

Entertainment Briefs

LORENZI PARK TO HOST POETRY, MUSIC EVENT

LAS VEGAS — Poetry and music lovers, unite. Local poet Keith Brantley hosts an evening of "Poetry in the Park" on Saturday, May 26, at the Sammy Davis Jr. Festival Plaza in Lorenzi Park. Expected to perform are some of the city's best spoken-word artists. Readings will take place from 6 to 9 p.m., followed by special guest performances, with the musical entertainment provided by Phil Wigfall's Urban Renewal nu-jazz project. Known for his eclectic, funky sound, with influences from Miles Davis, Weather Report, hip-hop and rhythm and blues, Wigfall, who's an accomplished saxophonist, has played with Clint Holmes' house band and Walt Blanton's Dharma. Blankets and lawn chairs are allowed, but no pets. The parking lot for the theater is accessible from Twin Lakes Drive on the west side of Lorenzi Park. Admission is free. For additional information, call (702) 229-1087.

BRANDY SUED OVER LA FREEWAY CRASH

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Singer-actor Brandy was sued for negligence and wrongful death by the husband of a waitress who was killed in a freeway crash involving the entertainer. Marouane Hdidou filed the recently in Los Angeles County Superior Court. He seeks unspecified damages. His wife, 38-year-old Awatef Aboudihaj, died on Dec. 30 in a crash on the San Diego Freeway. A California Highway Patrol report said a Land Rover driven by 28-year-old Brandy (full name: Brandy Norwood) failed to slow in traffic and was going 65 mph when it struck the back of a Honda driven by Aboudihaj. The Honda hit another vehicle, slid sideways and struck a center divider, then was hit by a car driven by 50-year-old Mallory Ham of Simi Valley, the report said. The lawsuit names both Brandy and Ham and contends both were driving recklessly.

RAPPER-ACTRESS EVE CHARGED WITH DUI

LOS ANGELES (AP) - City prosecutors filed misdemeanor charges Friday against Eve stemming from a traffic accident in Hollywood last week. The rapper-actress (real name: Jihan Jeffers) was charged with driving under the influence, driving with a blood-alcohol level of .08 or above, and failure to provide proof of insurance, said Frank Mateljan, a spokesman for the city attorney's office. The charges stem from an April 26 arrest in which officers stopped Eve at 2:40 a.m. after her car struck a raised concrete center median on Hollywood Boulevard. A breath test showed her blood-alcohol level was above the legal limit, Mateljan said. Eve, 28, is scheduled to be arraigned May 17. She faces a maximum penalty of six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Mateljan said a statutory minimum sentence would include a minimum of three years' probation, a fine of at least \$390, and an alcohol education program, among other DUI-related conditions. Phone messages left Friday for Eve's publicist, Amanda Silverman, and her attorney, Matthew Johnson, were not immediately returned. Eve, a protégé of rap trailblazer Dr. Dre, has released several solo albums and won a Grammy in 2001 for "Let Me Blow Ya Mind" with Gwen Stefani.

R. KELLY WRITES SONG FOR VIRGINIA TECH

NEW YORK (AP) - R. Kelly has written a new song, "Rise Up," about healing in the aftermath of the April 16 shootings at Virginia Tech. A gunman killed 32 people and himself on the university's campus in Blacksburg, Va. "Rise Up" will be available digitally May 15, and 100 percent of the net proceeds from its sale will go to the Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund, said Jive Records, Kelly's record label. Kelly, 40, wrote the inspirational ballad after watching the events unfold on television while he was on tour, Jive said. The lyrics include the lines: "Rise up, when you feel you can't go on, rise up, and all of your hope is gone, rise up, when you're weak and you can't be strong." The Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund was created to provide assistance to the families of the victims, as well as grief counseling and other needs for those affected by the shootings.

Franklin judges stage auditions

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. (AP) - Breanna Norman quietly walked up to the microphone, took a deep breath, closed her eyes and began singing "Amazing Grace."

About a minute later, the 10-year-old Norman thanked Aretha Franklin for listening to her.

Norman, a fourth-grader from Detroit, was one of about 70 people who auditioned recently for a panel of judges, including the "Queen of Soul," for a stage production of Franklin's life and career.

"Aretha: From These Roots" is expected to open in

Detroit next spring. Franklin said the major roles will be cast out of Hollywood.

The three days of auditions were held to fill out the roles of musicians and others in Franklin's inner circle.

"I'm not hard on anybody. I'm just here to listen," the 65-year-old Grammy-winning singer said during a break. "I try to make them comfortable coming in the door."

Franklin said she was impressed by some of the would-be cast members.

"I just heard someone who has come closest to Sam Cooke than I have ever

heard," she said. "I was one of Sam Cooke's biggest fans, and this (singer) was very good."

Those auditioning were judged on voice, singing ability, appearance and presentation, said Ron Moten, one of seven judges.

However, only a few hopefuls received top scores.

"If it's Aretha Franklin's life, you are talking about the best of the best," said judge Greg Dunmore.

Ciara Roberts, 25, of Pasadena, Calif., received a top ranking from at least one judge.

"I came here on a mission

and I'm not leaving until I get what I came for, which is playing Aretha Franklin," said Roberts, who belted out a powerful version of "Since You've Been Gone."

Singing styles varied from the opera-trained voice of Teresa Moore-Mitchell, who drove from Salisbury, N.C., to the gospel stylings of LaToya Turrentine, 22, of Detroit and Denise Stubbs of Wayne County's Redford Township.

"I love Aretha Franklin, but I can't sing like her," Stubbs, 42, said after her version of "To God Be the Glory."

Black women: Rap music degrading

By Aria White

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA)

- Ask most Black women what they think about hip-hop or rap lyrics and most will likely say they are degrading. But, some Black men express mixed emotions on the issue.

"It's freedom of speech. We shouldn't be trying to tell rappers what to rap about. It's just music. It isn't hurting anyone," said Ben Silsbee, 20, a self-proclaimed avid rap listener, part-time DJ and student at the University of Maryland.

On the other hand, Silsbee says, while he will continue to listen to rap music with questionable lyrics and defend the artists' freedom of speech, he doesn't necessarily agree with the message the music sends.

"When I was in Spain last year, people thought the n-word was acceptable because of rap music, I think that's terrible," Silsbee said.

A large majority of rap music's fan base is made up of young Black men. Clinton White, 21, from Sarasota, Fla., said as a young Black man he knows he is promoting the bad message by just listening to it.

"I know it's degrading, and I don't necessarily agree with what is said, but it's still good music, and I still like to jam to it," White said.

When radio host Don Imus called the Rutgers women's basketball team, "nappy-headed 'ho's," the critical eye of Black America turned not only on him but on the rap industry as well.

Following the Don Imus situation, rap music is being targeted more for its degradation of women. Instead of just focusing on White

people who degrade Black women, Black leaders and organizations are also beginning to go after Black people who degrade Black women and Blacks in general.

Anwan "Big G" Glover, from the Backyard Band and the serried "The Wire," spoke to University of Maryland students about the negative messages in rap songs and videos. A clip was shown of a rapper sliding a credit card

in a woman's butt. And this kind of graphic was common for a rap video.

"It's disgusting, the videos, the songs, but it's the music I listen to. It's what's popular," said Darian Scott-Carter, a young Black man from Baltimore who listens to rap music regularly.


Scott-Carter said everyone knows it's wrong and degrading, but everyone continues to listen to it regardless.

He said he doesn't usually even listen to the lyrics. For him it's all about the music behind the lyrics.

"I love rap music. It's degrading and it's nasty but I love it," said Ain Welmon of State College, Pa. "I'm not saying what they rap about is right or anything. But I'm not going to go around signing any petitions to clean it up either."

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