


arts


Vermont Gay Social Alternatives
PROUD to be
a part of P.R.I.D.E.
JOIN US FOR THE WEEKEND!!!

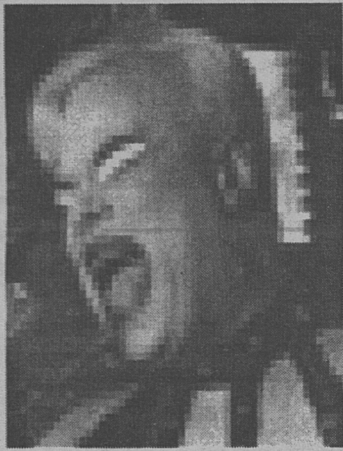
FRIDAY, JULY 9 PRIDE CRUISE
 Join us on the LTC Ferry Champlain for an 8pm-11pm sunset cruise with music & munchies and beverages & breezes. DJ **Mario Boss** is back by popular demand! The Champlain holds nearly 300 passengers, so don't be left on shore!
"The BEST gay event of the year."
\$35 advance tickets* \$40 week of cruise
*advance tickets are available at the Peace & Justice Center or online at www.vgsa.com

SATURDAY, JULY 10 PRIDE DAY
 Look for our float in the Parade and come visit our information table on the Waterfront.

PRIDE NIGHT
 the official
P.R.I.D.E. DANCE
 at Burlington's Memorial Auditorium Annex

featuring
YOLANDA!
 and her
PLASTIC FAMILY

PATIO PARTY
 7:30-9:00pm
 with DJ MONACO
YOLANDA
 9:00-11:00pm
 MONTREAL'S
 DJ MARIO BOSS
 11:00pm-2:00am



TICKETS ARE \$10 AND AVAILABLE AT THE PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER OR ONLINE AT WWW.VGSA.COM THIS IS A 21+

SUNDAY, JULY 11 PICNIC
 JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL POST-PRIDE PICNIC AT THE ST. JOHN'S CLUB IN BURLINGTON. IT'S A FULL-FAMILY EVENT (NO PETS) WITH BEACH ACTIVITIES, VOLLEYBALL, HORSESHOES AND FUN! \$5.

VGSA - MEET PEOPLE, DO THINGS

By CYNTHIA POTTS

There's a soft chuckle hiding in Nhojj's voice as he describes his early collegiate career. "I just couldn't focus. I'd be in the library thinking of [song] arrangements when I was supposed to be studying."

That lack of academic discipline shouldn't be a problem. Nhojj did go on to get a degree in economics from NYU, but judging from his second CD, *Someday Peace, Love and Freedom* the young man has a career in music in front of him.

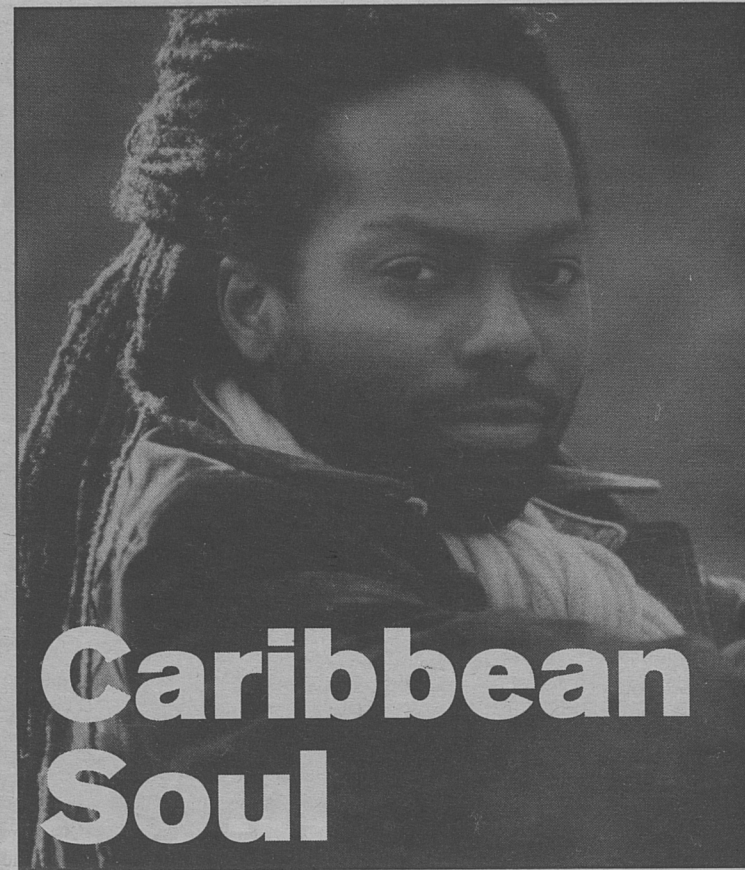
"When I was in my economics classes, I looked around and realized that I didn't want to work with the people who were in my classes. They were all type-A go-getters, and that's not who I am. Sometime you have to stop trying to fit yourself in a predetermined mold." Referencing an earlier abortive degree quest, Nhojj laughed. "I'd run away from music before. This was the second time it had come back to me. I decided that was it."

The result was *I've Been Waiting For You*, Nhojj's debut CD that showcases his smooth vocals. You can clearly hear the gospel influence of his childhood - Nhojj's father is an Adventist minister - as well as muted Calypso and Caribbean motifs. "My influences? Bob Marley, of course. I know it isn't popular right now, but I grew up listening to Michael Jackson. I'd listen to everything on the radio: Sade, Patti Labelle, Whitney Houston - all of that Eighties stuff.

"I was born in the States, while my Father was going to college," Nhojj explained. "Then we went back to Guyana, where I lived until I was 14. Then we went to the tiny island of Trinidad for the next four years."

Trinidad's conservative culture, as well as his father's religious vocation, kept Nhojj in the closet. "I knew I was attracted to guys, but there was nothing positive to identify with. Everything I heard was derogatory - I didn't want to be the faggot, the queer."

In New York, "Many of my friends were in therapy - not because they were gay, but for all sorts of things. They urged me to go so I could work things out. It was free at school, so I went. And it was through that process, looking at past



Caribbean Soul

Someday Peace, Love & Freedom

Nhojj
 Independent Release, 2004
www.nhojj.com

and present experiences, that I came to grips with it. That's when I decided that being gay wasn't this horrible idea I had in my head."

Nhojj's mother took his coming-out hard, "especially since my brother is also gay." When asked about his father's reaction, Nhojj paused. "We've talked about it. I don't exactly know how he's rationalized it, but he doesn't put pressure on me."

He has found a lot of support in the gay community - especially the gay music community. "There's an organization called OutMusic, which includes artists from all around the world." A quiet pride entered his voice as he continued, "They have an awards ceremony coming up, and I've been nominated for an award." That would be the Outstanding New Recording, Male award.

It's easy to see why the album has garnered so much attention. With more overt Caribbean and Reggae influences than the earlier album, *Someday Peace Love and Freedom* is a more positive, uplifting work. Songs like "Peace" are espe-

cially timely, with lyrics like "What would you do if you saw 2 children arguing?/What would you do if one of them was your own?/ Now what would you do if they broke out in a fight? / How long would it take for you to call for... / Peace"- while musical wizardry uses instruments to mimic the sounds of bullets whooshing by the listener's head. Nhojj's writing - he penned all the album's lyrics - has an uncanny way of combining the intimate and the universal, filling a listener with the desire to change the world and the hope that such change is indeed possible.

You can find Nhojj's work, which also includes a live-performance DVD, at his website. The singer has independently produced his work "in order to stay true to myself. I might be able to go to a label, but they try to squeeze you into a market. This way I can do what I feel is right."

"It's hard," Nhojj admits, "because I don't necessarily fit into a predetermined market. But when I talk to somebody and they tell me they love the music, that the songs touched their life, that's what's rewarding." ▼

Cynthia Potts is a freelance writer and mom who lives in Plattsburgh. She welcomes feedback and can be reached at ctpotts@juno.com.

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 candles CIVIL UNION jewelry
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 books pillows, soap hammocks

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