

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Hip Hop Group Keeps it Positive

Embraces stage as alternative to the streets

BY CARI E. HACHMANN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

La Familia, a local hip-hop group founded in 2003 by the Cordeta brothers, Jonathan "JC" and Bo-Mandela, are at work on their next street album, "the Northwest King", compiled of lyrics inspired by everyday life living in Portland; from a flamboyant party life of love, designer digs, expensive cars, and flashy jewelry to a darker, more somber reality of gangs, poverty, prostitution and political injustice.

"We like to say things people can relate to," says Bo-Mandela, "The Northwest King is about the northwest that people don't hear about. It's very diverse, with songs about love, parties, depression, and a whole spectrum of emotions."

Growing up in low-income neighborhoods of Compton and Portland, the two brothers witnessed their friends' involvement with gangs and experienced the many troubles of street violence firsthand. So when



K Prynce, Timmi Hendrix and Bo-Mandela of La Familia, a local hip hop group.

the rap-duo teamed up with Aneal Jeannis, singer and music studio engineer, and Eloee Gail-Williams at a low-income summer camp in high school, the youth-empowered hip-hop group had plenty to rap about

and lots of opportunity to expand. With the mission to "keep youth doing something positive," La Familia's close-knit group joined other band members in flaunting their first major show in March of

2006 at the Wonder Ballroom's "Back to Reality" show put on by Global Fam and Hungry Mob productions, performing alongside Dead Prez.

La Familia also recently performed with Immortal Technique in 2007, D12 in 2009, and head lined "The Youth Summit," a Stop the Violence show put on every year to end gang violence.

Though setting an example for youth through music, traveling, partying, and hanging out with friends keeps the boys busy enough, La Familia still manages to "Bring Back to tha hood," by not only producing events for revenue to help band members overcome poverty, but also throwing charity events to help the community.

Producing over 1,000 songs with more than 12 artists, distributing over 10,000 CDs and more than 10 music videos, the Cordeta & Jeannis La Familia Productions expect their next street cut to offer "the true definition of northwest hip-hop" with sounds backed by "a mixture of Jay-Z's witty, read-between-the-lines lyrics and a laid-back west coast twist.

La Familia started when the

Cordeta brothers began rhyming as youths in the early 90s.

Every summer, the boys traveled to numerous cities around the Pacific Northwest while on tour with their father, John Cordeta, a guitar player for the Oregon Army National Guard's Live Band.

"Since we were little, our dad was a big influence," says Bo-Mandela, who also mentions in a press release that they're cousins to Barry White.

"We were always around music; we listened to his old records like Stevie Wonder, Earth, Wind, and Fire, and watched him perform, which made me want to perform." Mandela adds that Tupac, Biggie, Jay-Z, and Ditsit were also big influences for them.

When Bo-Mandela was 9, he and brother JC began rapping together.

Dreams of getting signed motivated them to start rap groups with friends throughout middle school. By high school, the brothers had been rapping for so long that the formation of the La Familia organization and a built-in home studio was just another stone in the path to the band's expansion.

Oscar Night at the Hollywood

Will it be the Social Network or the King's Speech? Nicole Kidman or Natalie Portman? The Coen Brothers? Christian Bale? Regardless of the winners, you're invited to take in the glitz, glam and gossip at Portland's own Oscar party at the

historic Hollywood Theatre on Sunday, Feb. 27.

Admission is free with doors opening at 3:30 p.m., just in time to see the stars stroll the Red Carpet. The 83rd Annual Academy Awards hosted by James Franco and Anne

Hathaway will begin on the Hollywood Theatre's main screen at 5 p.m.

On sale will be the themed cocktails such as "The Black Swan" and "The True Grit" as well as beer, wine, food, popcorn, candy and

soda.

Local funny men Ian Karmel and Mikey Kampmann will perform during commercial breaks

All proceeds from the event go towards the restoration and operation of the Hollywood Theatre.

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