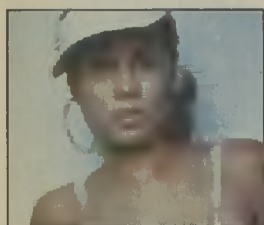


1D ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Tamia

Tamia
More
Various producers
Elektra Records



Tamia's third CD was delayed nearly a year because of health reasons which I'm told have been treated. The single "Officially Missing You" was released in the fall but wasn't well received. Pity. It's a good song.

Good best describes this CD. There's nothing that knocks me out, but that's how Tamia's work affects me. But the more I listen, the more I like. "More" (which was titled "Still") is a solid effort.

There are some trendy tracks. "On My Way" finds Tamia cooing and oohing over a fairly generic hip-hop track with materialistic lyrics. It's radio friendly as most Track Masters productions are, but a tad tepid. The title track is nearly a carbon copy, except the lyrics give the song more credence.

But forget those songs. Tamia shines when you sing mid-tempo grooves and ballads. "Officially Missing You" is both and shines like a diamond among coals. "Still" is one of the better songs Jermaine Dupri has produced and written. "Questions" is typical R. Kelly, which has recently come to mean great (is this man on a roll or what?). And "Poetry" may be Tamia's best vocal performance on this recording.

If there is a gripe it's that several of these songs have appeared somewhere else. "So Into You" is on a Fabolous CD and "(They Long To Be) Close To You" can be found on Gerald Levert's latest CD. That leaves 11 unheard songs, which could upset CD buyers who expect 17-20 songs on a disc.

Still, "More" is a fine effort. Tamia's voice is as arresting as ever and she's picked good stuff to sing. If you've asked for more, you certainly have it now.

Ratings

- Classic; ★★★★★
- Excellent; ★★★★★
- Good ★★★★★
- Fair ★★★★★
- Why? ★★★★★
- No stars - A mess ★

BET provides more 'exposure' for music videos



Hip-hop stars like Cassidy's videos are played on BET's late night show "Uncut."

By Nekesa Mumbi-Moody
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Given all the barely clad women that are booty-shaking, grinding and gyrating on BET during the day, it's hard to believe things could get any wilder after dark.

But as the rap group Whodini once rhymed, "the freaks come out at night." And on BET — already criticized for showing videos with a high T&A quotient — the videos become even more graphic during the wee morning hours on "BET Uncut."

While outright nudity is blurred out, the clips still contain enough sexual content to make R. Kelly blush. There's Ludacris' "Booty Poppin'" video, featuring close-ups of jiggling posteriors as women take it all off in a strip club. And in Nelly's "Tip Drill" video, women shake so wildly that bikini bottoms pop off, and a posse of leering men grab various body parts. Later, the women simulate sex acts with themselves.

"Everybody's doing them. I think it's a helluva promotional tool," said Luther "Luke" Campbell of 2 Live Crew fame, widely considered the godfather of scandalous music videos. "It gives an artist a chance to express themselves a little bit more."

In the hip-hop world, sex has long been part of that expression. Campbell's early '90s videos had bikinied women doing the butt-jiggle when "dirty dancing" was considered shocking. Tupac Shakur's "How Do You Want It" video in 1996 featured real porn stars (although they didn't have sex on camera). And these days, everyone from Snoop Dogg to Lil' Jon to G-Unit's Lloyd Banks are promoting videos that are actually X-rated.

Before, artists were mostly making sexually

oriented material for the underground market — providing them to strip clubs, or selling them as part of videos or DVDs. Now, they're bringing them directly to television, through places like "BET Uncut" and the Playboy network. And more outlets are growing for those who want to see more — or less — than a bikini.

"It's almost like the other videos are like foreplay and the uncut videos are the act themselves," says video director Nzingha Stewart, a woman who has directed clips for artists ranging from ODB to Common to Joss Stone.

"We all want to see videos uncut," says music producer Jermaine Dupri, who makes a cameo appearance in Nelly's "Tip Drill." "We hate making clean versions — I do. So 'Uncut,' they don't let us play the lyrics, but they let us do videos however we want to do it, so, it's another outlet for us."

Explicit videos aren't exclusive to rap. There were topless women on Motley Crue's 1987 video "Girls, Girls, Girls," which was recently featured on an uncensored rock videos DVD from Interscope. Madonna's "Erotica" video from 1992 featured the singer completely naked, obscured only by strategically placed black bars. (MTV played it, but only in the early morning hours.)

But the videos on "BET's Uncut" make Madonna seem as tame as Clay Aiken.

They typically feature full-figured black women dirty dancing at a frenetic pace. Close-ups are reserved not for faces, but for voluptuous posteriors. In Nelly's video, he swipes a credit card between a women's buttocks.

Even Big Boi of OutKast — an avid strip-

Please see BET/2D

Where's the party?

By Cheris F. Hodges
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Want to know where the parties are? Just ask your CUZCN, Cuzncity.com that is.

The website, which is a portal to upscale entertainment in the Queen City, is the brain child of 28-year-old Dare Odugbesan.

"We try to bring quality entertainment to Charlotte," he said. Cuzncity began as an email list in 2001. But Odugbesan wasn't touting the usual "grown and sexy" parties that most night clubs advertise every week. Cuzncity has sponsored networking parties at Latorre in uptown Charlotte, worked with Focus on Future Leader's voter registration drive and brought soul acts like Alicia Keyes, Bilal and Dwele to intimate settings at an affordable price.

According to the website, Cuzncity's mission is to enrich the entertainment scene with events of substance and culture.

Odugbesan says Cuzncity attracts both older and younger people with the events they sponsor. "We directly interact with our customers," he said. "We find out what people want and give them a chance to log on to the website and find something they are interested in."

Cuzncity plans parties other events, then targets the upwardly mobile urban professionals by sending e-vites to their inboxes.

Odugbesan said Cuzncity is all about having fun, and it's not just limited to Charlotte. The Nigerian native works with a team of 12 other people, including four in Charlotte and some in Africa.

"This is global," he said. Cuzncity is more than just advertisement for parties. According to the website, Cuzncity is a full service entertainment company. The company promotes club events, film festivals, themed getaways and celebrity sporting events.

The company had its official website launch party last month, bringing Cuzncity to the forefront of the Charlotte nightlife scene.



Beanie Sigel

Short-film festival brings reel drama at Afro Center



Driving Fish

By Artellia Burch
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"Reel Soul" a bi-monthly short film festival, intends to bring the drama to the Afro-American Cultural Center Friday for two shows.

The films — "Driving Fish" and "Next Tuesday" — will bring something different to the event yet the pieces all

have one common ingredient: drama.

This month's event is called "Save The Drama," which "Reel Soul" producer Dennis Darrell says he picked the name for a reason.

"This event will showcase different dramas about black life," he said. "There are four new films that are making their premieres in Charlotte. We have 'Driving Fish,' that's about a young girl that grows up without her father. The films show what happens to her because of it. 'Next Tuesday' is about a father and his son. I can't wait for the dialogue after this film. Some brothers are going to have some moments."

"Scratches" is incredible. I can't wait to show this film. It is for every player and every person show has been played. It's funny but it's deep. It shows how this person became a player."

A unique part of "Reel Soul" is the organizers give the audience an opportunity to talk and share their views on each film.

Darrell says he believes the combination is special to film lovers.

"We have good films and even greater dialogue," he said. "Sometimes I forget parts of the movies but I always remember what was said. The dialogue makes it more than a film event it makes it a happening."



"Reel Soul" will be held Friday at the Afro-American Cultural Center.

Rapper pleads to drug, gun charges

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHILADELPHIA — Beanie Sigel, a Philadelphia rapper who was a protégé of rap superstar Jay-Z, pleaded guilty last Thursday to federal drug and weapons charges.

Under federal sentencing guidelines, Sigel faces about three years in prison when he is sentenced July 8, authorities said.

Please see BEANIE/3D