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Hype Man

By Wilfred M. Phillips Jr.

On February 23, 2019, the award winning hip hop musical play, *HYPE MAN*, made its west coast premiere at the Fountain Theater. Playwright Idris Goodwin provides the audience with a glance into the hip hop world and the unknown factors that several artist face in expressing themselves and their music.

A hype man is a hip hop music backup rapper and/or singer who supports the primary rapper. Examples of some famous hype men are Bobby Byrd on James Brown's *Sex Machine* and Flavor Flav on Public Enemy's *Don't Believe the Hype*.

The cast members are Mathew Hancock, (Verb, an African American hype man); Chad Addison (Pinnacle, a Caucasian rapper who reminds me of the fiery hip hop star Eminem,) and Clarissa Thibeaux (Peep One, a talented female mix-master who composes dazzling beats in her mind that will have you moving in your seat). The setting is in a makeshift recording studio located in an American inner city.

The trio forms an interracial rap group and is on the brim of making it big until the police shooting of an unarmed black teenager upsets them and forces them to challenge issues of race, friendship, and privilege. Verb wants the group to perform a protest rap, which often creates unbearable tension in the recording studios between the friends.

The highly energetic performance by all cast members, along with fantastic laser lighting, moves this type of theater to a new level. You don't need to be a hip hop enthusiast to enjoy this entertaining musical-play. *HYPE MAN* is currently performing and will close on April 14, 2019. The Fountain Theatre is located at 5060 Fountain Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90029. For show times, ticket information, and reservations call (323) 663-1526 or visit www.FountainTheater.com