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WILLIAM PORTER
Denver Post
Columnist

Keeping the gospel spirit alive

The Old Landmark Baptist Choir was winding up its program Sunday afternoon, but not before Shelly Lindsey's soaring soprano nearly elevated the stage at City Park's band shell. I'm guessing she doesn't walk on water, but by the time Lindsey walked off into the embrace of her audience, I half expected dialogue intervention to clear up the large bloom plaguing Ferrill Lake, which served as the Denver Black Arts Festival's backdrop.

Lindsey owns some serious pipes, so you would expect the crowd at the F. Cosmo Harris Gospel Stage to be bigger.

But as ever, black gospel competes with secular music, which boomed from the nearby hip-hop and R&B tents. It has been that way for at least a half-century. Since soul titans Sam Cooke and Aretha Franklin jumped the gospel ship.

Still, Lindsey fights the good fight.

"Gospel music to me is really about an experience with God," she told me on a day so hot that every third person at the festival seemed to have a parasol. "From me to my community is all about taking a message to them about hope and restoration."

Gospel has served that function in the black community ever since the music emerged from its roots in 19th-century spirituals. Standing in the shade, Alan Cook considered the sweep of history — gospel music and his people's — all intertwined.

"It stems back to slavery days, when oppression was so great they needed an escape," said Cook, who recently returned to Denver after stints in Chicago and Atlanta.

"The music enjoyed great favor, but people fell off from it in favor of profits over spirituality." And yes, listeners at the gospel liturgy skewed older. There were a few kids under the smattering of umbrellas, but most tagged along with their parents or grandparents. Not a ball cap was in sight, but there were plenty of fine straw Panamas and fancy Sunday hats straight from church.

An exception to the age demographic: Khalid Barnes, a 37-year-old from Montbello. He has spent the past four years as choreographer and performer with the Men & Women of Vision Ministry.

Sunday, he was on stage with his cousin, Ayesha Mont, and Shanira Graham.

"I think gospel is just an inspiration," Barnes said. "It can lift your spirits, and we're trying to win souls and save lives."

"Gospel music has made an extreme difference in my life."

Still, Barnes can feel which way the wind is blowing as well as anyone.

He has a "holy hip-hop" show called "Blueprints" in production. He hopes to unveil it at Denver's Restoration Christian Fellowship in December. Standing beside him, Annette, who was resplendent in a crimson dress with a

Plan reworks ski-area law

Udall's bill would allow more activities, but critics worry it is too broad

By Mark Jaffe *The Denver Post*

A proposal to expand the federal Ski Area Permit Act to recognize winter sports beyond alpine and nordic skiing and promote summer recreation is drawing concern from environmental groups.

The draft bill by U.S. Rep. Mark Udall, D-Eldorado Springs, is aimed at updating the 1986 law to reflect the changing nature of ski resorts operating on U.S. Forest Service land.

"My bill would make it clear that activities like mountain biking, concerts and other appropriate uses can be allowed at these ski areas," Udall said in a statement.

Environmental groups say they are worried that the language in the draft is too broad.

"The concern is that this will open the door for things like water parks or roller coasters," said Ryan Bidwell, executive director of Colorado Wild.

Amy Mall, a senior policy analyst with the Natural Resources Defense Council, said ski resorts shouldn't get preferential treatment.

"The bill needs to be explicit that when it comes to summer activities, ski resorts have to meet the same rules and standards as an outfitter or any other permit applicant," Mall said.

Still, both environmentalists and ski industry officials say the act needs to be reworked.

"The act no longer reflects what is going on at resorts," said Geraldine Link, policy director for the Lake-wood-based National Ski Areas Asso-

ciation.

In the winter, there are tubers, snowboarders and ski-bikers on the slopes, as well as skiers, Link said. During the summer, they are replaced by mountain bikers, zipliners (who slide down the slopes on elevated rope lines) and hikers.

"We just need to clarify that such diverse activities are consistent with the act," Link said.

Udall's draft bill, which is open to public comment, would change nordic and alpine skiing to "skiing and snowsports" and allow for year-round "natural-resource based" outdoor recreation.

Ski resorts have been adding summer activities to their master plans for decades, said Ken Kowynia, winter sports program manager for the



AT LEFT: Attendees of the nation's largest charity polo event, the Denver Polo Classic in Littleton, pose for pictures with the horses and Argentinian riders Sunday afternoon.

ABOVE: Marc Patolie, a native of France, smokes a cigar while watching the dog events with his wife, Rebbecca Patolie, and their daughter Lauren, 2.

Noah Rubinowitz, *The Denver Post*

dp Online. More images. »denverpost.com/photos

Big hats, big hearts,

By Brian Malnes *The Denver Post*

Women in big hats, great food and horses in Colorado. Must be a rodeo, right? No, it was the 21st Annual Denver Polo Classic held this weekend at the Polo Reserve Development, 4401 W. Mineral Ave., Littleton.

The event was hosted by the Denver Active 20-30 Children's Foundation to raise money for children's charities in Denver.

"This year we've set new records for attendance and sponsorship," said Brian McCleary, the event's chairman.

McCleary, 33, said the Polo Classic is the nation's largest charitable polo event and estimated more than 4,000 people attended over the weekend, with the goal of raising \$400,000.

Polo consists of two teams of four riders and

their mounts. The object of the game is to hit a 10-inch round ball through goals situated on either side of a field that is 300 yards by 200 yards.

Many of those who attended the championship match on Sunday were first timers including Sarah Scholbe, a 27-year-old advertising salesperson.

"I'm really learning a lot," Scholbe said. "It is definitely something out of the ordinary."

At halftime, between chukkers (game peri-

Drowns attend a charity polo match that benefits kids

ods), a tradition ensues called "stomping of the divots." This is an opportunity for all the spectators to take the field and repair it.

The play-by-play for the match was done by David Andrews. The 73-year-old travels the world doing the announcing for charitable polo matches.

"English is the universal language for polo; that's why they put up with me," said Andrews, a native of England.

Among the children's charities that will be helped by the event are the Colorado I Have A Dream Foundation and Denver Kids Inc.

"I think our event is very unique and unbelievably entertaining," McCleary said. "It's a great way to give back to the kids."

Brian Malnes: 303-954-1638 or bmalnes@denverpost.com

Hybrids get green light to go solo in HOV lanes

By Jeffrey Leib *The Denver Post*

be paying HOT tolls, CDOT requires program participants to acquire transponders that will count hybrid use of



Blaine Nickless received a sticker that lets him drive alone in