

ENTERTAINMENT

# Local rapper gets break, flies at the Thunderbird

By John T. Stephens III  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Local rapper TDK's career got a huge lift recently when he gave a live performance at the Thunderbird Hotel, 1213 South Las Vegas Blvd.

TDK, a 12-year veteran of hip-hop, began rapping on friends' answering machines and making demo tapes to advertise himself as a rapper and last week's performance could be just what the artist needs to go big.

Prior to the Thunderbird performance, TDK — a Columbus, Ohio native and Cimarron High School graduate — found his only success as an underground rapper — a term used to describe an artist whose work is not played by mainstream radio or can only be found on mixed tapes.

His underground hits included "Russian Roulette," "I Hold the World Hostage," and "The Gambling State."

"Hip Hop culture is a lifestyle that is not a fad or a trend that will go away," said Patricia Cunningham, host of Speak Out and Community

## Arts

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American artists, thanks to the gallery.

Encouraged, resident artists have reached out individually to exhibit their work beyond the gallery locally as well as out of state. Harold Bradford has work on exhibit in New Orleans and Johanna Volgelsang will be exhibiting in April at the art gallery at UNLV.

Most Saturday mornings, Bradford finds himself actively involved in the artist's workshop at the studio. According to Bradford, "If you're going to have an artists' community and you're serious about art, this is the place to be. We learn from each other here—interaction is important because it comes with constructive criticism."

Earl Dunbar, a retiree for now, and former Housing Division of the City Government employee in Ft. Wayne, Ind., spends his Saturday mornings at the artists' studio and is a student in Bradford's art class at UNLV. Dunbar, a self-taught painter, took up painting 10 years ago. "My work has changed a lot since I joined 'The Left of Center' family of artists," he said.

The gallery is open Thursdays and Fridays from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It is located at 2207 W. Gowan in North Las Vegas.

For info, call 647-7378.

Roundtable on KCEP-88.1 FM.

Baggy clothes, gold hoop earrings, high-priced tennis shoes and other fashion typify the hip-hop generation which, according to TDK, began back east in the south Bronx.

Hip-Hop sprang from the experience of inner-city Black youth.

Rap was used to express creativity, showcase verbal dexterity, assert intelligence and tell about how rough life can be in an urban jungle or an unjust society.

"Rap is the money portion of the Hip Hop culture," TDK

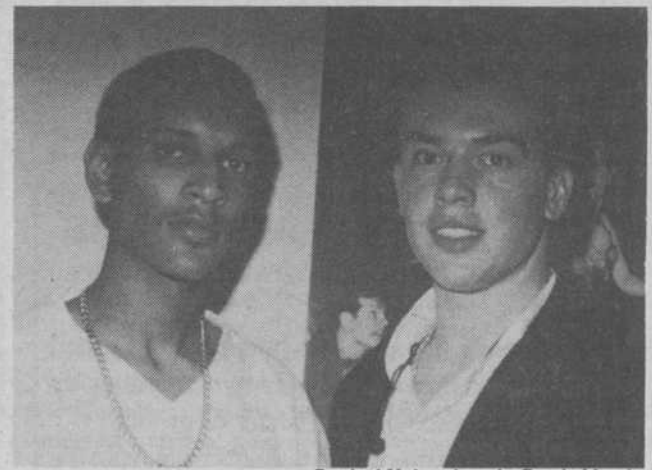
said.

And the genre produces billions annually. Increasingly, "mainstream" companies are latching on to the potential financial boon. Pepsi, Calvin Klein and Levis-Strauss have all used rappers to promote their products and tap into the lucrative market of urban blacks and suburban white rap fans.

Hip Hop culture flourished in the mid-1990s. "Yo! MTV Raps," which first aired in 1992 put the art form in the mainstream. It hasn't looked back since. Just check movie soundtracks.

TDK, a 22-year-old teller at a Wells Fargo Bank branch, got his break because Nevada Stupak, whose father once owned the cash-strapped Stratosphere Hotel and currently owns the Thunderbird Hotel, gave him a chance. "Thanks to my boy, Nevada, I have a place to showcase my skills," said TDK, who plans to return to Ohio to attend Newark College.

Despite its commercialization, rap hasn't lost its elemental nature, TDK said. Rap is "a poem expressing itself over the beats. It's all based on African chants and poetry."



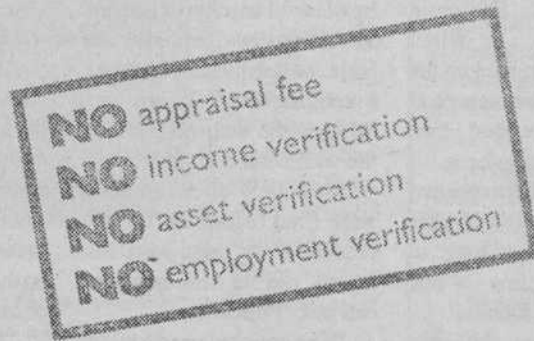
Sentinel-Voice photo by Randy Merritt

Music promoter Nevada Stupak, right, embraces hip-hop recording artist TDK during his recent performance at the Thunderbird Hotel on the Las Vegas Strip.

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