



## M.U.G.A.B.E.E.

By J. Bingo Holman

Carlton Turner leads me upstairs to the V.I.P. room of The Forum where he is the public relations director. His older (by 13 months) brother Maurice waits for the interview with his weathered and dented Bach Stradivarius in his lap. "I take it everywhere I go," Maurice says. Seated in three matching blood-red naugahide wing chairs, these beautiful men lead me on the long and winding road of their lives.

The third and fourth of six children (two older sisters and two younger), the Turners were raised on a farm in Utica "on a strip of land called Lebanon," where they still live today. "We're just a couple of good, old-fashioned country boys," Carlton says. I say they're anything but old-fashioned. Carlton says they still farm: "We grow tomatoes, okra, green beans, squash, watermelons."

The brothers are in the habit of completing each other's sentences, which along with making it hard to attribute quotes, also makes it hard to imagine one without the other. Collectively, they have formed a band called M.U.G.A.B.E.E. (Men Under Guidance Acting Before Early Extinction) and a recording studio (Turner World Around Productions); they give creative writing workshops; they've written a children's play; they work with Jolivette Anderson at Lanier High School with the My Mississippi Eyes project (which studies the Great Migration of African-Americans in and out of Mississippi).

Music has always been an integral part of their lives. Their father was a jazz enthusiast and singer, born and raised in Harlem, who made them dedicate every Saturday to the discovery of jazz through his collection of the classics: "Thelonius Monk, Chuck Mangione, John Coltraine." They had an older cousin from Chicago who lived with their grandmother who every day after school turned them on to "Stevie Wonder, Earth Wind and Fire, Prince, The Spinners," and then on Sundays they sang in the Paige Grove Missionary Baptist Church choir. "We had music all day everyday," Maurice says.

The brothers, both with thin, chin-length dreds and caramel skin, have a burning desire to make a change, and they feel this change will come through music. They say that African-American music inspires cultures worldwide. "They're putting out music that frames the cultures of the world," Maurice says, adding that the frequent surges of negativity and selfishness in the music industry often spawn the same in its fans. They want to "bring another consciousness" with their

blend of all the music that inspires them.  
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