wonder's) **Talking Book** over and over and over again. That's the kind of thing I'm aiming for. Professionally, I keep God first. I'm a firm believer that you don't have to stab people in the back to get where you want to go. You just keep throwing up the praise and the blessings keep coming down."

## New lead in B.I.G. case

By Constance Summer  
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES - Police released a detailed composite sketch last week of a gunman they say may have conspired with at least one other person to kill The Notorious B.I.G.

"We believe it was a targeted hit on the Notorious B.I.G.," said Lt. Ross Moen, declining to discuss any further who might have wanted to kill the rapper, or why.

Detectives believe at least one other person was involved in the killing, Moen said.

"We believe (there) may be ... more than one individual involved in the shooting, although there was only one shooter in the vehicle," Moen said.

The detectives said they seized a videotape in Houston that could shed more light on the March 9 killing of the rapper outside a party after the Soul Train Awards.

They declined to say what was on the videotape, made by Texas rap fans standing outside the party, or how specifically it would help the investigation.

"We believe the videotape will be instrumental in solving this case," Moen told reporters at a news conference.

A few minutes later, however, he said of the tape: "It's not the best clue. It's one more piece of evidence we have."

The 24-year-old rapper, whose given name was Christopher Wallace, was shot to death around 1 a.m. as he sat in a GMC Suburban outside the Petersen Automotive Museum, about to leave a party celebrating the awards show.

Wallace died of multiple 9mm gunshot wounds to his upper body.

Detectives are scouring the country for suspects, Moen said. "I can tell you we are going to make an arrest," Moen said. "I cannot tell you when."

Descriptions for the composite sketch of the gunman came from two of the six people in the Suburban with Wallace at the time he was shot, Moen said. Not all the witnesses in the car have been cooperative, he added.

The sketch shows a black man, in his early 20s, with a receding hairline, a light, neatly trimmed mustache, and a heart-shaped face. His hair is cut short and he is wearing an oxford-type shirt and bow tie.

Moen declined to say whether the man might have been a guest at the party.

"I'm drawing no conclusions on what the bow tie indicates," he said. "There were people there in tuxedos."

He also declined to say whether Wallace or anyone else in the car spoke with the gunman before the shooting.

The composite, done by the New York Police Department, was not altered after authorities received the videotape from Houston, Moen said.

The amateur videotape was made by rap fans outside the party hoping to see some of their favorite musicians. Instead, authorities said, the four women from Texas and two male friends witnessed one of the most high-profile killings of the year.

The women, who had come to Los Angeles with 15 other female friends, returned to Houston with the tape and did not notify authorities until the killing was featured in a March 15 episode of television's "America's Most Wanted," said Sheila Feren, a publicist for the show.