

Chinua Hawk

Here's what they're saying...



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As the rain came down on a cool May evening, the thunder and lightning was not outside but on SOB's stage. The night provided captivating and memorable performances by two independent soul artists. New Jersey based Chinua Hawk opened the show with his brand of folk-tinged soul. A large man with a baby face, Chinua was backed by his band which included guitarist Michel Kunz who was one of the producers of his album. Performing songs from his debut entitled "Limited Edition", Chinua displays a commanding stage presence. So involved is he in his singing that he kept wiping the sweat from his forehead with a napkin reminiscent of Louie Armstrong. The half-hour set was highlighted by a gorgeous rendition of Roberta Flack's "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" and "Fame", a catchy original that could be a possible single. It was ironic that he sang the Roberta Flack song because he sounds like Donny Hathaway at times. Chinua means "God's Own Blessing" in Ibo which is Nigerian. The name is appropriate because The Creator has brought to earth a talented performer to share his gift. Like his surname Hawk, Chinua's flight will lead him to his final destination - fame.

The Keystone

Chinua Hawk Spreads Soul in the SUB

By Rita Garwood

Name one musical artist who can inspire you, make you laugh, and offer you a scholarship all during one performance. Give up? His name is Chinua Hawk (pronounced shin-WAH), and he entertained KU students in the SUB Wednesday evening. The ambient, soulful vocals of Hawk, backed by the sweet yet simple acoustic guitar riffs of Wes Mingus, united to fill the Multipurpose Room with a melodic groove. Thanks to the Student Government Association and the Association of Campus Events, around 50 KU students were introduced to Hawk's real-life lyrics, amazing vocal strength and deep commitment to college students. Unlike most artists today, Hawk seemed to possess a strong desire to connect with his audience on a personal level. Before the show began, Hawk stationed himself by the Multipurpose Room entrance, taking time to chat with students as they arrived. On stage, Hawk urged his audience to play an active role in the show, encouraging them to ask questions and offer comments between songs. Just listening to Hawk's lyrics and hearing the passion and emotion in his vocals shows his desire to relate to college students in a positive way. "Can't Move On," the first song of the evening, featured rhythmic, up-beat guitar work by Mingus, and gave the crowd a taste of Hawk's soulful singing style. Almost immediately, the audience caught the vibe of the music and began to clap along. "Someone Beautiful," Hawk's second song, was slow paced and featured emotional and thought-provoking lyrics about being dumped by a girlfriend. Several students sang along as Hawk wailed, "Cause you wanted in me what you've seen on TV. You wanted someone, someone beautiful." Between songs, Hawk dedicated a soulful a capella rendition of "Happy Birthday," to students Nicole Odom, 20, and Dave Kim, 21, after inviting them on stage. The birthday students remained on stage and joined Hawk in a cover of "My Girl" by the Four Tops. Hawk's comedic side came out after "My Girl," when he began telling jokes, making fun of his own songs and striking poses for the photographer. The crowd responded with uproarious laughter. "I Remember You," written on the topic of recalling a secret crush of the past, and taken from Hawk's new album, Sunflower, was a highlight of the evening. Hawk encouraged the audience to sing along by starting a contest to see which side of the auditorium could sing the loudest. KU was Hawk's ninth stop on his tour of college campuses across the country. According to Mingus, the tour began September 1, and will continue until May; they will perform a total of 85 dates. When asked how he and Mingus deal with their hectic touring schedule, Hawk replied, "We just do it. When you love what you do it doesn't bother you." Hawk also mentioned the reason behind his new scholarship, "We get to meet so many kids, and I know so many people who are struggling to get through school. I'm just doing what I can to help," said Hawk. After a few of his own songs, Hawk began to take requests from the audience. The most remarkable in this series was his beautiful a capella rendition of "Amazing Grace," which paid homage to his boyhood days as a singer in a Trenton, NJ church choir. Keeping with the gospel theme, Hawk invited birthday girl Odom back to the stage, where she performed an outstanding a capella solo of "Eye of the Sparrow." Hawk discovered Odom's vocal talent while she performed "My Girl." The final song of the evening, "Raven Wings," featured funky guitar riffs and the positive lyrics, "I'll never give up on my life. I'll never stop dreaming." Hawk received an overwhelmingly positive response from KU students. "The atmosphere was just cool," said Heather (Kat) Thomas, an Undeclared freshman. "I like his lyrics, the words that he chose; I can relate to them. He inspired me," said Priscilla Jessie, freshman, Psychology. "His voice is so powerful," remarked freshman student Tae, "He touched me." Hawk also informed his audience of his new scholarship, the Maggie L. Goodwyn Scholarship Fund, which will begin at the end of September. This scholarship is open to all college students and high school seniors in the United States. "I decided to put it (the scholarship) in the name of my aunt," said Hawk, "she was a very giving individual." A portion of profits generated from CD sales and Hawk's tour will be donated to the scholarship fund. For more information about Chinua Hawk and the Maggie L. Goodwyn Scholarship Fund, visit www.chinuahawk.com.

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