



OUR TOWN

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YORKVILLE EDITION

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD IS OUR BUSINESS

Inner-City Youth Get a Leg Up in Hip-Hop Cabaret

THEATER PICK OF THE WEEK

Do the muscle...do the muscle...do the muscle," MC Antoine "RL" Joyce chanted as the audience repeatedly practiced the dance move — so named since the move simulated an arm making a muscle.

This is one of three dance moves that the audience learned at "Hip-Hop Dance Class 101," part of the All Stars Project's Hip-Hop Cabaret. The show, which opened Sept. 10 and ends Oct. 1, is a political cabaret that broaches a wide spectrum of subjects including change, love, public housing, slavery, current political leaders, the limited choices for this year's presidential election and the war in Iraq. Joyce summed up the point of the cabaret when he said the show gave performers "a chance to express our views" and "hip-hop is how we bring it all together."

Through rap, spoken word and at least five forms of dance, the 20 inner city performers, who range in age from 9 to 34, did just that, along with music provided by DJ Tommy Lee. Most of the acts in the community theater show were written, produced, choreographed and performed by the youth. Their messages were powerful and engaging, although some lyrics were hard to decipher.

One of the night's best performances was "Public Housing," written, produced and performed by the three-person rap group The Dead. It's the first single and video from the group's new album, "Now or Never." The lyrics are snappy and the tune is catchy: Pub-

lic housing you know I love you / get that money until we die / in the projects where we be wilding / representing all my people in the sky."

In "Campaign," performers sang, acted and danced about how this country's political system can be boiled down to two parties — Republican and Democratic. It's "one choice that looks like two. Two choices doesn't seem very democratic."

And our best interests are completely outta the question / A weapon of mass deception / Just avoid the fact / That most people know you only want the oil in Iraq."

The 75-minute show, with no intermission, is held in the 31,000-square foot All Stars Project theater complex, 543 W. 42nd St., between 10th and 11th avenues. It's directed by Dan Friedman and Joyce and produced by the All Star Project's Youth



The All Stars Project's Hip-Hop Cabaret touches on issues like public housing and the war in Iraq through dance, song and rap.

ROGER GRUNWALD

Onstage! and the All Stars Talent Show Network. This is the non-profit organization's second production of the hip-hop cabaret.

All Stars Project provides extracurricular, culturally based educational programs to tens of thousands of poor and minority youth. The organization was founded in 1981 by the New

Two performers that represented the Republican and Democratic parties were then replaced on stage by two other performers, one wearing a shirt that said "New," and the other in a shirt that said "America." A third girl came running out into the middle. Her shirt said "independent." Together they represented what another America could be like. The act ended with the three girls holding hands.

Another political act was "The Mask," in which three dancers wore lifelike masks of President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of State Colin Powell. To Bush, a rapper said, "Been in the wrong direction since you stole the election /

Alliance Party's Dr. Lenora Fulani, a former presidential candidate, and Dr. Fred Newman, a philosopher and playwright.

The group has a continuous line-up of various kinds of performances. The next performance is a play, "Stealin' Home," that begins Oct. 8 and runs through Dec. 12. It's described by the organization as a Jackie Robinson baseball and sex play. Tickets for the All Stars Project's Hip-Hop Cabaret or "Stealin' Home," can be purchased by calling 212-941-1234 or logging on to www.castillo.org or www.TheaterMania.com.

— By Lauren A. Elkies