

Holy hip hop makes play for ears and souls of young

By Victoria Elmore
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Teens are embracing a new genre of clean rap with positive messages.

Holy Ghost Explosion, an event for teenagers, was held last week at Emanuel Church of All Nations on South Pond Boulevard. Christian rap artists such as Tawana Ross, who was host of the event and producer Crucial, among other artist performed in front of many young people who showed up to have a good time.

Holy hip hop, better known as Christian rap or gospel rap, has been around since the early 1990s. It is a form of hip hop that is centered around Christian themes and faith. Many Christian rap artists convey lyrics about their past experiences prior to becoming a Christian, to let young people know that God brought them out. Other artists rap about their life as Christians. In the end, the messages are all positive and the lyrics lift up the artists' faith.

Michael Stanfield, the co-leader of the Youth Ministry at Mt. Carmel Baptist Church and team leader for Holy Culture Ministry, has a positive outlook on holy hip hop. He feels anyone is wel-

come to listen to the music and attend the events.

"A church member could bring you to a holy hip hop event. At the end of the event, they ask you if you are saved," Stanfield said.

He stressed that the purpose of the question is not to embarrass young people, but to extend the opportunity to be saved in a warm manner. "It's not about pressuring teens, but simply sharing the Gospel in another way. It's very inspiring."

Teens learn a lot about music and themselves at holy hip hop events. Stanfield said that young people who involve themselves in the concerts learn how to appreciate a different genre of music other than secular rap music.

"Teens will have the ability to continue to love the music because it is music with a purpose," he said.

Stanfield started a foundation called Words of Wisdom and he bases the principles on a basic formula: "First thing they do is hear the beat. Second, they hear and repeat the lyrics," Stanfield said. "If what they learn, hear, and repeat is based on scripture, how can we go wrong?"

Many Baptist churches hold holy hip hop events, Stanfield said, as a positive

atmosphere for teens to dance, fellowship, and mingle with other young folk their age. Rev. Casey R. Kimbrough, pastor of Mount Carmel Baptist Church, is optimistic about the events and feels that it is a great place for teenagers to go. He even allows his teen-aged son to attend. "The holy hip hop events usually take place in the gymnasium of a church. It's a very positive atmosphere, I've been there," Kimbrough said. "It's a lot better than clubs."

Holy hip hop shows are targeted to ages 12 to college students. The event serves as a place to fellowship with other believers and mentorship for teenagers who can look up to rap artists who aren't following EET.

"I think the entire recreation of the culture serves as mentorship process. It gives young people the opportunity to create their own culture," Stanfield said.

Every holy hip hop event begins with a warm welcome. "Every event opens with standing praise and worship. Then the artists come and perform their hip hop beat," Stanfield said. "All lyrics are based on scripture."

Mary Mary share life experiences

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times try to get in the way, but we want to always do what is pleasing to Him," Erica said.

"Mary Mary" is an album about life experiences and the messages that come out of them. The sisters want listeners to enjoy their music but also acknowledge the words. They said that there are messages of hope, faith, peace, and joy in words.

"God's sovereignty is the message of our album. Don't just listen to the beats," Tina said. "We take our time with our lyrics, so don't get caught up in the music."

Tina and Erica are dedicated to their careers but they take on a daily task that they consider more important - family time. "We spend time with our children and husbands. It gets hard, but you have to work hard at what you do," Erica said. "Family

is a God-ordained order. We wouldn't be right on stage if we didn't get it right at home."

There is a time to stand still and a time to act; the gospel sisters have learned to discern between the two. On track nine of their latest album, Erica and Tina sing of acknowledging God's desire for his people to realize He's in control, therefore they can rest.

The sisters find the time between traveling and relaxing with family to get along with God.

"You have to make the time, it won't present itself. You have to prioritize and we try to do it," Tina said. While traveling and staying up late, the artist finds time to read her Bible.

Touring has been a time an excitement for Mary Mary. They said that hanging out with Franklin has been

thrilling. "It's been a lot of fun. We've been following him for years," Tina said. Erica feels that she and Tina vibe with Franklin. "We have a similar purpose in that we want to affect young people. It's a part of who we are," she said.

The sisters said they don't serve a boring God. This is a truth that they want the world to know, especially teens. "When young people go to concerts, they want it to feel like a party. And we like to party," Tina said. "But we don't compromise the God we serve while having fun."

The gospel artist feels that having a good time is not a bad thing, but there are limits. "We enjoy ourselves like God wants us to do and wear nice clothes," she Tina said, "But we aren't naked."

Gay activists arrested at Va. college

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permitted on campus, saying he would not allow his school to be used for a media event aimed at raising money for

gay rights. "Neither will we permit them to espouse opinions or otherwise suggest beliefs or lifestyles that are in opposi-

tion to the morals and values that this institution promotes," he said in a statement issued earlier.



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Source: The Media Matrix National Black-targeted newspaper report 2003

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