

Dance

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Collective. She said many of the members are also part of a collective called "Foli Kan," a name that means "sound of rhythm" in Malinke, the language of Guinea and Mali.

The group of dancers hop and swing their arms during the "sole" dance, which is a dance for the rite of passage for boys in Guinea, Firehawk said. She said the boys go with the village elders into the woods, and they play one rhythm when the boy leaves the village and another when he returns.

For girls, she said they do a dance called "sorsener" for their rite of passage.

West African dance "is probably the most joyous, ecstatic dance ever done," Firehawk said. "It's a connection between sky and earth."

Firehawk said she completed her studies of dance at the University of Massachusetts and traveled among

the indigenous peoples of Guinea and Mali for almost five months. She said she intensely studied their dance culture, a culture based on connecting with spirits through dance.

Although Islam dominates the region, Firehawk said the dances had elements of magic in them — the

"It's a super energetic and expressive kind of dance."

Rachel Bonvillain
West African dance student

tribes called it "ju ju." She said it seemed like a kind of voodoo, but the dance encompassed both the negative and positive aspects of magic.

"We're finally acknowledging Africa for the richness that's there," Firehawk said. "It's been a long time in coming."

Rachel Bonvillain, one of the dance students, said she drove from Cottage Grove to attend the classes. "It's a super energetic and ex-

pressive kind of dance," she said.

Bonvillain said it's easy to catch on to the dance because Firehawk explains and demonstrates each step, first at a normal speed, then breaking the step down into simpler parts for the students to learn.

Teri Page, another West African dance student, said she enjoyed the drum music.

West African dance "is really unique from other dance classes because of the live music," she said.

Page said she enjoys the classes because they are a fun, aerobic workout.

"You get a high off it, because you're moving so much," Bonvillain said.

Bonvillain said dancing to the beat of the drums is inspiring and powerful, and at the same time, hard to explain.

"There's something about the drums," she said.

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Rap

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"We're not talking about materialistic things like in the mainstream (hip-hop)," he said.

Riddlore said his music comes from the ghetto, but it in no way promotes the "gangsta" lifestyle. Instead, he said he focuses more on hip-hop style and uses some positive messages in his lyrics.

Firtel said all the artists performing in Friday's show are independent and sell their own albums. They don't make huge amounts of money, he said, but they also don't answer to anyone but themselves.

"We don't want anyone telling us what we should do (with our music)," Riddlore said. He said he will be promoting his new album, "Everything You Need to Know to Make It Big," which was released Monday.

Riddlore, like many of the other Los Angeles artists on the Afterlife label, has never performed in Oregon, but he said he believes they will be well-received.

"We've got a lot of support in Oregon," Riddlore said.

Firtel said the response he has received from people who have heard about the concert is positive.

"People that listen to these guys are super-stoked," he said.

DCF Entertainment, Afterlife Records and the Black Student Union will team up again for this April's Black Arts Festival, featuring many of the same artists from Friday's concert, and adding Aceyalone, Cypher 7, Cotton Candy, Legion and P.E.A.C.E. to the roster.

For those who miss the Eugene performances, the artists will also be performing at Portland's Roseland Theater on April 20.

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