

D Section



Governor's pardon

Forgive R&B artist for being true to old school

By Cheris F. Hodges
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His real name is Governor, last name Washington. Yes, he's on TI's Grand Hustle label, but he's not a rapper. He's a soul man and a regular guy.

"I'm a guy who struggled and has a dream," he said. "I'm trying to put the blues back in R&B." Tonight, Governor will perform for the first time at The Jazz Café, 2127 Ayrsley Town Blvd. Door open at 6 p.m. and the performance begins at 8 p.m. Admission is \$10.

Governor, a native of Virginia, got his start like most singers, in the church.

"I've been singing



Governor, who says his mission is to "put the blues back in R&B," will perform tonight at The Jazz Café in Charlotte.



'Way Up!' a slam dunk

Wayman Tisdale
Way Up!
Various producers
Rendezvous Entertainment



Wayman Tisdale's basketball career may have been spotty, but he's yet to miss as a recording artist.

True, his albums don't sell millions, but the quality has been outstanding. "Way Up!" is Tisdale's latest and possibly the best of the bunch.

Tisdale doesn't reinvent the wheel or anything, he simply offers superb musicianship with solid songs.

Tisdale takes the approach of most smooth jazz artists - offering a couple of well-known r&b songs set to jazz and a number radio friendly new songs. Tisdale chose Kool & The Gang's "Get Down On It" and a Sly & The Family Stone gem called "If You Want Me To Stay." On each, Tisdale shows his skills as a bass player are more than capable to transfer r&b into something jazzy. "If You Want Me To Stay" is especially tasty with Kirk Whalum's silky sax gliding gracefully through Tisdale's athletic bass work.

Tisdale's best work may be George Duke on "Tell It Like It Is." Duke's keyboard work is as steady as always and his production on the track juices Tisdale's performance. This should be a precursor to an entire CD produced by Duke.

Tisdale's other offerings are nearly as memorable. Eric Benet's vocals are a delicious touch to "Sweet Dreams." Dave Koz guests on the CD's second best song, "My Son (A Song For Bubba)." And Jonathan Butler's acoustic guitar and haunting vocals make "Sunday's Best" a perfect way to close this CD.

I don't know if Tisdale misses the NBA, but I do know he's certainly found his calling.



Ratings

Classic: ☆☆☆☆☆

Excellent: ☆☆☆☆☆

Good: ☆☆☆☆☆

Fair: ☆☆☆☆☆

Why? ☆☆☆☆☆

No stars - A mess

Please see HUNT/2D

Please see JENNINGS /2D

A & E

Cancelling 'BET Uncut' based on money, not pressure

By Cheris F. Hodges
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Has BET cleaned up its act? The controversial "BET Uncut," a video program which showed the raunchier side of hip-hop, has been pulled from the air waves.

But the videos, mostly shot in strip clubs, featured strippers and other barely-dressed women, will still be available on the internet at www.BETuncut.net, although it is not clear if the website is affiliated with the network.

So, after six years, why did BET drop the show?

Debra Lee, CEO of BET, told EURWEB, "It was a great show for a segment of our audience, it was always controversial because it took videos to a different level. Because of all the new programming we're doing, my view was it was time for that show to end."

Fans of the show aren't happy and have started a petition to have the bootfest

brought back on the air. An Internet petition, which has been circulating since early July, has about 567 signatures.

Two years ago, students at Atlanta's all-women Spelman College brought national attention to the program after Nelly's "Tip Drill" video aired, showing the rapper swiping a credit card through a woman's backside.

Spelman students wanted the show canceled but a network spokesman said that wasn't

going to happen, because "Uncut" had a cult-like following.

Michael Lowellen, a network spokesman, told USAToday in 2004, that "BET Uncut" was specifically for adults and the show allowed artists to express themselves.

But, says Johnson C. Smith communications arts professor and television expert Neenga Burton, Ph.D., cancelling "Uncut" isn't some benevolent move on the part of the network.

"If 'Uncut' was a financial benefit to them, it would still be on the air," Burton said. "In this industry, it's about the bottom line."

Burton said the lack of advertising money coupled with years of complaints about the show is more than likely the real reason why 'Uncut' was pulled.

"It's a good thing they're trying to clear up their image," she said. "It's about 30 years too late."

Hunt is certain he's a hitmaker, he's just not sure when

By Nekesa Moody
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK - Van Hunt's guitar-laden rock 'n' soul riffs have earned critical raves and drawn comparisons to greats like Prince.

But for all the laurels he's received for his self-titled 2004 debut and this year's follow-up, "On The Jungle Floor," the one thing the 29-year-old singer-songwriter hasn't achieved is commercial success.

Appearances on shows such as "Late Night With David Letterman" and plenty of buzz have yet to help Hunt break through on urban radio, where hip-hop and slick R&B dominate, or on today's heavily formatted pop stations.

Yet Van Hunt refuses to accept the idea that his music may be too esoteric or abstract to appeal to a mass audience.

"I do think they can be hits - they just need to be played,"

Hunt says of his songs. "I sit down and I write and I make sure that it follows the code of Songwriting Craft 101. I've got hits... I need DJs."

There's not a hint of arrogance as the Atlanta-based

musician's attitude-just a cool confidence. Hunt isn't worried about whether folks will finally catch on to his sound -he's just biding his time until it happens.

"Anything that is different for long enough, it becomes legitimate, so I think by the third record, we'll establish the name as a brand and people will get into it," says Hunt, wearing his signature head scarf, over an eel sushi lunch at an upscale Manhattan restaurant.

"I always knew I was an artist, and even more importantly, a star," Hunt declares.

And he's got the backing of a man who's helped create the biggest star-making machine of the last few years on his side - "American Idol" judge Randy Jackson.

Given that he's become famous for advising wannabe pop stars how to fashion their voice for ultimate mass appeal, Jackson's link to Hunt might seem a bit peculiar. But Jackson has been his manager going back almost a decade, when Hunt was a Morehouse dropout looking to make his mark as a songwriter and producer.

"I just fell in love with songwriting and his commitment to himself as an artist," says Jackson, who describes Hunt's sound as "if you put Neil Young, Sly Stone, Al Green in a blender."

At the beginning of his career, Hunt's sound was being performed by others. His breakthrough was the song "Hopeless," which he



Van Hunt is sure that he'll reach the top of the charts.

Songs in the key of Lyfe: Jennings back with 'The Phoenix'

By Cheris F. Hodges
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It's hard to believe Lyfe Jennings is back with a new record already.

After all, his first album is still getting a lot of air play-especially the single "Must Be Nice." But the R&B singer is set to release "The Phoenix" on August 15.

"This album is named for my son, whose name is Phoenix and for the mytho-

logical bird the Phoenix that was reborn through fire," he said. "Our fires are day to day stuff that no one talks about."

At a tour stop in Charlotte earlier this week, Jennings talked about lessons that he's learned since the release of his self-titled debut and where he is now. It's also easier for Lyfe to get his music played on the radio these days.

"Radio knows that I can pull their audience now," he said.

The first single is "S-E-X" and it's No. 21 on the Billboard charts, although the song isn't about a romp in the hay. It's about a voluptuous young girl and how the men in the neighborhood want to sleep with her.

"As soon as a woman starts developing, she gets all of this attention immediately," he said. "No one ever talks about that."

Jennings knows what he's

singing about because the singer said that when he returned home from jail, he ran into situations where he'd see a pretty girl and have a conversation with her only to find out that she was 16 years old.

"I would keep it moving," he said.

But for those men who don't, he said he hopes the track will get them thinking about their own nieces or daughters.