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Theophilus and Wynter bring Brooklyn to Annex

by Jack McManus '13

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

With midterms mostly over and the semester's inevitably snow-covered final weeks still out of sight, the cloud of buzzing, anticipatory energy that floats over Hamilton most Friday nights felt especially thick this week. While the campus' most wizardly students congregated across the road for Hogwarts at Hamilton in Benedict, many of their Muggle classmates filed into the wide open Annex for the Campus Activities Board's flagship musical event of the semester: rapper Theophilus London in the headlining slot with pop princess Wynter Gordon opening up the show.

Although the two acts weren't immediately familiar to many students when advertisements for the show started popping up around campus and on Facebook last month, CAB has built a reputation for booking top-tier talent over the past few years, putting on memorable concerts like Janelle Monáe with Body Language and LCD Soundsystem with Sleigh Bells. Some also recognized Wynter Gordon for her hit single "Dirty Talk," which has been on party playlists since its release in 2010.

Filling out the other half of the bill, the hipster-approved Theophilus London has been building a reputation since a breakout performance at the Cannes Film Festival in the spring of 2011, months before the July 2011 release of his first and only album, *Timez Are Weird These Days*. Born in Trinidad, London's genre-indifferent sound and progressive, fashionable image have made him a favorite within the blog-centric Indie music world, and for over a year he's been touring



PHOTOS BY DAVID MORGAN '15

Wynter Gordon ran through her most popular hits and a surprising No Doubt cover.

steadily behind *Timez* and a more recent remix album called *Timez Are Weird These Nights*.

Both uniquely named artists travelled up from their shared hometown of Brooklyn for the one-off show, catching a few glimpses of our colorful changing leaves before returning for separate concerts at the Gramercy Theatre in Manhattan, with Theophilus performing there Saturday and Wynter on Monday. While it may not have the same reputation as the historic theater, the Annex crowd was surely as eager to party as any other audience could be.

Gordon took the stage first, introducing the crowd to her sometimes absurdly animated touring band. Characteristically, the audience started out small as many students extended their pre-show

activities as long as possible, but it gradually grew throughout her opening set. With her early time slot and modest crowd, Gordon initially struggled to get everyone engaged and active; luckily, she came prepared with a few creative ideas to get the crowd going.

Sporting a black fedora and fashionably destroyed Iron Maiden t-shirt, Gordon launched into her much-anticipated hit "Dirty Talk" just after the halfway point of her set, surprising those who expected her to save it for last. While latecomers may have been disappointed, the more punctual partiers danced with newfound energy to in appreciation. She dropped another surprise a few songs later, busting out an unexpected cover of No Doubt's 1996 single "Just a Girl," which her band performed with impressive accuracy. Judging by the shout-singing that immediately broke out, the cover was clearly the highlight of Gordon's opening set.

Theophilus came on later than his scheduled start time, which played to his advantage by giving the crowd extra time to grow. Technical problems plagued the beginning of his set, with his vocal microphone malfunctioning during the first song and forcing him to get a backup. Of course, the Annex has

never been known for its pristine acoustics—when the temporary wall is opened for concerts like this, the upper part of the dividing bulkhead remains, trapping higher range frequencies in the front part of the room and drowning much of the audience in a bassy, vocal-bereft wash. This structural difficulty is a familiar issue though, and at this show it brought out the more abstract, drum and bass-oriented dance music aspects of both artists' performances.

Once his mic started working and he settled into a comfortable rhythm, London showed off his impressive lyrical dexterity, weaving lines together with his casual, uncomplicated flow. Backed by both a DJ and some live instruments, Theophilus wasn't overly reliant on prepackaged beats and samples for the show, as he rapped without a backing vocal track and sang many of the hooks live, harmonizing with a recorded version of himself. In fact, the recorded background was only really conspicuous during "Why Even Try," a duet with absent female vocalist Sara Quin, whose parts were superimposed by the DJ at Friday's show. While the band also played along with pre-recorded tracks for a larger-than-attainable sound, their contributions

and presence still gave the show a subtle but significant "rock concert" feel.

Decked out in dark sunglasses, a camouflage jacket, a skinny gold chain and his hipster-hop required snapback hat, London proved to be a capable frontman, keeping everyone engaged and excited even as they started to sober up towards the end. About halfway through his set Theophilus surfed his way out into the crowd, which turned into a slightly awkward moment when he returned to the stage and noticed his bracelet had gone missing in the sea of arms and hands.

After his demands for it back went unanswered, London started the next song obviously upset about the lost jewelry. Luckily a helpful student approached the stage with the prodigal bracelet shortly thereafter, resolving the crisis and earning himself a spot to hang out onstage for the remainder of the set. A few other students shared some time in the spotlight during the show, with Wynter Gordon inviting up a few excited fans and Senior Annie Phillips taking the stage to dance with Theophilus at



Gordon won fans with her dancey beats.



The fashion-obsessed London easily out-hipstered most students.

A&E Weekly Schedule

CAB
Acoustic
Coffee
House

Thursday, Oct. 25
8 p.m.
Events Barn

Joe
Pug

Choir and Dance
Performance

Friday, Oct. 26

7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 27

1:30 p.m.

Wellin Hall

A Capella Concert

Friday, Oct. 26

Saturday Oct. 27

9:30 p.m.



The Chapel

CAB Comedy:

Upright Citizens
Brigade

Saturday, Oct. 27
8 p.m.

Events Barn