

Entertainment

Africa Nite



Mike Dean

I had planned on *being* in Africa by now. After working and travelling across Europe and Asia for a few years I returned home with the intention of working for a year before taking off for Africa. But with the job market as it is in Canada I decided to return to school. I've always been fascinated by that huge mysterious continent, and the Africans I've met and gotten to know have left an impression of a generous and fun-loving people. So I was looking forward to experiencing the sights and sounds of Africa Nite '95 and learning about their culture.

The doors opened at 6:30 and the dinner was served around 7:30, a half hour late, though I think few minded as it gave a chance for people to socialize and check out the African handicrafts on display. The meal was well worth the wait, consisting of jollof rice, mupanga (plain rice), nyama (beef stew), akoko chewee (curried chicken), mashisha (vegetables), and ginger africana (ginger juice) on tap.

The night's M.C.'s were Timothy Kabiru and Andrew Wahome who started off the entertainment introducing George Eguakan from Ghana who performed a libation in his native tongue, blessing the people present, Africa, and the evening's festivities. After the singing of the anthem of the Organization of African unity and the Canadian anthem, Eugene Ombuli and Teresa Walsh shared a recital in both English and French.

Next followed a powerful speech by the guest speaker, Reverend Ogueri Ohanaka, one of the highlights of the evening. Ohanaka, originally

from Nigeria, is the executive director of the Black United Front (BUF) of Nova Scotia, based in Halifax. This organization was formed in the late sixties to address such areas as self-confidence, self-determination, motivation, identity,

upon such as little known African inventions (from the cotton gin to a lunar capsule tracking device) and the abundance of natural resources in Africa and its economic potential. But he left us with his most important message to Af-

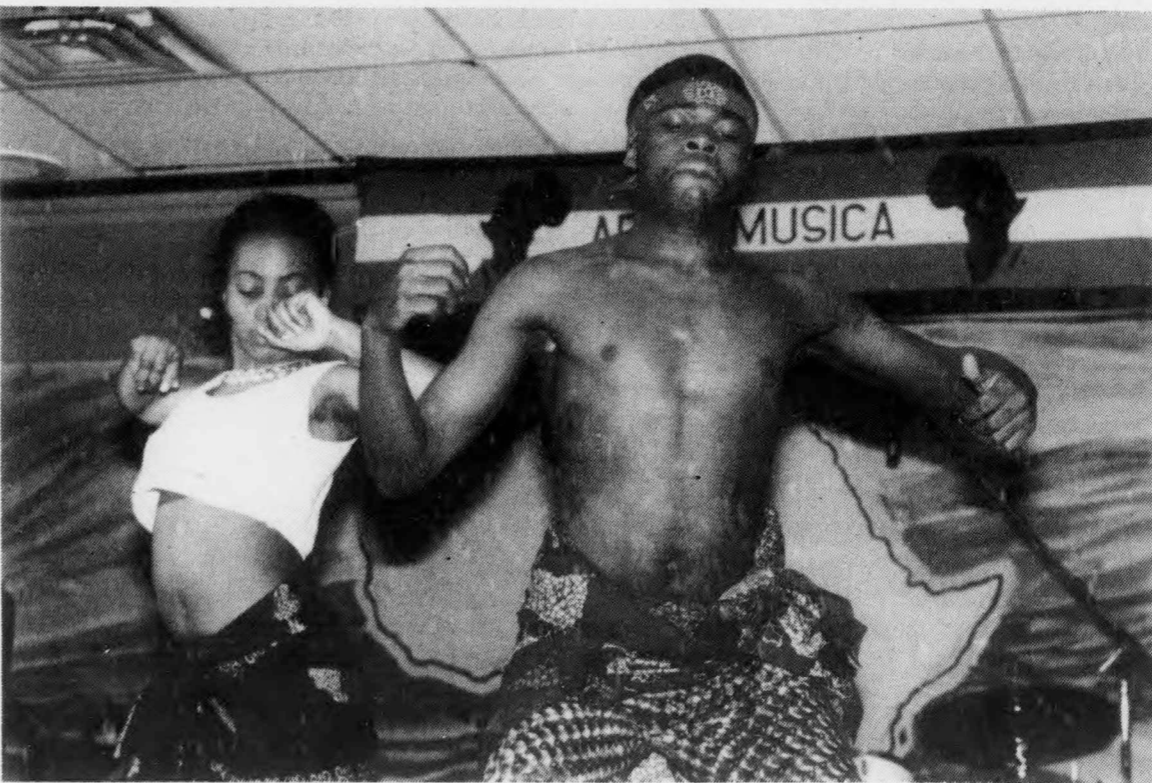
Charles Waana performed an interesting, if somewhat bewildering "drum beat" dance, even incorporating air guitar for his second number. After that, there was a video presentation of an African fashion show which was disap-

tantly African sound that Paul Simon would be more than willing to exploit. They played two songs which served as a preview for the dance at the end of the show.

The remainder of the show consisted mostly of "traditional" dance, though much of it we could have witnessed at Sweetwaters. However, some of the dancers were very impressive, contorting and gyrating their bodies in ways that would have put me in traction. The dances were interrupted at one point by David Hobona of Botswana who recited a poem.

After the dance floor was cleared, Afro Musica took the stage again and performed the rest of the night. Having a live African band for the dance was one of the saving graces of the evening considering most cultural nights play mostly western music. Most people stayed for the dance and the floor was packed for the better part of the evening.

My main complaint is that nobody (other than Rev. Ohanaka) made an attempt to explain their culture. The M.C.'s only sporadically introduced performers and when they did, not much background was given. Even though this is an amateur performance, I think people expect (for \$10 a shot) to not only be entertained but to learn something about the culture. Also, it would have been preferable to have less lip-synching, and no video presentation in exchange for more "live" performances. Despite this however, and even though there was some disorganization, the atmosphere was laid back and I think everyone enjoyed themselves. The food was great, Rev. Ohanaka was impressive, and Afro Musica was entertaining.



Dancers "gettin busy" at Africa Nite. Nuff said

(K. Rainville Photo)

and racism. The reverend touched on racism and ignorance, using personal experiences as examples. He told of talking with Canadian students after he first arrived here who thought that Africans lived in caves and had tails (the reverend lost his when he landed at Pearson). Ohanaka went on to discuss sources of pride that Africans can draw

reclaim your culture. He stressed the importance for Africans to take pride in their traditions and keep them alive.

Then international student advisor Kay Nandall presented awards to three international students for their extra-curricular contributions. Afterwards, veteran Africa Nite performer

pointing. It would have been far more interesting to have a live fashion show with somebody explaining where the clothes are from and what functions they serve, such as was done at the evening of Cultural Diversity in January.

Afro Musica took the stage next and proved to be the other highlight of the night. This Halifax band has a dis-