

Tisdale, Band Play Hearts Out For Sweltering Audience 9/29/2002

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The music was as hot as the weather Saturday night.

Bassist Wayman Tisdale led a quintet to headline the evening at the College of Charleston's Cistern for this year's edition of the Moja Arts Festival. Opening up was Quiana Parler and Jerome Griffin's Heart and Soul.

Tisdale and his band played their hearts and souls out, pleasantly distracting about 750 fans from the sweltering conditions under the moss-draped oaks at one of the area's most beautiful venues. Tisdale, a former NBA player, has a commanding stage presence. His self-described urban smooth music was delivered Saturday in a big way which the audience seemed to thoroughly enjoy. He used elements of jazz, R&B, and gospel in arrangements that were soulful and funky.

Saxophonist Michael Phillips was featured throughout the evening and ended up a big hit with the crowd. His talent seemed to exceed the material, but the relatively simple compositions gave him the leeway to stretch out, and that he did, on tenor, alto, and even a gadget that distorted his voice like Roger Troutman's (Zapp) vocorder, a keyboard synthesizer that creates robotic-sounding vocals. He used it in a call-and-response improvisation with Tisdale on a tune called "Gabrielle."

Tisdale played melody as well as bottom on his bass and was quite fluent. The Stanley Clark influence was much in evidence. Some of his solos sounded like guitar solos. The rest of the band included drummer Jason Thomas, keyboardist Mark Harper, and keyboardist Arlington Jones.

Much of what the band did Saturday was built around funky grooves with plenty of riffs. Tisdale was very democratic in allowing all the players room to display their talents.

Parler showed off her talents as well, performing ballads and upbeat tunes with her big band swinging hard behind her. It was their first performance together, but you couldn't tell. She seems to still be getting stronger and broader in her reach.