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HIP HOP: Chiccy Baritone

Upstate poet's world outreach with the spoken word.

BY [JIHAD HASSAN](#)

Culture freedom. Try saying it with me: CULTURE FREEDOM. Now, doesn't that feel as good as it sounds? I think so. I mean, dig it - just to be able to express your own culture freely has to be a wonderful and blessed way to live. All my true Hip Hop heads already know Hip Hop is a culture. But do you know poetry is the cousin of your favorite hot sixteen? Yes, family. Poetry doesn't always come with a beat - well, not a beat you make. Poetry is a beautiful expression that comes from the beat that life gives you. It is a steady flow that your heartbeat directs.

I got a chance to get the 411 on one of South Carolina's up and coming poets. Her name is Charlene Evans, but uses the pen name Chiccy Baritone. Introduced to the poetry circuit in 2001, this sister uses her smooth alto voice to uplift and motivate all genres of people. Chiccy Baritone uses her own life experiences to encourage and uplift her audience. This sister is what I call deep! The best way I can describe her work is refreshing. It's filled with freedom and spirituality. To put it right to the point, this Sister spits that hot ish.

Lets get it!

How's is everything? Tell me about your new movement.

I'm doing good. My movement is basically using poetry for self-expression, world-outreach and people-progression. This involves cultivating poetry into different aspects to reach people at the theatres, in workshops, in the streets, in cafes, wherever; transforming their life by bringing focus back to their purpose and their vision - all through poetry

When I first met you and got blessed with your art, you were solo. Now you have a band? Tell me about your band.

Well, I'm still solo but I've been blessed to have a band to back me up on select events. The band is called OKRA and they are based out of Greenville, but have graced many stages and have backed up many vocalists in and out of South Carolina. I wanted to give people some variety with poetry and to show them another feel for spoken word with music

How did you get down with moving folks with your words - poetry?

Whew, you are trying to take me back. It started back in 1994 and 1995 when I was in the Miss Spring Valley Pageant in high school. I did a monologue of the poem "Black Love" by Gwendolyn Brooks as my talent and it was just something different to the pageant world at that time. I continued to write all thru my college years and right before I graduated from South Carolina State



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University, I went to an open-mic at Amelia Street Café and performed a poem I wrote; that was 2001. I have been hitting open-mics and performing all over ever since.

Who are some of your favorite artists?

Tavis Brunson aka The Minister; Omari Fox aka Wordperfect; Just One; Budda Con; those are the artists that come to mind, but there are many that are my favorites.

What kind of message do you have for our youth?

I wrote a poem that I dedicated to the youth called "You are Tomorrow" and it's basically taking about how they are going to carry this world into tomorrow but they can't without the help of previous generations so it's a cycle that we have to contribute to as well. Some of the history books in public schools are not doing a good job in educating our youth about all of history and so I think that its very important for young adults, parents, family and any other connection these kids have, to assist in the responsibility of teaching these kids about their ancestors, the civil rights movement, exposing them to other cultures, etc. before they can change our tomorrow. Every single child needs to know that regardless of what they have gone through or are going through their divine purpose in life is so much greater and it will be fulfilled.

Tell me about your CD.

My CD has some raw poetry with just the beat of my words like "Next in Line" and "Now That's Poetic." Then there is the music and the vocalist adding a little flava to some of my work... There is a poem I wrote called "Love" that makes you feel like you just stepped up in somebody's jazz club. It's just me and the music and that is actually the first poem I ever memorized.

Where can folks pick it up?

The CD can be purchased at Sounds Familiar in Columbia at the Parkland Rd. and Rosewood Dr. locations, Earshot in Greenville on Laurens Rd. or you can go to my website and purchase it online at www.chiccybaritone.com

What's in your CD player now?

I'm pretty eclectic when it comes to music because music contributes to my inspiration as well so you will hear Lisa McClendon *Live from House of Blues New Orleans*, Alicia Keys *Unplugged*, Norah Jones *Feel like home*, Yolanda Adams *Day by Day*, Karen Clark Sheard *It's Not Over*, and KEM *Album II* are all in my CD player right now.

I want to thank you for taking a minute to speak with me. Before we go, please tell us what we should look forward to from you.

I am getting ready to record my sophomore CD live sometime in 2007 - haven't narrowed it down when but continue to check out the website for more details so look out SC!

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