

# Whallum, Tisdale imbue jazz with special flair

By Dianna Saffold  
Sentinel-Voice

Anytime, anyplace (well, almost anyplace), in Las Vegas, pleasure is unconditionally accessible—for the right price, of course! Every imaginable thirst is satisfied by venues that have jumped into the competitive entertainment arena. Last week's games were played in the new Dallas Conference Center at the Texas Station Casino and Hotel.

The players were contemporary saxophonist Kirk Whallum and jazz bassist Wayman Tisdale. The show opened like a wedding feast, serving the best wine first.

Whallum was very loosely dressed, giving his body the room it needed to express his physical and musical interpretive abilities. Having been raised on gospel music seemed to give him the freedom to give of himself to the jazz-appreciative audience. The title of his latest CD, from which he played several cuts, describes his talent eloquently: "Unconditional."

His musical spirit brought the prancing piper out into the audience, and as he came closer, you could feel its intensity. Returning to the stage after kibitzing with the audience, he must have been energized because he began to blow so strongly that the power of the music seemed to lift his leg and spin him around. At one point, he held a note so long that local jazz enthusiast, Donna Starks, said, "He is making my lungs hurt."

For those of you who have seen the Wesley Snipes movie, "Sugar Hill," wherein Wesley, standing in the rain, begs for the love of a woman through an iron gate, Whallum's piece, "Now Till Forever," would have been perfect for that scene—there would have been no need for script. His melodic, soul-riding waves of love and rhythm would have rendered words superfluous. The feeling he experienced allowed him to share an old family aphorism: "I'm walking in high cotton, I'm surrounded by greatness." His words of exhilaration were as moving as his music.

The rapport he had with his band was heavenly. He lovingly addressed the parents in the audience, advising them to love their children and tell them: "Nothing you do can



Wayman Tisdale (right) gets in the groove during the performance at Texas Station. Sentinel-Voice photo by Joyce Hudson make me love you any less, nothing you can do to make me love you any more; my love for you is like God's love—you can't change it."

He shared with us one of his most intimate moments, the birth of his son, Kyle. After losing a child in 1981, he and his wife decided in 1982 to try again. Inspired by the desire for another child, on Thanksgiving of that year he wrote the song, "Kyle Smiles." They were blessed with a son, Kyle, on Thanksgiving of '83. The music practically described it, from labor to the passing into his arms of his new son. The melody told of that embrace, and of the tender moments immediately after, which he shared with his wife. The closing of the song echoed the promises of loyalty and unconditional love that awaited them.

He did several pieces from "Unconditional": "Groverworked and Underpaid," featuring Tom Braxton from the Wayman Tisdale camp, "Now Til Forever" and "All I Do." He also took us home with a couple of cuts from his "Hymns In the Garden." Horn player Braxton joined Whallum on "Grover Underpaid." Whallum returned to the crowd-blowing, shaking hands, giving and receiving love through his music.

He reminded me of an angel, sent here to straighten us all out about this thing called jazz. He explained to the audience "how precious it was for them to come back and still have the love of the people." Whallum gave everything you expected from a jazz show and more. He spotlighted his supporting musicians, mingled with the audience and he gave you the best of his best. Don't ever miss him when he comes to town.

Some of you may remember that Wayman Tisdale was an Olympic gold medal winner as a player on the U.S. "Dream Team," who later played for the Indiana Pacers, Sacramento Kings and Phoenix Suns of the NBA. Now, he plays for you!

Whallum's being a hard act to follow was no issue to Tisdale. His style, along with his sidekick, Braxton, opened the door to his world of music. They played jazz tag to get the audience warmed up, using themes from the popular television shows, "Mayberry, R.F.D.," "The Brady Bunch" and the cartoon, "Popeye," and they really cut up on the theme song from "Sanford & Son." Having seen them once before, the camaraderie demonstrated amongst the talented musicians on stage was special.

Tisdale also spoke of a very special person in his life, his daughter, Gabrielle, for whom he wrote a song. As he played, you could feel the intensity of his love. The notes were clear; the words—some spoken, some not, were unmistakable notes of sincerity. Based on the soul poured into this piece, Gabrielle needs only listen to it if she ever doubts her father's love.

Tisdale enhanced his musical abilities about 6 months ago by learning to play acoustic guitar. From his CD, "Face To Face," he brought the cut, "Brazilian." This took us into his

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Elvis 'L-Boogie' Wells (left), joins other poets of the show, Keisha 'Endigo Fury' and Keith 'The Griot' Brantly during questions and answers period.

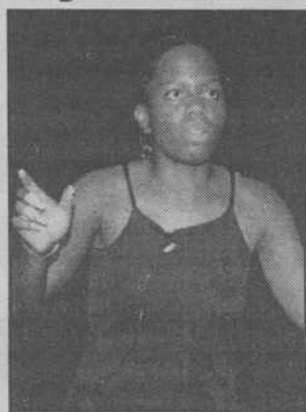
Sentinel-Voice photo by Joyce Hudson

## Play explores macabre topic: Why do women kill

By Debbie Hall  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Today, there are so many tragic stories in both broadcast and print news of violence. It is easy to feel discouraged after hearing or reading another story about a mother killing her newborn or the homicide of a child.

After numerous stories of murder within families or worse, manslaughter



MS. CHINA

with no apparent motive, it becomes more comfortable to "tune out" and not think about these problems. But one woman wants you to not only think about what is happening today with women, but to take action and change society. Her name is Ms. China.

In the rich tradition of Africa with expression through art, music, poetry (See Murder, Page 18)

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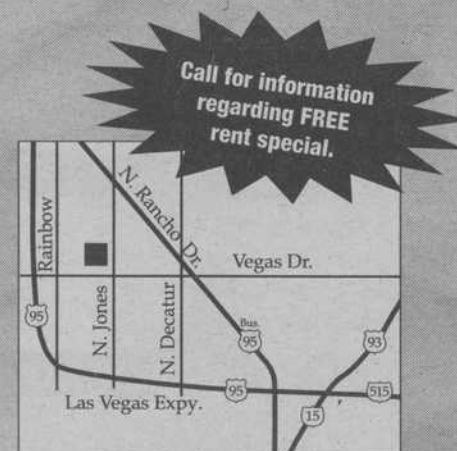
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