

ENTERTAINMENT

Melody Makers paving way for talented youth

Catisha Marsh
Sentinel-Voice

The Melody Makers performed to a sold-out crowd at the House of Blues Friday and they were fabulous. There wasn't one square inch of space in the place.

The Ghetto Youths International opened the show. The group is a masterful idea started by brothers Ziggy and Stephen. Ghetto Youths, based in Jamaica, is a label aimed at attracting talented youth who do not have inroads into the music industry.

Stephen, Rohan, Julian and Damian "Jr. Gong" Marley form the nucleus of the group, and they feature an eclectic assortment of artists, rappers, a flag waver and others (whose purposes I have yet to ascertain). All in all, there were 11 rugged-

looking rastafarians on-stage, dressed down in green camouflage fatigues. Each beat had more bottomed-out bass than the one before it, as the artists took turns, rapping, singing, and chatting over the hip hop-inspired rhythms. They sang "Changes," "Pharoah, Won't You Let My People Go," and "U Nah Mean" among others. In each song, the band would break the beat somewhere in the middle and the drummer hit the drums—1-2, 1-2-3—while everyone would jump up and down onstage. The audience followed right along, jumping up and down, shaking the building. They performed for an hour, bringing out a little boy to chat over the final beat, driving the audience insanely wild. Ghetto Youths International oozed raw



Sentinel-Voice photo by Kim Edwards

Ziggy Marley strums his guitar during a House of Blues performance Friday.

energy over phat tracks and beats and music, capturing the very essence of being young in urban culture.

The Melody Makers took the stage and performed at least four songs from their

newest album, "Spirit of Music", which features co-production from Don Was of Rolling Stones fame—the first time an "outsider" has blessed the musical production of the group.

They performed "Beautiful Day," "Higher Vibration," "You Got My Love," and "One Good Spliff."

Now, I related to "One Good Spliff" completely and "You Got My Love" was an endearing love song, both featuring Stephen on lead.

I didn't like the rock beats and feel of the other songs. I understand that artists must explore their horizons and all, but I think they should stick to the reggae.

And that's what most of the show was about—strictly roots and culture. The level of energy on stage was incredible and it was amazing that no one crashed into anyone else with all of the dancing and jumping going on.

The band covered some of their father's, Bob Marley's hits, of course,

particularly "Natural Mystic," "Africa Unite," "Could You Be Loved" and "Jamming" to the deafening screams of the audience. They also sang songs that cemented Ziggy and the Melody Makers into the world's consciousness, like, "Tomorrow People" and "Look Who's Dancing Now."

After the band was forced back onstage during the encore, they sang three songs, whipping the fans into a furious frenzy. Then, finally, at least 15 children spilled out onstage and the band once again started the—1-2, 1-2-3 punches with everyone jumping up and down. The kids were grabbing excitedly for the mic and each enjoyed their time in the spotlight as the audience cheered and laughed.

The Rat Pack is back in Las Vegas playing at Desert Inn

Dianna Saffold
Sentinel-Voice

The date is December 12, 1961.

The stage fills with smoke and the purr of conversation lazily rides it as it wafts through the room.

Musicians for the 12-piece Lou Bronson orchestra ease onto the stage, young and old, giving you the sensation that something unusual and truly great's about to happen.

It turns out that we're at a birthday bash to honor Ol' Blue Eyes, Frank Sinatra, being thrown by his Rat Pack cronies: Joey Bishop, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr.

"The Rat Pack Is Back," a play about the legendary foursome, is playing six nights a week in the Starlight Ballroom at the Desert Inn.

The production, featuring Bobby Caldwell as Frank Sinatra, Hiram Kasten as Joey Bishop, Steve Apple as Dean Martin and Tony Tillman as the incomparable Sammy Davis, Jr., interlaced with details that make you feel as if you were really there, back in the 60's.

The play is great, truly giving the audience a quick glimpse into the stellar performances, the frivolity, the laughter, the boozing and the unmistakable camaraderie that characterized the Rat Pack.

Tony Tillman, a lounge strip favorite for the past fifteen years was dynamic as the late great Sammy Davis Jr. Originally from Baltimore, Maryland, Harrahs Corporation brought Tillman



Tony Tillman as Sammy Davis, Jr. Photo special to Sentinel-Voice

to Las Vegas 15 years ago, where he started performing at the famous Dunes Hotel and Casino.

Trading off with his buddy Clint Holmes, Tillman opened for Bill Cosby for nine years.

That exposure catapulted him into an international arena, sharing the stage with such greats as Don Rickles, Joan Rivers, the Kinston Trio and with Victor Borge, in which he did a commanding performance for the Queen of Denmark.

He met the legendary Davis in 1976 in Stockholm, Sweden.

Tillman spoke with a subdued passion when he shared the experience of playing Davis in an interview with the *Sentinel-Voice* after his performance:

Tony: I've always been a "Sammy-file." I first met him in 1976 in Sweden. That is when I got involved in appreciating what Sammy was about. I modeled my performances after him, without trying to be him. I wanted to do that kind of thing without being him, so when they asked me to do this, I had to go completely against the grain of (what) I was doing.

I had to stop making sure that I was not being him and to try to be a little more like him. Still I didn't want to be a caricature, when they asked me to do this,

I didn't want it to be like, "Oh, he's funny!" That wasn't real. That wasn't Sammy, especially in 1961. I just tried to bring to the show what I got from him, which

was always be "on," always be the best you possibly can.

Sitting across from Tillman, who was still high on the show, he transformed into Sammy.

I seized the opportunity and asked:

How are they treating you Sammy? Can you feel the discrimination of the sixties now?

Tony/Sammy: Actually I started when I was 16. I've been all over the world, had to play Georgia and parts of

Florida that nobody ever hears about. I know what discrimination is.

I know what racism is. I know what it is to have a club owner to call your agent and say, "You gotta talk to your guys. They are in my club dancing with white girls."

Tony: Sammy had to put up with things that we don't even know about; things (you don't know of) unless you've actually been through it. ... I look at people sometimes and it makes me laugh because

what they call discrimination years ago wouldn't have been nothing. You know what it's like when somebody don't like you. It's possible they just don't like you, it's got nothing to do with what color you are.

The show is a throw back, and there are some things that would not fly today.

You couldn't get away with it, but everybody knows it's a play. You understand it's a play. That's it. That's where it begins and ends.

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