

Black Explosion 'Rebirth' educates and entertains

52nd-annual Black Explosion shows appreciation for Black Panther Party, highlights student fashion and talent

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Flute Fingers, a performer at Saturday's Black Explosion fashion show, approached the stage on a hoverboard, playing Drake and Future's "Life is Good" on his flute.

Soon after, the performer wound up

serenading an audience member with a flute rendition of Juvenile's "Back That Azz Up."

It was his specialty and like many others performing or showcasing their fashion, the Black Student Union's annual event was his platform.

BSU held its 52nd annual Black Explosion with this year's theme being "Rebirth;" a theme which highlighted the cultural significance of the Black Panther Party. Roughly 600 UB students and community members attended the fashion show at the Marriott Hotel. Social media influencer Cleotrapa hosted the show

with a special appearance by rapper Sleepy Hallow. The show had four fashion lines and several performances, paying homage not only to the Black Panther Party, but to black culture as well. Models displayed a couture ranging from streetwear from designers like Faceless, to formal African wear from the designer Glenroy March.

Flute Fingers, formally known as Anwar "Notes" Overton, was just one of the night's showmen and has earned over 15,000 followers on Instagram for his artistry. Overton plays his flute at weddings and parties with genres such as hip-hop, soca and R&B.

"My performance was just a little razzle dazzle of the flute, I had my dancer Tyreke with me and we just came out and just wanted to give like a little taste of what we do," Overton said. "I wanted to do some piano and guitar, but I don't know if the [audience] was ready for that."

Students had the opportunity to show off their talent through rap, poetry and dance throughout the night. Audience members were excited to see step performances from UB's Delta Sigma Theta sorority and other Greek letters. Additionally, audience members praised UB's step team, UBST, and its performance highlighting the unfair treatment against black people within the prison system.

In between performances, independent designers displayed their colorful and diverse designs.

March's pieces were each from different collections. He said his white outfits, which were adorned with feathers like a "swan," were from his White Swan collection, while models



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STUDENT MODELING A JUMPSUIT FROM AQUAMAIA'S LINE DURING BSU'S BLACK EXPLOSION

wearing clothes from the Midnight Rose collection wore pieces dripped in red and black. One model came out wearing a long red evening gown with a thigh-high slit, completed with a black tassel around her waist. March then presented his Sankofa line inspired by African tribal garb.

"Sankofa means looking back, so I used African prints and then a little tribal. You see the details in the pants and the jackets," March said.

March said working with BSU's models was an "interesting" experience compared to the models he works with in countries such as France, Africa, Australia and Co-

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lombia.

BSU President Florence Ayeni said putting the event together was a "learning experience" and a "journey." With the help of SA and BSU staff, however, she said the experience had more "good times" than bad. The journey paid off because students eagerly swarmed around the stage when rising New York rapper Sleepy Hallow appeared.

"We had a certain budget that we wanted to allocate to artists and a lot of our students just wanted someone local that they actually listened to or kind of related with more," Ayeni said. "So it was kind of an easy selection."

Nelaje Branch, a junior computer science and statistics major, said she thought the show was "super dope" and liked how each performance showed not just American black culture but Caribbean culture as well. Although she liked each of the performances, her favorite performance was from dance group Crossfire.

"I think Crossfire absolutely murdered it, like they gave you not only Afro beats, but contemporary. They gave you soul, they gave you majorettes from the HBCU's, they gave you a little piece of every[thing]," Branch said.

Dejah Luke, president of Crossfire and senior psychology major, said the team was inspired by other dancers, particularly Beyoncé, since it was "basically a Beyoncé tribute."

Sedahri Young, senior communication major and a dancer for Crossfire, said when coming up with a dance, the team wanted to give the audience an "HBCU Homecoming vibe" and embody female empowerment.

"We changed the game, women have made a change over the years," Luke said. "This was about the Black Panther movement, the Renaissance and we females had come to show out."

Ugochinyere Ejiogu, senior biostatistics major and one of the performers, described the show as being the "epitome" of "being black." She said her favorite part

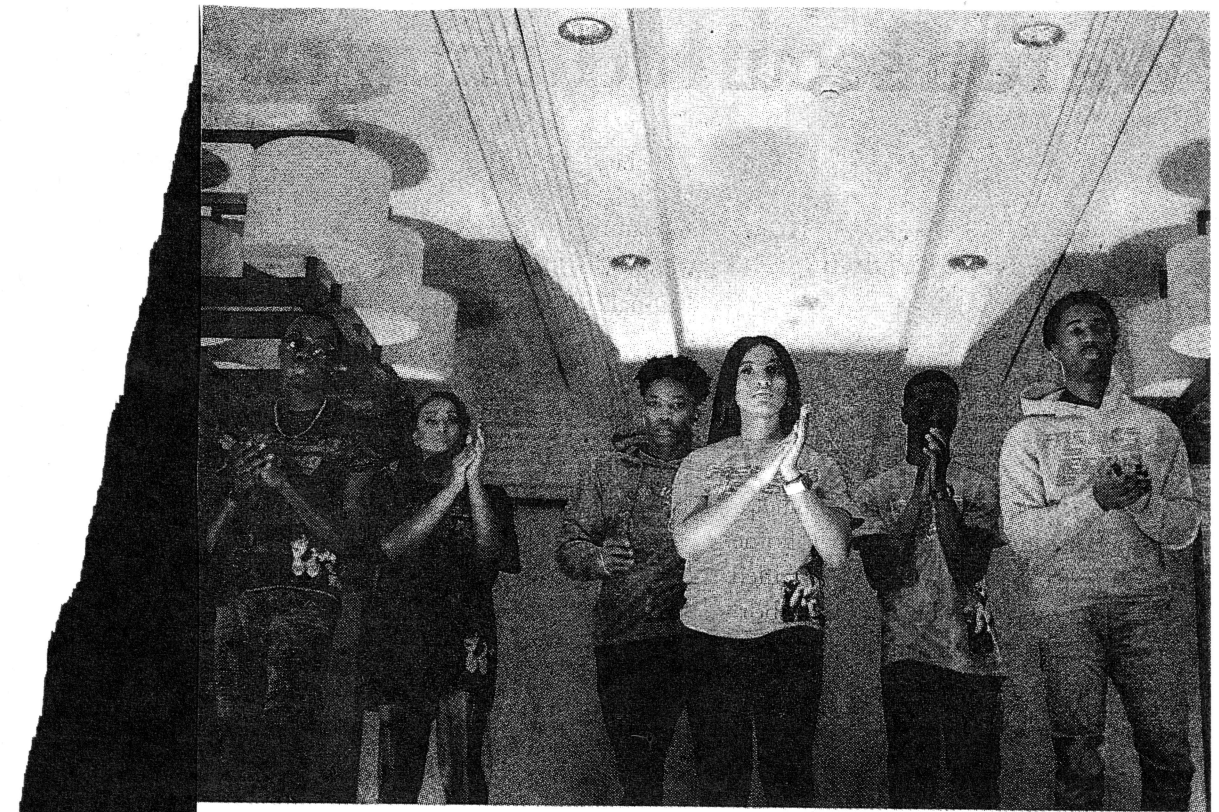
was performing with the Greek life community.

"We're members of Delta Sigma Theta sorority, Incorporated, so joining all the other 'Divine Nine' Greek organizations and coming together to do a step and stroll together was very powerful to show the whole community."

The Greek organization's performance seemed to be a fan favorite for many audience members because they said Greek life with an "HBCU vibe" isn't as common on campus.

"Greek life also represents some source of unity within the African American community," Ayeni said. "I felt like that just really showed us what brotherhood and sisterhood look like within our community and what unity looks like within our community."

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STUDENTS MODEL CLOTHING FROM DESIGNER FACELESS' CLOTHING LINE DURING BSU'S BLACK EXPLOSION



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RAPPER SLEEPY.HALLOW PERFORMING DURING BSU'S BLACK EXPLOSION