Guest artist: Semaj

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SPOKEN WORD The Last Poets join Semaj at the Millennium Theatre

BY SHARON DARGAY STAFF WRITER sdargay@oc.homecomm.net

You know by its title, *Tongue*, *Tongued*, that a poetry reading Friday in Southfield's Millenni-um Theatre is no run of the mill, coffee-house style affair.

First there's the venue — a 1,028-seat theater — hardly the intimate setting for poetry performance

Then the guest artists, The Last Poets, are known in poetry circles as the fathers of hip hop and ron and rap

And finally, the main attractio

And finally, the main attrac-tion, Semaj. The Detroit woman fuses her lyrical verse to the strains of classical, jazz and funk music played by her back-up hand and directed by composer and saxo-phonist, Farrug Z. Bey, Her dance director, Kimerli Boyd, enhances spokan word through movement. Music, dance and spoken word combine into a multi-media per-formance that transcends gen-dor, racial and class lines. The band is there like the water for the boat and the poetry is the boat, Semaj explains, la carries the words.

And the dance?

"This is another metaphor of the river. You have to have a

shore. There's sand over her and rocks over there. That's what the dance is. It frames the work." Semaj will add a bagpipe to her six-person band consisting of guitar, bass, and various drums for the performance on Friday.

Tangue, Tangued What: A multi-media presentation of spoken word, music and dance woven together by Detroit poet Semaj and guest artists, The Last Poets. Where: Billennium Theatre, 15600 J.L. Hudson Drive, west of Greenfield and south of Nine Mile in Southfield. Admission: S20 available at the Millennium Theatre and ali Ticket-master outlets or by calling Ticketmaster at (313) 645-6666.

"It's what I hear," she says, describing why she added Scot-tish pipes for two of her poems. The first piece is North Ameri-can rhythm with bagpipe. The last piece is the finale. Everyone will join in. We should have some percussion — bean bags and chimes — for the audience so that all can be a part of this energy. played piano and a sister who played flute. "I really thank my mom. I played piano growing up. We all played."

played piano growing up. We all played." Semaj also played violin until it became "jealous" of her other activities, demanding and con-suming her time. "If I wanted to play I'd have to put in many hours of practice. I couldn't do that with my teach-ing, family and writing." With an undergraduate degree in biology, Semaj taught school in Detroit for several years before becoming a principal at a celigious academy. She started writing verse as a child, but switched to education-al proposals while working as a school administrator. "I was writing (creatively) and then I stopped. I started writing grants. But Willie Williams of Broadside Press kept after me."

Energetic atmosphere

Energetic atmosphere This is about creating an atmosphere of energy that's atmosphere of energy that's transforming for the band and the audience. This sint televi-source to the energy of the sengaged...they are catpulted into the energy of that is happening." It's not enough for Semaj sim-ply to recite her poetry, described by some as molten and fiery. That to have music with it. I have sounds with it. I come from an orchestra background." Semaj grew, up in musical

Semaj grew up in a musical household with a mother who

With his encouragement, she penned enough verse for a book, The Dancing Shoes on Fire Book of Poetry and released a CD, Tongue, Tongued last year.

Turning point

Turning point When her daughter, Robyn, died after a long illnese last summer, Semaj decided to quit her principal's position and turn to full-time writing. The Millen-nium show is her first major con-cert since her daughter's death. It will include student readings from the Little Robyn Poetry Contest, held in her daughter's memory.

Contest, held in her daughter's memory. "I've done some (educational) consulting, but right now I'm working as an artist, doing cre-ative things and healing. I'm going to London this summer to do some work, some poctry. "I'd like to tour in Europe. But I do love the people here? Semaj says. "Initially I thought my

CD REVIEWS

Air 10,00012 Legend Release date: May 29 Cosmopolitan French duo Air has the ability to sound like a mind-meld of 60s enay listening. 70s AM radio and Martian eleva-tor music from an 80s sci-fi Ulopin movie. All this sometimes in happens in the same song and also man-gaes to sound remarkably fresh. Crafted with technology and the cool detachment only the French seem to muster, 10,000hz Legend unamed for the frequency which will allegedly cause listeners to oracutate the frequency which will allegedly cause listeners to execute the frequency which will allegedly cause listeners to to sound warm and human iss and out. Micolas Godin and Jean Beneit

Dunckel, the sonic-chemists responsible for Air, came out of the gate wanting to reinvent the future of music as if it was 1959 again with their first alburn, Moon Safori. And they show no signs of stopping. Legend features gor-geous analog soundscepes, a love song sung by what sounds like a robot, a country number called Wonder Milky Bick and don' for-get the Beck cameo. Setting the bar our the global over that formal, Airmay be the last band capable of mking us rohink the way we have music. Listen up! — Richard S. Hansen

Listen up! - Richard S. Hansen

The Gorillaz

The Gorillaz The Gorillaz Almost everyone with a passing interest in music has been involved in a basement jam ses-scion. What's the difference between you and Damon Albarn (front-man for the late, lamented Blur? Albarn has been 'jamming' in a real atudio with Dan 'The Automator' Nakanura and their stoned-out, off the cuff, beat-ori-ented songs are being released on a major label - already yielded a European hit. Did I mention that is press packs and on videos there are actually animated gorillas? Thing is, Albara's tossed off melodies still hook circles around

his pop contemporaries. Especially when combined with The Automa-tor's beats. Building on the scaf-folding these two create, the record is full of guest appearances includ-ing Del tha Funky Homosspien, Miho Hatori of Cibo Matte and oven ibrahim Ferrer. If it sounds like a mess, then you're right, but it's the catchiest, sugarcoated mélange of Brit-pop and Hip-hop you could possible innogine. The whole affair (and this may speak to it's lasting playability) is a lot more fan if you forget the band's podigree and protend they're actually cartoon monkeys. Trust me, brilliant summer tunes either way. — Richard S. Hansen

Scheduled to open, Friday, May 18 **INCL FYES** Alter meeting in a life-and-death circum-stance, a female Chicago police officer and lost sout named Catch foll in love. While uncovering the truth about Catch, she Is forced to deal with the secrets of her own past. Stars Jennifer Loper, Jim Stuart Wilson. Based on the novel by Vladimir Nabokov, this story centers on Alexan-der Luzilin, a worldly chess genius who falls in love with a glamorous aristocrat, and abruptly proposes to her after barely misfits from Duloc in order to create his own perfect world. Vocal talent includes Mike Myers, Eddle Murphy, John Lith-gow, Linda Hunt and Cameron Diaz. SHREK The story centers on an og/e named Shrek, whose swamp is overrun by WAYNE STATE EXPRESS Reliable Motorcoach Service to Ś Don't miss your last chance to see <u>CASINO WINDSOR</u> The Rover DEPARTURES FROM: Bioonfield + Carmington + Novi Hamibranch + Modison Heights + Southfield MONDAY - WEDNESDAY - FRIDAY \$500 500 (Including '15.00 Meal Vourt or 110.00 ٢ × a swashbuckling sex romp filled with adventure and romance Playing until May 19th only Call (313) 577-2972! HILBERRY THEATRE Call 1-800-290-2957 SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW ON SWEETOR NEXT SEASON CALLED BOY OTHER TORNEL ברענע ILL Experience a public school where arts and academics meet in perfect harmony. The new Arts Academy In the Woods can help nurture and develop your childs talents through Dance, Music, Theatre, Visual and Technical Arts, The Academy is open to all students entering the 9th grade in the tall of 2001. Hurry Registration must be in by May 25, 2001. Academy in the Woods

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