



SEARCH SACBEE AND SACTICKET

> Search

SEARCH YELLOW PAGES AT Sacramento.com

Go!

T MOVIE MUSIC DINING ONSTAGE NIGHTLIFE CASINOS ARTGALLERIES FAMILY TV/RADIO PERFORMANCE CAMERS CALENDAR YELLOWPAGES

-Free Concerts
-New Attractions
-Great Discounts
-Aug 11 - Sept 4

ROCK THE BARNYARD

POP ROCKS • A POP-MUSIC SPECTACULAR
Every Night
CALIFORNIA STATE FAIR • BIGFUN.ORG



Published 2:15 AM PST Friday, Jul. 02, 2004

Performance art

David Garibaldi's talent for painting to music has made him a hot nightclub act

By Bob Sylva -- Bee Staff Writer

David Garibaldi, a two-fisted brush-wielder, prepares another rush toward his canvas in one of his "Rhythm and Hue" gigs at the Empire nightclub last month. Garibaldi creates a painting on a 6-foot-tall black canvas in seven minutes to accompanying music.

Sacramento Bee/Michael A. Jones

David Garibaldi, an explosive 230 pounds of feathery dexterity, is a painter, a musician, a dancer, and all of those art forms in a single, slashing stroke.

A blur on stage, he wets his brushes in his big drums like a pair of bleeding drumsticks.

He is Jackson Pollock to DJ Sneak.

Right now, Garibaldi may be the city's hottest, if not least-known, artist. Pollock, he mints a fresh currency of canvases, posters and computer images during engaging live performances where he hurls paint to a pounding beat. Better yet, he may rank among the city's most profitable artists.



This year, life has put out a big tip jar for him. And it's stuffed with cash.

He's just 21 years old.

- [Photo gallery](#)

Even so, Garibaldi was performing in bars and nightclubs before he was of legal age. But no one is checking his ID. What they're staring at are his canvases - these acrylic cocktails of sinuous figures, rendered in lurid hues of neon, bourbon, velvet midnight. It's as though he's painting urban portraits with curling plumes of smoke.

"This is my style," he says of jazz hipsters and tattooed barfly genies vaporously released from a magic lamp. "I just see it. The illusion of

WIN FREE TICKETS TO MOVIES, THEATRE & MORE...
ENTER NOW!

UeX

june is gonna be extremely hot

now open
CLICK HERE

Harrah's
LAKE TAHOE CASINO & HOTEL

movement. The gestures. The mood-struck faces. The inspiration of the nightclub. This is how I see music."

See for yourself at his artful Web site, www.garibaldiarts.com. But if you really want to experience the skill (or is it a stunt?) of David Garibaldi amid all the spins and splatter, you need to catch him in person.

On a recent Friday night, the congealed crowd mildly curious, Garibaldi is ready to take the stage at the Empire nightclub. In a gig he calls "Rhythm and Hue," Garibaldi will paint a 6-foot-tall black canvas in seven minutes to accompanying music.

Can paint applied, however fast or frantic, offer any more visual fascination than paint drying?

"He is one of those things we do on Congo Bongo night, which is like a variety show," says Bob Simpson, owner/impresario of Empire. "He has a good reputation. People like his work. And we wanted to create an atmosphere here that is more than just a dance club."

Like, say, hip-hop at the Crocker? Not exactly.

"He's quite a performer," adds Simpson, impressed. "He gets the crowd hyped up. Everything he does is related to music. So, it's a good fit for us."

Wearing baggy jeans, a black Empire polo shirt and cap, Garibaldi bounds on stage on cue. His spotlighted blank canvas is about the size of a grim shower curtain. A tune by Prince ("I Want To Be Your Lover") is blaring. And Garibaldi gets down to business.

Spontaneously, using two brushes, he establishes the outline, the contour, the profile of a face. He dances off. He reloads his brushes in a paint can. He squiggles the canvas some more. He grins, he vamps, he struts, he plays air guitar. He cups an ear and mugs to the crowd. Everyone cheers.

Now Garibaldi, with time ticking, really gets cranking. He assails and flails the work. He twists, he spins, he touches up, and a portrait emerges. He smears in a background color for contrast. He prances off. He washes a hand with paint. And runs at the canvas. Splat! His signature. Painting finished.

Jolene ViDrio, 24, an office receptionist by day, a lover of dance at night, was impressed after watching a performance.

"I think he's a really good artist," she says. "I've seen him a couple of times before, and I think he really gets the music with the painting."

The painting sold the next day.

For five hundred dollars.

For seven minutes of work.

On a sunny afternoon, Garibaldi is sitting on a spotless white couch in his tasteful artist loft in West Sacramento. He's noodling on his laptop.

The very cool crib has soaring windows, porous burlap curtains, a concrete floor, tiger-orange walls, a web of halogen gallery lights and graceful potted palms. Garibaldi and his girlfriend, Joy Chua, bought the new artist loft/apartment for \$238,000.

Chua, 24, works as a bank loan officer by day. At night, Chua, who is a vivid figure herself, haunts the local nightclub scene with a digital camera, clicking images that are posted on www.napkinights.com.

The two met in a nightclub and Chua took some snaps of Garibaldi in action, lending him a minor celebrity.

Asked how two young people could afford to put a down payment on



GO

Shop Entertainment Deals

- BROTHER OLIVERS**
- FARE & SPIRITS**
- CACHE CREEK**
- CAFFE VIA DORO**
- CONTINENTAL BUFFET**
- ESQUIRE IMAX**
- THEATRE**

[See All Advertisers](#)

[Customer Service](#)

[CALL ...](#)

[View All Top Jobs](#)

Sacramento Dating

Jayson and Lisa
Engaged:
Sept. 24, 2004

eHarmony®



Find the Love of Your Life

- ▶ [View Success Story](#)
- ▶ [Get your FREE Personality Profile \(\\$40.00 value\)](#)
- ▶ [Find compatible local singles](#)
- ▶ [View Q&A](#)
- ▶ [Learn more](#)

eHarmony

anything, much less a home, Garibaldi, who estimates his current art take at \$4,000 a month, says the couple had some savings. He also boasts that Chua has a fine business mind.

What's remarkable about all this - love, fame, money - is that Garibaldi's success is instantaneous.

"It's crazy," he says. "People say to me, 'How long have you been painting? All your life?' 'No,' I say, 'I just started last year.' I feel bad." He shrugs. A sheepish smile. "But if you really want something bad enough, if you set your mind to something, you can do it."

Garibaldi is 6 feet tall, 230 pounds. He is wearing a white T-shirt, denim shorts, flip-flops. His considerable feet are speckled with paint. He has a scraggly beard, a bristly scalp, a round face with the biggest, most doeful brown eyes imaginable.

Another surprise about Garibaldi is his nature. He may be this dark, roving Rembrandt of the night, but he has the demeanor of an altar boy. He's polite, well-mannered, and nearly guileless in his sincerity.

Garibaldi grew up in Elk Grove, in a Mexican-Italian family. His mother owns a beauty salon; his father used to operate a company that made flavored popcorn. "Ever since I was a kid, I could draw," Garibaldi says. He also played trumpet and danced in a hip-hop ensemble called Boogie Monsterz.

But it was at Sheldon High - he was a junior, an "aerosol artist" (i.e., graffitist), something of a troubled kid - where things fell into place. Garibaldi enrolled in Shawn Sullivan's popular, very demanding animation class. His life changed.

"You could see that he had talent," says Sullivan, 34, who is an inspiring teacher. "We had long talks about what he wanted to do. He has a great eye for color, layout, for character design."

Garibaldi excelled in class. His short films captured several awards, even a summer scholarship. One piece was screened at the Crocker Art Museum. He probably could have gone on to art school.

But he never finished high school.

"It's my dirty little secret," says Garibaldi, with visible remorse, shaking his head. "And I'm not telling kids that this is the way to go. I think you need a diploma to fall back on. But I wanted this (success) real bad. And failure wasn't an option."

After leaving high school, Garibaldi worked at his father's plant for a couple of years. Then he moved into an apartment and got a job at a Wells Fargo Bank call center. Frustrated, he quit one day and went to University Arts. He bought some brushes and acrylic paint. And he taught himself to paint.

To pay the rent, Garibaldi executed a huge mural outside his apartment house, at 2523 N St. It depicts vast sea life, starfish, kelp and turtles. It took him a week, standing atop a scaffold. He did all the work with aerosol. It's still up today.

Next, on Wednesday nights, he set up an easel at Fox & Goose, which was hosting an urban jazz session. He painted scenes to music. The audience loved it. "People would go to their ATMs," Garibaldi says. "And they would come back and buy the paintings."

Next, he went to other clubs - Elements, K Bar, Blue Cue. He did the same work, with the same results. His big break came with the opening last year of Ink. Garibaldi painted a huge mural live. "We had a blank wall," says Ink owner Chris Nestor. "His work fit our theme - sexy, cutting-edge, lively."

Next, he refined his act into "Rhythm and Hue" and since has become a

regular attraction at Empire. Of his work's appeal, Garibaldi says, "People can see who did it. They can see the struggle. What matters is the process. And when it's hanging on their walls, they can remember the evening, the experience."

In truth, Garibaldi is not the first guy to toss paint onstage. Denny Dent, who died last year at age 56, was a longtime performer at rock concerts. Garibaldi also credits New York City street artist Justin Bua as a source, as well as Frank Morrison, a well-known artist who paints extenuated jazz musicians.

Still, Garibaldi's work has captured a niche. Earlier this year, he went to New York City for business and was booked at the Roxy Theater in Boston. He recently signed a contract with Image Conscious, a major poster company, which will publish three of his paintings.

Garibaldi and Chua have plans. With her business acumen, his art for promotion, he'd like to take his show on tour. But he hasn't forgotten his roots. He goes back often to Sheldon High to talk to the kids. "I want to inspire people," he says.

In the end, he's a portrait of gratitude.

"Right now, life couldn't be better," he says. "I'm 21 years old. I have a beautiful girlfriend. I have a good family. And I have a unique talent that I am not going to take for granted."

David Garibaldi

The artist will perform his "Rhythm and Hue" show at 9:45 tonight at Empire nightclub, 15th and R streets. He also will appear at 4 p.m. Wednesday on MTV's "Direct Effect" in a segment recorded last month at Lake Tahoe.

About the Writer

The Bee's Bob Sylva can be reached at (916) 321-1135 or bsylva@sacbee.com.

~~The Sacramento Bee~~ - Get the whole story every day - [SUBSCRIBE NOW!](#)

Sacbee Ad Links

[Buy a link here](#)

Tequila Lime Rub - 5 Star

Superb on Chicken or Fish, Low Soduim, 0 Carbs or Calories \$6/
bottle
www.danandbucks.com

Free Ringtones

Download free ringtones. 1000s of songs. No credit card required.
www.flycell.com

[Contact Us](#) | [Advertise in Ticket](#) | [Advertise Online](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

[Subscribe to The Sacramento Bee](#)

[The Sacramento Bee Web sites]

[Sacbee.com](#) | [SacTicket.com](#) | [Sacramento.com](#)

Copyright © The Sacramento Bee