

Raid

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Twenty weapons and several ounces of what appears to be cocaine were also seized during the bust, said Metropolitan Police Department Lt. James Dillon. FBI investigators said the estimated street value of one ounce of cocaine was between \$750 and \$1,000.

Police would not elaborate about how much of a dent Wednesday's bust would have on area drug sales.

"We feel this will make a significant difference in the (residents') quality of life and hopefully reduce the decay of this neighborhood," said Metro Sgt. Greg McCurdy. "This is

another fine example of a coordinated law enforcement effort."

Police said they had been investigating the suspected ring for more than 2-1/2 years, focusing the investigation in February 1995.

"In order to have cases that can be presented and survive the scrutiny of the U.S. Attorney's Office, we have to build cases slowly," Dillon said. "It takes a lot of time, energy and money."

The ultimate goal is to keep the suspects off the street for as long as possible, he said. If convicted on all counts, suspects will spend a minimum of five years in prison.

Darryl Jackson, the landlord of the Madison Avenue property, spoke up later after the drug bust.

"I'm not trying to say what these people are doing is right; it's very wrong.... but these people pay their rent, they have children, they feed them and send them to school," Jackson said.

"As far as what happened today, we knew that was going to happen, we knew it was coming," Jackson said.

He said landlords are sometimes leery of evicted possibly violent tenants for fear of retribution.

But Wednesday's raid, "was

a long time coming," Jackson said, "it was well overdue."

However police spokesman McCurdy said every effort would be made to seize properties, if it can be proven that the owners - who at press time have not been identified - can be shown to have had prior knowledge that drugs were being sold at the locations.

Arguably, the timing of the bust could not have been better for the local program. Less than a month ago, seeding program manager Franklin Simpson came under fire from local print media for implementing his portion of the initiative too slowly.

The partial weeding of his affected area could make his job easier by making area residents happy, Simpson said.

"The opinion was expressed by the West Las Vegas residents that they want this illicit trade out of their area," he said.

Community groups "are excited about these kinds of activities," Simpson said, "because it presents the opportunity for resident-driven initiatives to play a role in the restoration of these blighted neighborhoods."

Community activist Beatrice Turner agrees.

"My concern was that they needed to do something to shut down," the crack houses, Turner said. "It's always drugs being

dealt there, and it's time for the community to take back the community."

"We can no longer allow that white elephant to stand in the middle of our community, and say it ain't there," she said.

Conference

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When asked to comment on the relationship between artists and radio, Gibson - who is considered by many to be the dean of black disc jockeys - said, "a lot of artists that I've dealt with in my 3,000 years on the radio scene are humble at first," he said. Then they become well known and they "get an entourage and forget who helped them."

Aspiring recording artists were advised to be both persistent and creative in getting their demo tapes played on the radio. DiPrima urged new artists to make certain they get their tapes to people who can help them. "Go to the right person at the station....," she urged. "Don't say, 'I got my tape to the janitor and he's gonna hook me up.'"

Gibson recalled a story about how a woman plied him with down-home food like peach cobbler and pork chop sandwiches for a week before asking him to listen to her three boys sing.

This was the second drug sweep held in West Las Vegas by the Weed and Seed program. Officials would not disclose whether a similar raid is planned for the Meadows Village area behind the Stratosphere hotel..

"What was I going to say?" Gibson told the audience. The woman was Bernice Isley and the three boys were the Isley Brothers.

When a few audience members complained about the lack of imagination and abundance of profanity in some rap songs Stan Washington, editor of the Atlanta World, said, "there's a book you can use, it's called Webster's."

Local college student and rapper Joe Ellis praised the music conference for answering many of his questions about the industry. Ellis, who describes his work as "laid back," said he welcomed the opportunity to network which the conference provided. Like many others who attended, he felt the \$50 registration fee was well worth it.

Theodore Samuel, a local songwriter, said he attended the conference to meet other people and to promote his recording, "Second Chances," performed by Roxanne Warren.

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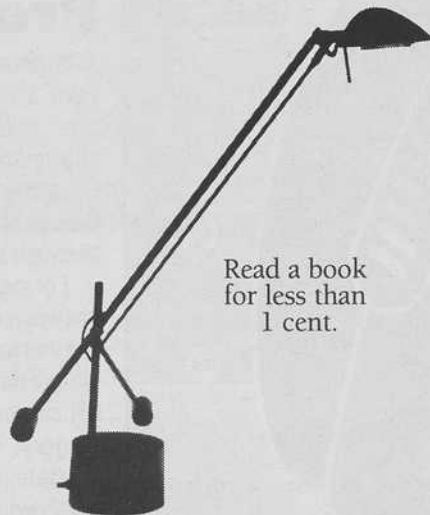
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