

Harlem Renaissance Broke Cultural Color Barrier

By Russ Lane
Staff Writer

A rush of black creativity hit mainstream America following World War I. Called the Harlem Renaissance, the intellectual, political and artistic movement drew from within and beyond the northern section of Manhattan's 96th street. It was the first influx of black culture that penetrated mainstream American thought.

The Renaissance gained momentum through a combination of social outrage and literary aspirations. After the "Red Summer" of 1919, in which black WWI veterans were lynched, Harlem intellectuals combined their sense of social injustice with the yearning for art to

reflect the black populace.

In the Renaissance's early period, this energy was harnessed and directed by National Association for the Advancement of Colored People founder W.E.B. DuBois. Believing that the "Talented Tenth" of the Negro populace would bring social change, DuBois encouraged blacks to use the arts to address racial injustice with class and sophistication.

Generally known for its central figures Langston Hughes and "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" scribe James Weldon Johnson, the Harlem Renaissance's focus was larger than literature. The Renaissance generated 10 volumes of poetry, five Broadway plays, three ballets and a deluge of essays, short stories,

verse, paintings and sculpture.

Manhattan's theater district featured black artists both on and offstage. Composers Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake served as Harlem's equivalent to Rodgers and Hammerstein, penning "Ain't Misbehaving," "Porgy," and "Shuffle Along," which introduced singer-dancer Josephine Baker.

Outside of musicals, Langston's Hughes' play "Mulatto" became a Broadway success, an unprecedented feat for a play written by an black. Oscar Micheaux became the first black director, making movies with and for blacks.

The movement also spawned several black news journals, which drew attention to many of the Renaissance's literary giants. In addition to the Urban League's

Opportunity, The Messenger and the DuBois-edited Crisis became the epicenters of the movement.

The 1920s were also the golden age of jazz and blues, with New York serving as one of its meccas. As Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong moved to New York, jazz left New Orleans speakeasies behind and found white recognition in venues like the Cotton Club.

The earthy sound and risqué subject matter of jazz and the blues was generally ignored by the Talented Tenth, since its themes undermined the projected image of "high culture." Despite receiving no endorsement by the Renaissance elite, the growing popularity of jazz slowly blurred the color lines, much to the chagrin of traditionalist America.

The racial tension that fueled the Harlem's artist also affected political thought. Black Nationalism gathered grassroots support, epitomized by Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" rhetoric. Although Garvey's separatist theories were in direct contrast to DuBois' concern about black assimilation, Garvey's movement crumbled following his imprisonment for mail fraud. Aside from its politics, the Harlem Renaissance's lasting impact ascended the black experience into high art. Its collection of writers, actors, musicians and artists becomes the forerunners of black creativity.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

CULTURE

From Page 1

"blaxploitation" films.

"There are five portrayals of African Americans in film - Toms, Coons, Mulattos, Mammies or Bucks. I think there's been a broadening of roles, but those portrayals can't be thrown out," Amana said, adding that even actors such as "Jerry Maguire" star Cuba Gooding Jr. play roles that reinforce the stereotypes.

He cited the Academy Awards as a gauge for the roles for which mainstream America typecast black actors.

"If Denzel Washington wins for Hurricane this year ... he will be the first actor that wins a role that is not a sidekick," Amana said.

"Even Sidney Poitier won for a role that was basically a sidekick. Whoopi Goldberg was the intermediary between a white couple in 'Ghost.' There hasn't been any Academy Award-winning

black actor who hasn't been a variation of the sidekick role."

Like film, television has taken an active role in combatting these archetypes of black roles.

Far from the projects of "Good Times" and the junkyard of "Sanford and Son," blacks have striven, through television, to give audiences a different taste of black life.

In 1984, "The Cosby Show" broke ground, changing the way audiences thought of black family life.

Riding on its coattails, shows like "A Different World," "Family Matters" and "The Jaime Foxx Show" pushed to do the same.

Meanwhile, the WB and UPN networks, in addition to Black Entertainment Television, continue to showcase black talent and promote diversity.

"Black people now appreciate the aspect of blackness," Harris said. "Through the 1960s there was still a 'pigmentocracy' (in which the shade of

blackness was an issue).

"But after the idea of 'black is beautiful' was introduced to people and television shows like 'The Cosby Show' featured a cast that were all shades of blackness, there is less an emphasis today."

But even with such progress, a push for more diversity on the tube continues. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People gained much attention last summer when it threatened to boycott the four major networks because of a deficit in minority television characters.

The real results of the push seem somewhat ambiguous, but networks have promised to get more faces of color on the small screen.

As black representation on television is still suffering from growing pains, the relatively quick rise and domination of hip hop is the most recent example of black impact on mainstream thought.

More than just music, hip hop is a culture in itself, defining the manner in which people dress, speak and act.

Lost City Music and Video Co-owner Eric Ose, whose merchandise is focused on hip-hop culture, said the music created an industry of satellite businesses.

"Hip hop is more than just the music - it's clothing; it's shoes; it's a lot of stuff. The clothing labels and other businesses have spawned out of the music's widespread popularity," Ose said.

The hip-hop "industry" has invaded mainstream culture, particularly among the nation's younger demographic. This fascination with the cultural contributions made by blacks is not new.

"It seems to be the latest example of what has been a continuous phenomenon throughout the 20th century - the availability of black pop culture as an expression of youthful rebellion, which serves as a mean of expression that (youth) can control," said Perry Hall, associate professor of African-American studies.

The impulses behind the cultural cycle are rooted in white fantasies about black living. Harris said black culture's

ability to enter the American mainstream was historically based on a sense of voyeurism.

Ose said this voyeurism was more prevalent in modern youth culture than ever before.

"You've got these suburban white kids now that want to be black," Ose said.

"They fantasize about being a thug, a player, and there are a lot of hip-hop artists willing to project that image whether they live it or not."

While Hall said black culture could blur racial distinctions and promote diverse appreciation, Harris said this acceptance did not necessarily terminate racism in America.

"I make a distinction between acceptance of the culture and the acceptance of the people," Harris said. "It's far easier to listen to a rap record than to invite a black person to dinner."

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

MARATHON

From Page 1

basketball, shag lessons and taeco.

Amid all the activities were the families whose lives were affected by the Marathon for more than just 24 hours.

In an emotional final hour, the families had the chance to express their gratitude and share their personal testimonies with the dancers and volunteers.

"It has been very exciting to be part of this," Rosetta Morphis said. Morphis' daughter, Amanda, receives treatment for cystic fibrosis from the hospital. "Amanda has had so much fun."

The Duren family has been involved with the Dance Marathon since it began a year ago. Carlos Duren, whose son C.J. benefits from Dance Marathon funds, said his family was always greeted with smiling faces, and the Marathon was an overall pleasurable experience.

"They're taking their time to do this, and we appreciate it," he said. "We'll be back."

Several doctors from the hospital also shared their feelings of appreciation with the crowd. Dr. Tim Bukowski, director of pediatric urology at the N.C. Children's Hospital, said the children were the special motivation behind his job and the marathon.

By the end of the event, the love, support and unity behind one goal were clearly visible. Joined in a huge circle, the dancers and volunteers swayed and sang along to James Taylor's "Carolina in My Mind."

With smiles on their faces and tears in their eyes, the dancers and volunteers surrounded the children as they played with a giant bouncing ball along with the ram mascot.

"It's something you just don't completely understand," Cooley said. "You don't realize until the end what you're doing."

The University Editor can be reached at udesk@unc.edu.

EDWARDS

From Page 1

Billy Mitchell, UNC-CH's fire safety officer, said the recent fires showed the proposal was needed on many university campuses.

But he said UNC-CH was already following its own plan to install sprinklers in some of its residence halls.

"(The University) is looking at putting sprinklers in Morrison (Residence Hall). It's going to be the first high rise (with sprinklers)," Mitchell said. "Fire safety-wise, I feel pretty good about Carolina."

Chapel Hill officials also passed an ordinance requiring sprinklers in fraternity and sorority houses after the Phi Gamma Delta tragedy.

But Lautenberg said the federal government was also responsible for ensuring the safety of student residence halls.

"It is never too late to protect young lives, especially with the sort of obvious approach contained in this legislation."

The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.

A Triangle Women's Health Clinic

Low cost termination to 20 weeks of pregnancy. Call for an appointment Monday - Saturday.

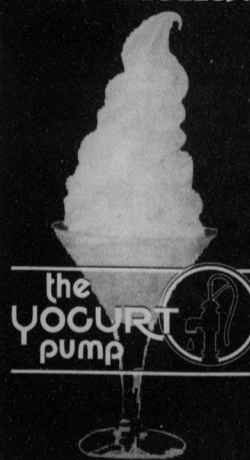
FREE Pregnancy Testing "Dedicated to the Health Care of Women."

942-0011

www.womanschoice.com
101 Connor Dr., Suite 402
Chapel Hill, NC

across from University Mall
ABORTION TO 20 WEEKS

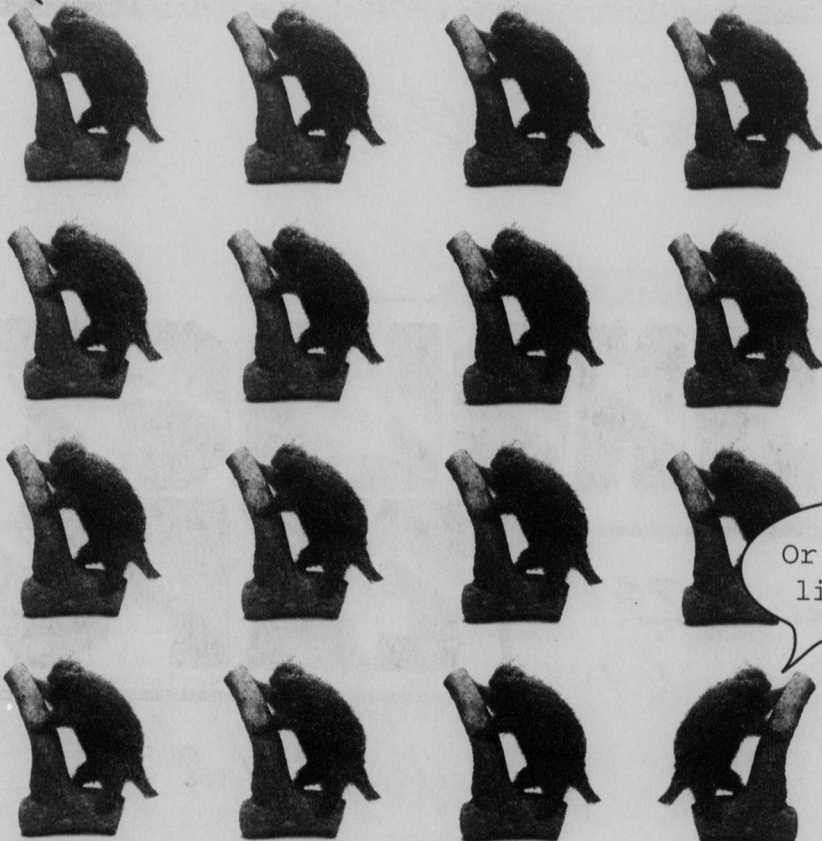
Yogurt is our menu!



Downtown Chapel Hill • 942-PUMP
106 W. Franklin St. (Next to He's Next Here)

North Durham • 286-7868
Northgate Mall (Next to Carousel)
Mon-Sat 11:30am-11pm, Sun 12pm-11:30pm

Find people like you.



Or nothing like you.

©2000 CollegeClub.com

Share common interests. DiSCOVER different views. Join cLubs.

Meet fRienDs. MaKe NeW ones. YOU never knOw what

you'll FInD at CollegeClub.com. Log on!

CollegeClub.com
it's all U.™

No porcupines, living, dead or otherwise, were harmed in the creation of this advertisement.