PEAK PERFORMERS in the ARTS

Anilash Panikulangara
Sports Editor

ANILASH PANIKULANGARA / KNIGHT LIFE

Senior Cassius Branson has been rapping since the age of 12.

"Rapping is an easier way of expressing myself," said Branson.

Branson's biggest influences in rap are Lil'Wayne and his peers.

"They [peers] give me props and confidence," said Branson.

He said Lil'Wayne is an influence because he wants to be up at his level.

"Everyone says Lil'Wayne is one of the best rappers, and one day I want to be included with him," said Branson.

In his rap, Branson uses some alliteration and rhyming but he mainly uses metaphors. Branson mainly uses metaphors because he likes how you can relate two different things.

"You can twist lines but mean a totally different thing," said Branson.

Branson said he performs "here and there." Some places he has performed are South Middle "Maple Street," Milwood, downtown and also at lunch.

Branson is a member of a group called "Profit." There are four members in the group, Branson, Branson's brother Isaiah, Josh Jarrett, and Lashaun Garret. They all go to Loy Norrix and have been rapping together since seventh grade.

They chose the name "Profit" because "We love money," Branson proclaimed.

The group mainly does freestyle. They just rap for fun and not for competition.

Branson definitely wants to pursue a future in rap and said, "I got a feeling that if I pursue that dream [of becoming a professional rapper] I believe I can make it."

Branson also added, "If I do make it on TV, I'm still going to be the same person I am now."

Senior Ellen Van Meter said she discovered an interest in poetry when writing Weekend Writings for Tisha Pankop's Honors English 11 class.

She likes poetry because she can express her feelings very easily.

"You could say a lot in a few words," said Van Meter.

Van Meter's influences in poetry are Rita Dove and Gwendolyn Brooks.

"I love their imagery and the rhythm of their poetry," said Van Meter.

"You could say a lot in a few words."
-Ellen Van Meter

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Even though Van Meter only started writing poetry last year, she has really improved drastically and has grasped the imagery of poetry. In her poetry she writes about the events she sees and uses a lot of metaphors and descriptive words to express herfeelings about those events. Van Meter participates in Slam Poetry, which is an outspoken poetry competition at a poetry group club called "Fire" in Portage. In Slam Poetry you speak publicly and act out your poetry.

"I like the combination of performance and literature," said Van Meter.

She won the slam poetry competition last summer. She is not in any competitions this year but has submitted a few pieces into the Kalamazoo Literary Awards. This year Van Meter is focusing more on just writing and reading a lot of poetry.

She does not want to do poetry professionally but said, "I will definitely take classes in college [University of Michigan]."

Freshmen Curtis Ray Jr. and Darius Haliburton have very big dreams and are willing to put forth the effort to accomplish those dreams.

"One day, while I was messing around with a mike and listening to music with Darius, I thought…man…me and Darius should do this," said Ray.

After that they decided to start a group called Mobb Boss Cartel (MBC). The group has four members: Haliburton, Ray, Ray's cousin DJ, and Kyla Bailey who is also a freshman at Loy Norrix. Ray is the singer in the group (he also dances), and Haliburton is the one who raps.

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Ray's biggest influence in music is his father, Curtis Ray because he taught him how to sing. Ray started singing last year at the age of 14. He sings hip-hop and R&B and also sings in the choir with his dad. Chris Brown and Michael Jackson are his influences in dance because he likes their style of dance.

Haliburton started rapping at the age of ten. "Rap is a work of art. It's how I express my feelings inside," said Haliburton.

One of Haliburton's influences in rap is his cousin "Honey" who is also a rapper.

Haliburton said, "When I hear him, it calms me down. Also when I was five, I was in a car accident and when I heard his voice it helped me out."

Some of his other influences in rap are Tupac, Plies and Lil'Wayne. Haliburton likes these rappers because of how they sound. He also likes how they rap about their struggles in life.

"I want to be like these three people mixed together but my own," said Haliburton.

Both Ray and Haliburton are very talented and show a lot of passion.

"We know we got talent and we have very big dreams to do a lot of things but we don't know how to put it together," said Ray.

"Rap is a work of art."
-Darius Haliburton

They both want to pursue a future in this area and they are very determined to succeed.

"I want to change people's mind about rap. A lot of people think rap is dead but rap isn't dead. And I want to bring it back," said Haliburton.

Ray added, "I really want to pursue this dream and I want people to hear how we sound."

Look out for them in February. They are supposed to perform at a Loy Norrix assembly.

Fresh Dining "Sprouts" Up in Kalamazoo at a High Cost

Kristen Wehling
News Editor

A quaint and modern restaurant has sprouted up in Kalamazoo that prepares all of its food fresh, with sauces and condiments made from scratch and new cooking techniques applied to the creation of this restaurant's delectable, yet pricey cuisine.

Sprout opened for business on November 29, 2007 and is located at 236 S. Kalamazoo Mall in downtown Kalamazoo. Robb Hammond, the owner and head chef of Sprout, wanted to bring to Kalamazoo a market in food that has not yet been filled before in the surrounding area, using fresh, local, and organic cuisine. As delicious and nutritious as the meals were, there was a high cost for absolute freshness.

On a sunny Saturday afternoon, my sister and I walked downtown and into Sprout, a restaurant with a calming atmosphere and modern vibe right next door to Dragon Inn on the Kalamazoo Mall and across the street from Terrapin. Fun and jazzy music filled the air as our coats were taken from us and we were seated at our table.

The walls were painted a light beige with an accented light sea green wall in the back of the resaurant, appropriately colored for the green theme the restaurant maintains. All tables and chairs were wooden and the chairs were of an ergonomic design that conforms to the backside of a diner's body which happened to be very comfortable and relaxing.

Above: The decadent Apple Confit Cake ($8.00)
Below: The 5 Year Cheddar ($11.00)

The chef and his cooking staff prepare lunch and hot dinner items right in the dining room in close proximity to the customers, filling the air with the aroma of fresh food.

The menu at Sprout was slightly confusing. Lunch menus vary from week to week and the prices range from $6.00 to about $13.00. The dinner menus, along with the dessert menus, change about once a month. Dinner prices for the month of December ranged from $8.00 to $35.00 and are laid out on the menu in a three course fashion so that a diner could pay up to $70.00 for a meal if ordering from all three sections, excluding dessert and a beverage.

The food prices are given in number units rather than placing the dollar sign before the number which raised a few questions such as, "Is this the price or the number we should order it by?"

Our first look at the menu was quite surprising. In addition to confusing numbers there was very little explanation as to what the foods were exactly and the ingredients in them. It could be compared to learning a new language with foods such as the Arctic Char which contains "soft polenta and eaters guild spicy greens." Needless to say I avoided this and went with something more familiar, a sandwich labled the 5 Year Cheddar ($11.00) which sounded like a grilled cheese except with carmelized onions and a sauce called miso, served with a warm mustard potato salad.

The lunch menu changes weekly and only consists of twelve items at a given time, which made for a very minimal selection to choose from. My sister ordered the Onion Soup ($6.00) which came with melted edam cheese and a large crostini, or crouton, garnished on the top.

The beverages offered to us were also very limited. Our server offered tea, coffee, and three varieties of Jones Soda. I opted for the Strawberry and Lime Jones Soda while my sister ordered a classic Root Beer soda. As the server poured our Jones Soda directly from the bottle into an ice filled glass, we noted the excellent service which began with our coats being taken from us, which prevented clutter at our table.

All together the food took about fifteen minutes to arrive at our table. The food was situated on uniquely shaped dishes in a very artistic manner. I began by digging into the warm mustard potato salad which I was taken aback by. I have never tried a warm potato salad, and it tasted just like eating a heated potato soaked in mustard. It was not horrible considering the fact that mustard is not my preferred condiment. The potato salad was an acceptable side to accompany the sandwich.

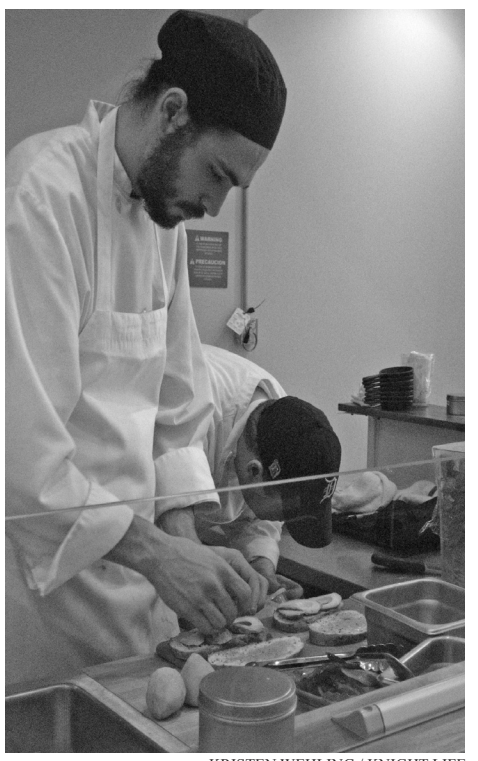
The 5 Year Cheddar sandwich was served on a sunflower seed wheat bread and was delicious but not satisfying or filling. At $11.00 I may have preferred the golden arches of McDonalds. My sister described her onion soup as good but perhaps possibly too fresh after being accustomed to processed soups that sit all day at other dining establishments.

Tempted to try dessert, we ordered an Apple Confit Cake ($8.00) with fresh parsnip ice cream and a tart cherry cloud of foam surrounding the sides, all prepared homemade at Sprout. It was delicious and beautifully placed on the plate.

When the bill arrived it was a little surpising. The total amounted to $39.22 for the two of us after discovering the Jones Sodas cost $6.00 for one bottle! After contemplating the ridiculously priced sodas that normally would cost no more than $1.50 at a convenience store, I decided to call the restaurant once I arrived home. The restaurant reported to me that the sodas actually cost $3.50 a piece, still relatively expensive, and that the waitress must have made a mistake. In addition to the pricey meal, I had to make an additional trip to be reimbursed $5.00 for the sodas.

The overall service at Sprout was great, but the food was not something I was accustomed to, having been extremely fresh and using ingredients I was not familiar with. Though the food was delicious, fast food or chain restaurants serving food at cheaper prices seem more appealing.

Sprout purchases all of their ingredients locally, supporting the local economy and showing off new culinary techniques in food preparation. Sprout is a fun and unique establishment to dine at for a date or special occasion, but is not reccommended for a simple night out.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Left: Sprout is located at 236 S. Kalamazoo Mall in downtown Kalamazoo. Right: (From left) Matthew Kurzawa and Andy Hayden are preparing one of the week's featured sandwiches, the Avocado.