

ISSUE 2

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ELEMENTS

ALSO SPECIAL ED, MAD SKILZ,
CIPHER, NITWITZ.

RAEK WON

WITH SOME SHIT TO MAKE YOUR
MOUTH WATER



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**THE DEBUT ALBUM FEATURING:
PEEPS THE SEQUEL PUNCHLINE DUES**

CANADIAN RELEASE: JULY 1995



MOCCA RECORDS GROUP
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Photo: Carmen Morrow

elementary

element- (n) any of the four substances (air, fire, earth, water) believed to constitute all physical matter.

-or-

element- (n) any of the four substances (Aerosol art, B-boy, DJ, Master of Ceremony) believed to constitute the Universal Hip Hop Culture.

-or-

Element(s) - (ppr. n) this magazine. Word.

This mag was created to, put it simply, SET IT OFF in this country. This country we live in is called Canada, so don't forget it and **don't front** because we've got some shit here that can twist any real hip hop head from Seattle to Tokyo. So what we at Elements are going to do is connect the Hip Hop community from Vancouver Island to the shores of Newfoundland. To the best of my knowledge, no one has successfully attempted the feat of joining this 9 970 610 square kilometres of land mass for one common cause: the love of fuckin' Hip Hop. Many have CLAIMED to be a Canadian-wide publication but we're here to give the real props where they're due. So respects to RapCity for transmitting Hip Hop for all these years, but now Elements is here to take some weight off your shoulders and open doors that have been closed for way too long. One of our major concerns is the lack of recognition given to graffiti artists in Canada. The AllCity Action Team (A.A. Crew) has been called in to rectify the problem by compiling flicks from the illest Canadian writers and displaying them in full color appropriately in the centre of each issue of Elements.

All b-boys know that they've been forgotten about in the past and been fronted on throughout the industrialization of MCs. But when any hip hop motherfucker sees b-boys goin' off, whether it's in 1985, '95, or 2014, they can feel that shit and realize, without even realizing it consciously, how important and powerful that shit is. So Element's is gonna try as best we can to interview the original b-boys from New York to any new crews representing worldwide. Just give us time, it'll come.

DJs have also been fronted on of late, as most DJs are turning producers and have lost interest in the development of this artform. Ample and exclusive information will be relayed to all of you on the continuous evolution of pimping the Tech 12's through this printed medium.

On the topic of dope MC coverage, Elements realizes that most publications are strictly industry based, meaning they revolve only around RAP- or recording artist/ production (as defined by Mr. Wiggles). This is fine because MCs are finally makin' the ends they deserve and taking control of the business and livin' lovely from it. 'Nuff power to all striving MCs, make that loot, get that current. On that note, respect due to The Source, Rap Pages, The Flavor, etc. Word up for real. However, Elements realized that the business and politics has been taken care of by the aforementioned mags, so we are determined on focusing upon all aspects in the foundation of our culture. Because without recognizing the foundation of any structure, it risks toppling from above. Moreover, this foundation is also a metaphor for the underground. The stronger it becomes, the more weight it can support as it keeps growing and expanding, not just higher (the next level) but wider (more heads involved) and maintain the strength throughout.

Hip Hop is life in essence, so respect it, learn from it, and make it as dope as you can, because that will reflect onto yourself and to everyone around you... and that's on the real for real for real. No joke.

-Flipout

July 1995 #2

CITR 101.9FM

ELEMENTS

Truth is the mission,
in every Elements edition... word to Checkmate!
Once again, Cover art work by Dedos; AA Graphics!
All-Writes reserved. We don't give a fuck! Elements 95 baby.

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Elements Hip Hop Journal is back! Elements is a bi-monthly magazine published by the Student Radio Society of UBC.

Content - Elements will focus on all elements of Hip Hop culture: MC's DJ's, Breaking and Graffiti - on both a local, national, and international level. The magazine features interviews, music reviews, and lifestyle issues pertaining to the Hip Hop community.

Editorial Policy - Elements jointly shares CITR programming policy (ask Linda Scholten or Miko Hoffman @ CITR radio (604) 822-3017 for details) and encourages submissions from all members of CITR and the general public. Please ensure consistency with the magazine's underground theme for better publishing consideration (cause we don't print no bullshit).

Submissions - Please forward all submissions (illustrations, flicks, essays, reviews, opinions, etc) to: Elements, c/o CITR #233: 6138 SUB Blvd, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z1 or fax us at: (604) 822 9364.

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WORD?

Tragedy has struck again in N.Y. with a member of **The Zulu Nation** being murdered. **Showbiz (Show & AG)** has been arrested and is thought to be the prime suspect in this case. Rumours are flying over this one. Let's just hope that the media doesn't blame it on "rap music". Be on the look out for the 17 date Canadian Hip Hop tour coming to a town near you this summer featuring **Rascalz**, **Ghetto Concept** and **Kaos**. **J.T. The Bigga Figga** (out of the Bay) has just signed a distribution deal with **Priority Records** for his own **Get Low Records** as did Bay Area artist **Master P** with Priority for his **No Limit** label. Speaking of labels and distribution, **Wild Pitch Records** has lost theirs with **EMI** and have shut down. Rumours have it that **Stepsun**, who have separated with **Tommy Boy**, is right behind them. The **1995 DMC Championship** is now available on video as is the reissue of the documentary **"Style Wars"**. Also check out the **"Repeat Offender"** graffiti video put out by **On The Go** magazine out of Philly. The video also features **The Roots** as well as a showcase from **X-Men DJ's Rob Swift** and **Sinister**. Also on the video tip, **O.I.D.B.** wins for dopest video of the month with **"Shimmy Shimmy Ya"**. Honorable mention goes to **TLC** for **"Waterfalls"** (can't front, that shit is dope). The 2nd Annual **Source Awards** will be held this August in N.Y.C. **Wise Intelligent** from P.R.T. has a new joint out with the **Nitty Gritty** on



the Dancehall tip. **Special Ed** is back with **"Neva Go Back"** off his forth coming album. What's this? No more **Pete Rock & C.L.** Yet another dope group divides. The **D&D Allstars** just finished shooting their video for **"I, 2 Pass It"**. Where else would they shoot the video, but of course at D&D studios. On the independent side of things, **L-Swift** has put out **"How It's Going Down"** on **Fortress Records**. **Dr. Frankenstein** (formally **Delphi Oracle**) comes with **"Frankenstein's Pain"** on **Knowledge Of Self Records**. **Rascalz** have released **"Blind Widda Science"** b/w **"Solitaire"** on **Figure IV Records**. **Finsta Bundy's** second single **"Who I Be"** is available on **Big Willie Records**. **Cipher** has **"Peeps"** out on **Mocca Records**. **Shabazz** drops **"Death Be The Penalty"** on **Penalty Recordings**. **Da Grass Roots** featuring **Elemental** has just released **"Drama"** on **Black Employed Records**, and on **Wu-Tang Records** are both **Sunz Of Man** and **The Genius** new track **"Labels"**. Make sure

you pick up **DJ Craig G's** new mix tape **"Sneakin' UP Pt. 2"** for all the latest (or should we say earliest) joints. Everything from new **Biggie**, to new **Rakim**, to new **Smif-n-Wessun** with **Mary J. Blige**, to new **LL Cool J** with **Mary**, to new remixes of **Junior Mafia**, to the new **Crooklyn Dodgers**, to new **Onyx**, to... oh well, you get the point. One thing though, whatever happened to DJ's actually DJ'ing on their tapes. Hmm? Out.

Rap Promoters?

by Muzikly Inzane

Once bitten twice shy. What do you do when you've been bitten more than twice? Well...

Once again another Hip Hop show has been cancelled in **Toronto**. This time it was the biggest show of the year: **Rap Fest '95** featuring **Redman**, **Keith Murray**, **Common Sense**, **Biz Markie**, **Craig Mack**, **Too Short** and **T.O.'s Ghetto Concept**.

The show had gone on the night before in **Montreal** and on returning to **Toronto** the promoters **T&J** realized that they had no money to pay the acts, and tried at the last minute to get the funds they needed, which obviously did not happen. They then failed to inform the 500 or more heads in attendance, who were left listening (for awhile anyway) to the sounds of **Mastermind**, and when he stopped, the sound of speaker hum. This was the

final straw for an audience which had been disappointed many times before, and commenced in destroying **Varsity Arena**, sound board included. Even **Redman & Keith Murray**, who had returned not knowing the show was cancelled, weren't spared. **Redman** took a few punches and broke his hand in the scuffle while **Murray** was chased around the arena and took a bottle to the head while he was trying to defend his partner.

This was the climax of a year where promoters have continually put on fraud shows, and ran off with the money. This time **T.O.** was not havin' it! Unfortunately, this has seriously damaged the concert scene. We have lost artists such as **Redman** who I am sure will spread the word to other artists, but more importantly the fans have been dissed and regaining their trust is going to be the hardest.

It's On You

In your opinion, what artist(s) fell off the most?

"Somethin' that hurt was Cypress Hill. I loved their first tape, man. They started trippin' off that buddah and they just used that as their gimmick. Any group that has any gimmick gets no respect from me."

- **Primero (Furst); NitWits**

"I don't know, man. I can't really answer that. Within every genre of music, there's only so much of a period that musicians and artists can relate and appeal to the masses. There's groups that have been around for a long time; ones that meant a lot to me. They're still rockin' and in a lot of peoples views, maybe they shouldn't be; but at the same time these people didn't love them the same way I did back in the day."

- **Clean; Cipher**

"Alright, I've got a fuckin' listeroney for your ass right here, check it: Big Daddy Kane, he was bad - then he was smooth, now he just...man, yaknowhati'msayin' though. I gotta include Cypress 'cause their first joint was a classic, straight up. Oh yeah, Eric "I can't do shit anymore so let me give this rapping thing that Rakim made look so easy a try" B fell the fuck off. His scratches were wack anyways."

- **Freestyle Craze!**

"...ya see you can't front on legends. If you don't buy it you gotta at least listen to it. 'Cause them nigguz made the shit even more interesting for all of us. So you know, I give respect where respect is due. But you know, the youth man, the youth is some strong ma'fuckers boyee!"

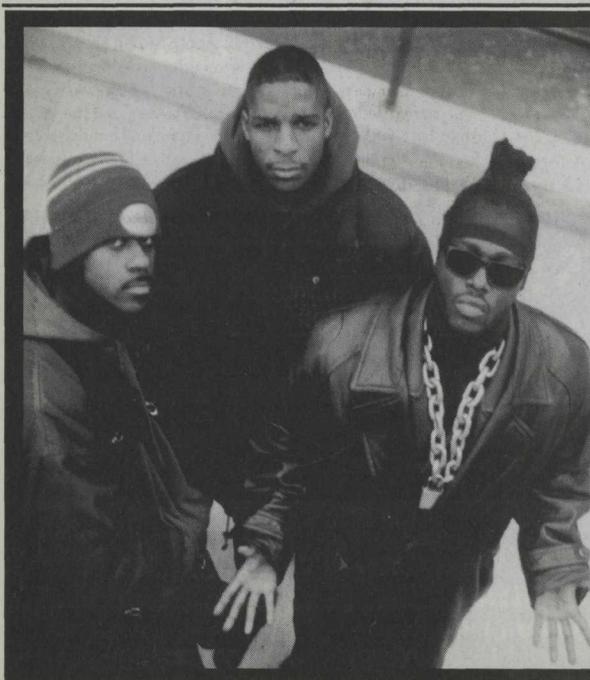
- **Raekwon the Chef**

"LL and Chuck D. Sitcoms and wack gear. No wonder Def Jam wants to sue them for inferior material."

- **Mr. Bill; Krispy Bisket**

"I'm not going to say any names but I hate it when there's a good ass DJ from a long time ago that you looked up to, and you look at him now and he's samplin' shit. I mean they're not stickin' with their roots, ya know? They're following some other shit like producing. I mean it's cool to produce but it's like, what happened to your roots, your scratching, your turntable skills? Why don't you apply that somewhere? They're wonderin' why their shit ain't sellin' - because nigguz wanted to hear the scratchin' in the first place."

- **DJ Q-Bert**



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by J Swing

What first got you interested in DJing?

I guess I started when I was 15. It just tripped me out listening to Malcom McLaren's "Buffalo Gals" and "Rock It" by Herbie Hancock with DJ DST on there. I seen some people scratching on turntables and I was like "fuck, that's fascinating," how you can put your hand right on the sound and just fuck with it. It's like a miracle or some shit.

Where did you go from there?

I tried it out on my dad's equipment and shit. I thought I was all fresh 'cause I could do some phony ass little basic scratches, so I was like "Yeah, what's up? Anyone wanna battle?" So I cut school and went to homeboys house and he schooled me. He did some scratches with the fader, and it was a knob fader on his home stereo. So I said "Aw, that's fresh" and went back home and practiced that style. Then I thought I was bad 'cause I learned that style so I said "Aw shit, I can fuck up anybody now." So all of a sudden I meet Mix Master Mike, this was back in '85, and he came up and busted some wild shit on me. He did the scratches from "Rock It" on me. He fucked me up and I was like, "Oh no". I was all nervous after that. That's pretty much how I started, we were just battling a lot. Competing a lot got me good. I was like "Fuck, I can't let this guy take me out," 'cause I would always get taken out. I lost more battles than I won battles, to tell you the truth. I was always like "Naw, I can't let him take me out". So I would practice and practice and practice. So that's how I got to where I am I guess.

Alright. So you're on the new Bomb Compilation DJ album.

Yeah, that's coming along real well. We're called the Invisible Skratch Pickelz. That's Shortkut, myself and Disk. We did an all... all the instruments are from the turntables. I guess you can say it's the most unique song on the whole album because everything is done from the turntables, there was no samplers.

Who's idea was that?

That's my idea. We used to study other DJ's and be like, "Let's study this guys style" and we would get his style down pat. Then it was "let's study this guy" and we would get his style down pat. We would study every DJ there was and get there



styles down pat until it was like "Fuck, there ain't nobody to study no more." So we started studying other forms of music like Jazz and Rock & Roll and shit like that and figure out how they play their shit and apply it to the turntables. That's how I came up with the concept of having all the sounds on a songs off of turntables instead of using samplers and shit.

How does that work?

Well let's see, one guy's playing the beat, you know scratching the beat. One guy can scratch anything from a bass line to guitar sound to a fart, anything.

Are you going to take that one step further and do an album?

Yeah definitely, were going to do a Jazz album. That Bomb Compilation is going to be the first song. Strictly turntables and nothing else. It'll be just the deepest, rawest Hip Hop.

When it comes to DJing, what impresses you these days?

Originality, finesse, style, skill and composition. You know, if he does something new that I've never seen before. I like the X-Men from New York, that DJ crew out there. Roc Raider, Rob Swift, Steve D, Sinister, the whole crew. They impress me a lot, I really like them.

Other than the jazz thing, Where do you want to go from here?

I would like to take DJing to a new audience, but if it doesn't happen then I'll just do my thing. A lot of experimental stuff is what were going to do. Just try and create new styles so if were dead in the year fuckin' 1 million, people will look back and be like "Aw man, these guys invented this fuckin' this style!"

And what would you say your style is?

It's a combination of a lot of styles put into one. Kinda like you know how Bruce Lee took a little bit of that, a little bit of this, and a little bit of that and put it together and made his own style. That's like my style on the tables. You know the speed... just all aspects of the turntables as an instrument is pretty much what I'm tryin' to do and more.

Q-Bert's remedy for cleaning and loosening your crossfader

- open up the mixer and take the fader out.
- clean the fader with channel spray
- after it has been sprayed, wash the fader
- when that is done dry the fader with a blowdryer

Q-Bert: What makes all that static is the carbon build up in there. Get rid of the carbon and it's like new again. It's cool to spray your fader once and a while if you don't want to take the fader out, but if you don't wash it out the carbon will stay and it won't come clean.



special ed

Whatever happened to SPECIAL ED?

After his first two albums, Flatbush's finest went on the DL, leaving hip-hop heads all over the world in suspense. I recently got a chance to talk to the man himself about the past few years, but more importantly, his single — "Neva Go Back" and his long awaited third album, Revelations....

by **checkmate**

special ed

First man, where you been at and shit, yaknowhati'msayin'? We haven't heard from you in about four years, besides on the "Crooklyn" thang. So if you could fill us in on what you've been doing and all that....

Okay, well I've basically been developing as an artist and as a producer working with groups... ya know at the studio, tracks, automation, so that's no small thing, that's a big thing to be taking of on a daily basis... and I've been producing acts as well as my own stuff.

Dope... What are the names of some of the new groups, as far as other artists, ya know?

Yeah, well I'm fucking with The Killing Team, Two Black Bastards, 40, Shields D. Realz. I'm working with a couple of producers such as myself, my partner and long time DJ Akshun, my brother Drew, my man Ish (the big I), Moe... so it's like I'm working with a whole bunch of people, I'm doing a whole bunch of stuff, yaknowhati'msayin'... Yeah, I'm working with a couple producers, a couple artists, rappers, dis an' dat.

I heard y'all went back to yard and shit...

Yeah man, I went down to Jamaica to do a song with Bounty Killer.

I heard that shit this morning, that shit's fat man, Bounty Killer's large, word up...

That's what I'm sayin'. I mean ya know I could have picked anybody. I could have tried to pick some ol' platinum artist or whatever. I figured let me go back to the roots, let me find somebody that's true to this and do this the correct way.

On your single, Never Go Back, you flip some mad skills man, like... you got that shit... damn I can't think of it right now... ("Ya rhymes is soft like fur/ oh you wrote 'em for her/ well that explain it")... but you just spittin' some of that 'ol shit again, man.

Yeah... "Pumpin' like Donovan, plus I'm a L'il Vicious" and all that other shit. That's my comeback joint, just lettin' people know I ain't gonna dwell on the past. I know what I've done, and what I was and what I did, but I ain't goin' back. I'm a just come back, the new shit, yaknowhati'msayin'?... Fuck the past, we gonna live the future.

Word, that's why I thought I'd ask you about the new shit 'cause I'm sure you're sick to death of people askin' you about that old shit. You know everybody knows the words to "I Got it

Made"...

They should, that's supposed to be a classic right there, yaknowhati'msayin'? I wanna give thanks for that, 'cause that's what I came into this industry to do. I set out to make a mark in this industry and be historical in an aspect, knowhati'msayin', and try to say I did this, I did that. But yo, I put my foot down and made my mark in this industry and I want everyone to realize that.

I heard that your new video is supposed to be something stupendous, yaknowhati'msayin'...

Oh yeah, it's out right now. You should be seeing it A.S.A.P. It's on rotation now on some of the video channels. It's called "Never Go Back". It was directed by Omar Epps (Juice, Higher Learning), so I had a lot of input on that, being that we're peers, and ya know, he's just a cool motherfucker. I basically gave him my ideas and let him bring them to life.

Yo, you ever comin' down to the West Coast or what, G? You know, way up in Canada, Vancouver an' shit...

Canada is live, son. Canada's one of the livest places I've ever been.

Word the fuck up!

I had a show up there in Canada and that was one of the best performances I ever had. The crowd was all with me, we was all together. That shit was live man, some emotional shit, kid. Yeah, man, and then when I did my reggae shit, that shit just tore the house down. That's what I'm sayin', I definitely know about Canada, no doubt.

So what's up with Akshun?

He's still my partner 'til this day. I wouldn't even call him a DJ 'cause that's not what he is. He's my partner, he's a producer, he's an engineer, yo my man does just about everything, yaknowhati'msayin'? He's an all around person. I've got a studio out in Brooklyn, Akshun engineers at the studio. We produce tracks out the studio. Even if I make the beat, I let him engineer for me 'cause he's skilled at all them things there, ya know?

Yo, that's so good to hear, yaknowhati'msayin'? Two brothers who have been down since back then and y'all still together, knowhati'msayin. No talk about that split up shit, y'all growing together...

I'm saying, it's been like, there's been a lot of fucked up times

special ed

and depressions, yaknowhati'msayin' and just times in general... Not no personal shit between me and him, but just in life and how it's dealt with us and you know, through our things, but we've stuck together 'cause, yaknowhati'msayin, we started out together. It's just a thing where it's like real dedication there because we started from scratch. We started from just two nigguhz cutting out of school, going to cut up some break beats and rhymes in the basement, to no audience, yaknowhati'msayin? There wasn't no audience, we was just doing it on the strength. Now it is what it is today, so I'm glad about that.

That's good to hear, brother getting on and all that. Incidentally, how old were you when you first came out?

I did "I Got it Made" and the first album when I was fifteen. When it came out I was 16. Then throughout the years, today I'm 23... So it's been a while.

So you're still young, but you're like a veteran in this game, yaknowhati'msayin'?

Well, that's what I'm tryin' to show nigguhz, I'm trying to show, well...

You've got some O.G. status up in this game.

Yaknowhati'msayin'! At that time, when I came out, I was the only thing like that goin' on and it just set the trend for mad heads to come follow...

Your new album is called Revelations, with fourteen tracks... so this is the thick album, then!

This is it. This is no commercial, no gimmicks, no bullshit and no jokes. Straight up song after song, fourteen joints.

With production handled by yourself, Akshun, and...

Howie Tee, Mark Sparks, Father Shaheed and High Class from Brooklyn. It's like, me and Akshun did half of the album and then we said alright, the other half we'll split up amongst respected producers that we felt we wanted to give props to. And no doubt, of course Howie, you know, who started me off in the industry.

Howie Tee's responsible for putting you on, right?

Yeah. He gave me my first beats, he put me on my first tracks and you know, I got my deal from that. And he is also the producer of the first single, "Neva go Back".

So he's still rollin' with y'all too, huh? That's some crazy shit.

Well, he's doing his thing as a producer too. He's back and forth between New York and the west coast doing his thing, so he's a very busy man himself. So ya know, we've always got to pay our respects and get some input from the man, and make sure that he got his piece stable, yaknowhati'msayin'?

Word up! I seen you up in Juice, doing a little cameo and shit. You gonna get into the movies?

Only if it's meant for me. I ain't gonna read for no part against a hundred actors and see if I get a part. I'm into music. I make records, albums and videos...

mostly just the records, ya know? All the videos and that come with it. If somebody offers me a part, I'm gonna take it. I'm not gonna run around like no ham sandwich trying to get a part.

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| ARTIST: | SPECIAL ED |
| LABEL: | PROFILE |
| RELEASE: | REVELATIONS |
| PRODUCTION: | VARIOUS |
| MEMEBERS: | DJ AKSHUN SPECIAL ED |
| HOMETOWN: | FLATBUSH, NY |

Vancouver Hip Hop Radio

CITR 101.9 FM

"THE SHOW" sat 6 pm - 8 pm
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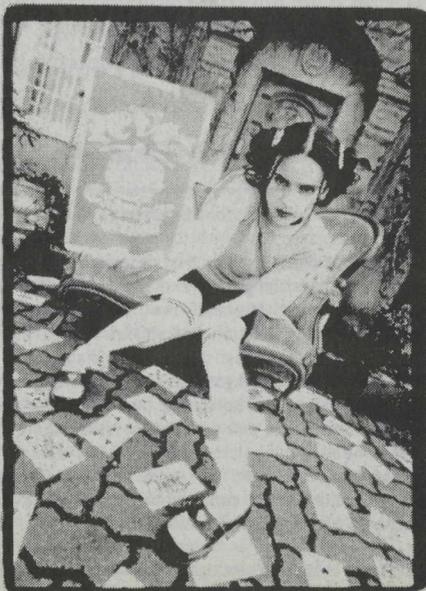
"KRISPY BISCUIT" tues midnight - 2 am
"NO MERCY ON THE GROOVE" mon 4 pm - 5 pm
"BEATS 2 DA RHYME" tues 1 am - 7 am

CJSF 93.9 CABLE FM

"STRAIGHT NO CHASER" fri 7 pm - 9 pm
"STRAIGHT OUTTA NEWTON" wed 7 pm - 9 pm

Mix Tape

| A | B |
|--|---|
| DATE/TIME | DATE/TIME |
| NOISE REDUCTION _ON _OFF | NOISE REDUCTION _ON _OFF |
| Sugar Hill - AZ | Who I Be - Finsta Bundy |
| 360° - Nit Wits | Doe In Advance - Gangstarr |
| The Riddler - Method Man | Frankenstein's Pain - Dr. Frankenstein |
| Extra Abstract Skillz - Madskillz | Crazy - Special Ed |
| Keep On - Grand Puba | Terror - Masta Ace Inc. |
| Up North Trip - Mobb Deep | Shades Of Black - Rakim |
| Criminology - Raekwon the Chef | Let Their Brains Blow - Helta Skelta |
| Ah Yeah - KRS One | Masta I.C. - Mic Geronimo |
| Coast II Coast - Tha Alkaholiks | Tribute - Jemini the Gifted One |
| Let Me At Em - Wu-Tang Clan | Labels - Genius/GZA |



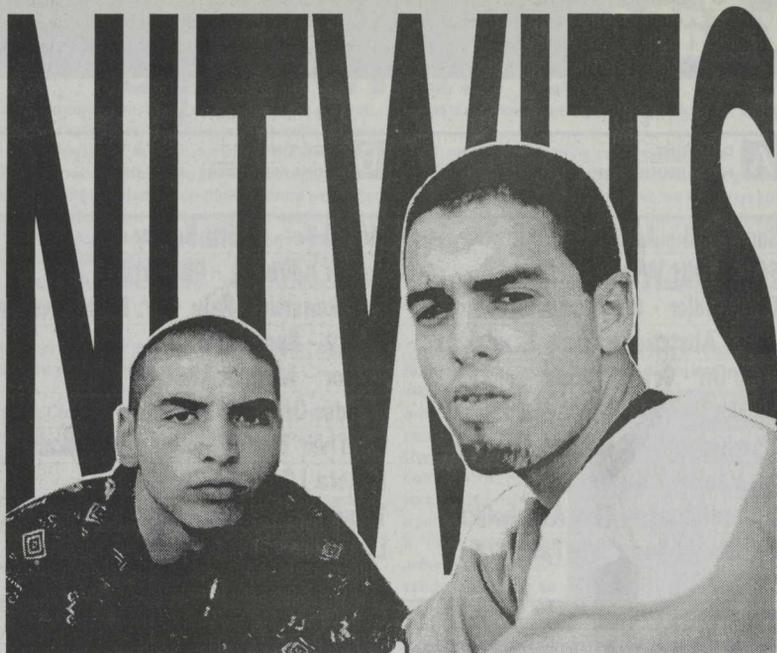
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Latin funk: Since day one, Latino brothers have been helping form the universal Hip Hop landscape, but their contributions take a consistent back seat on the flavor bus. Now, two Brown-skins enter the Hip Hop metro. Ding...next stop...the Nit Wits.

by ROLANDO ESPINOZA

It's 1995 and Vancouver city is experiencing its largest Hip Hop surge since 94's DJ SoundWar festival/contest. The introduction of Tremor Record's- Nit Wits, brings a whole new bilingual vibe to the city's underground rap scene. Probably first introduced to local heads via last year's opening act performance at the bunk De La No-Show gig, the Nit Wits have matured to the next level. Their new single titled, "Then There's Nada" incorporates Nit Wit fusion of English and Spanish languages: Spanglish (flavorless true English translation = "Then There is Nothing"). "We always kick Spanglish flavor- that's for you mi Raza- just to kick a different slang and show that we got our Brown pride in there" explains Amazon; part one of the Nitwit duo.

When first hearing the Nit Wit's lyrical skills, you immediately realize the difference between part one and part two; for each MC carries his own unique Hip Hop baggage. This contrast in

past experiences makes for a tasty recipe...mmm, que rico.

Part one: Amazon's style is best described as a lyrical reflection of the jungle and great river of the same name in the heart of South America. His family brothers OG Eugeneo and DJ Kemo (Labratz Production, Rascaiz) introduced '83 Hip Hop into their Vancouver East-side household and things haven't been the same since. "I gotta give large respects to my brothers, 'cause they always hooked up the Hip Hop for me. When people couldn't get that shit, my bros hooked me up. They taught me everything. I remember being six years old and doing backspins on our tile floor in the backyard. They even got me to enter a breakin' competition in some West Van mall... that's real Hip Hop." confesses Amazon.

Part two: Primero (Furst) is the knowledge of the group. Old school is in session when Primero rocks the box, unleashing

Latin pride as if it were no thing. "I'm writin' lyrics for all peoples, but especially our people, 'cause there's a lot of sleepy heads out there... there's not enough strong Latino voices representing...especially in Hip Hop." he states. Primero's Hampstead, Long Island stomping grounds gave him a unique perspective on the emerging culture that would be called Hip Hop. He recalls, "I used to be the little shorty sniffing arm-

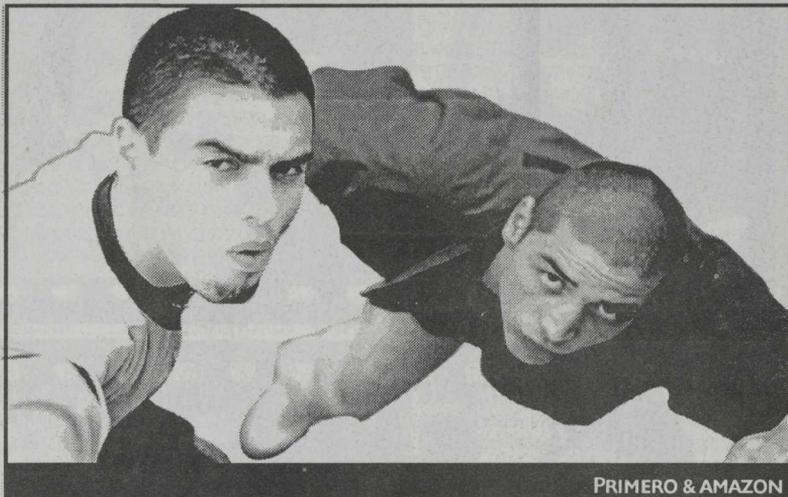
pits, checkin' out the cipher; dudes freestylin'. I used to try to get in there and see what was happenin'. I remember walking home from school scratching the vinyl of my notebook, sayin' 'Yeah! mom, look at this...listen to this! My mama

was a real traditional Latina lady... she didn't give a fuck about my notebook "scratching" shit, (laughter)." He went on to tell us about his pre-pubescent run-in's with U.T.F.O's Kangol Kid,, and how his cousin used to live across the street from them in Long Island. "I used to watch him, (Kangol Kid) play the drums and freestyle with the kids around the way...Roxanne, Roxanne...all that! All that- That was the shit that got me started, man," recalls Primero.

The lack of inertia in Vancouver's growing Hip Hop scene dominates various conversations, including the one we had with the Nit Wits on the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Amazon stated, "It's hard to create quality Hip Hop in this city, man. My boys that are around me just push us. My mentality around me is pure Hip Hop, even if I don't see it outside my immediate window...I don't care what the fuck's around me. We just wanna grow a nice foundation with all the real heads that we have up in here... all the real heads, and we'll start this shit for real." On that note, Primero also had some things to say about the young state of the Vancouver rap scene saying, "This city is

so brand new, we can do that, (create quality music.) We can go back to the essence of Hip Hop, 'cause we don't have to worry about the other bullshit that other folks deal with, (in other major cities)."

As our conversation continued, it eventually got on the topics of freestyle mics, and what interesting experiences had come



"My mentality around me is pure Hip Hop, even if I don't see it outside my immediate window... I don't care what the fuck is around me. We just wanna grow a nice foundation with all the real heads that we have up in here... and we'll start this shit for real." - Amazon

out of that whole thing. When asked about warfare, Primero paused and then said "You gotta have respect for the crews you battle against. If you want to battle, let's battle and if you want to scrap...let's throwdown afterwards.. In this city, people want to hide be-

hind their freestyles, thinkin' that if something goes down...we'll just battle it off, then forget about it. Naw, man. It's like this, if your gonna come insult me, then we're gonna battle; then after that, we're gonna throwdown, for real. That's the way that shit goes."

So it's official. Vancouver is ready to finally come out and make it's mark on the Hip Hop nation. After years of watching the east (Toronto) dictating the flow of the (Canadian) industry, people like the Nit Wits sat back, perfected their craft, and waited their turn. If you think that these

brothers aren't gonna come correct, you're living a fantasy, and "The fantasy your dreamin' will go poof, Then There's Nada."

| | |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| ARTIST: | NITWITS |
| LABEL: | TREMOR |
| RELEASE: | THEN THERE'S NADA 12" |
| PRODUCTION: | DJ KEMO (LABRAYZ) |
| MEMBERS: | AMAZON PRIMERO, (FURSY) |
| HOMETOWN: | VANCOUVER, BC |

The Seen

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DJ B Mello, (Seattle)



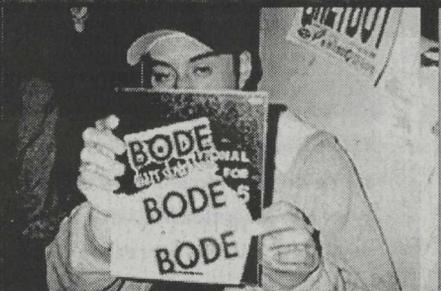
Bamboo & Checkmate



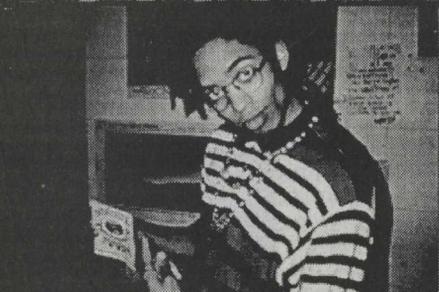
Tranz, Graff



Omar, Franklin Crew



Prev One, Q Continuum



DJ Kemo & Ebony



MAJOR WRITERS MEETING IN NEW YORK CITY IN THE YEAR 2000

TOYS LISTEN UP/ THIS IS A JOKE/ THIS IS NOT A REALITY CHECK/ READ THIS ON SUBSTANCE
THE ULTIMATE ONE YEAR MEETING WILL BE HELD IN NEW YORK CITY TO:

PAY TRIBUTE FOR GIVING BIRTH TO THE MOST MISUNDERSTOOD CRIME. TO GATHER THE MOST POWERFUL MINDS IN THE GRAFFITI HIP HOP CULTURE TO TALK ABOUT UNITY IN GRAFFITI. TO FIND OUT WAYS TO NOURISH THE SOULS OF MANY WHO ARE SALIVATING FOR A GROWTH OF A BRANCH OFF THE HIP HOP TREE. UNIT THROUGH UNDERGROUND ILLEGAL MEETINGS THROUGHOUT THE CITY, SO ALL GRAFFITI ARTISTS OF THE WORLD GET TO COLLABORATE AND PRODUCE THE FINEST GRAFFITI ART EVER SEEN BY MAN. TO BRING OURSELVES OUT OF STAGNATION AND FIGURE OUT HOW TO BRING OUR ART TO THE NEXT LEVEL AND STAY TRUE TO THE GAME. ELIMINATION OF NEGATIVE IDEAS BY RE-EDUCATING WRITERS WHO TEACH HATE, RACIAL SEGREGATION AND SELF-IDEOLOGIES AND TO TEACH THE IMPORTANCE OF STYLE SO TO BRING UP NEW GENERATIONS WITH NO RULES BUT RESPECT. TO INTERGRATE MANY CRAZY GRAFFITI IDEAS AND CREATE A NEW ONE. TO TRAVEL WITH OTHERS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES TO BOMB AND CREATE LARGE SCALE GRAFFITI WILDSTYLE BURNERS TO SPREAD A NEW AND MUCH MORE CONSCIOUS HIP HOP. TO LEARN FROM THE PAST AND NOT TO LIVE IN IT AND TO CREATE A NEW MOVEMENT OUT OF THE OLD. 5 YEARS IS NOT FAR AWAY. THIS GATHERING WILL BE UNWANTED BY CITY, COUNTY, STATE AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. THIS GATHERING IS DANGEROUS. ENTER NYC AT YOUR OWN RISK. THE NEEDS OF THE MANY OUTWEIGH THE NEEDS OF THE FEW.....IMAGINE.....A GRAFFITI WORLD. IN THE NEXT 20 TO 30 YEARS THE PEOPLE WHO HAD FUCKED US UP WILL HAVE SHRIVELLED UP AND DIED AND THE BABY BOOMERS GENERATION (THE ROCK AND ROLL/ HIPPIE/ YUPPIE/ YOU NAME IT) WILL BE SLOTTED INTO POWER AND THEY THINK GRAFFITI IS COOL? GRAFFITI ART IS GOING TO EXPLODE BIG ENOUGH TO OUTWEIGH EVERYTHING YOU DREAMED ABOUT AND THEN SOME. THE SPRAY CAN REPRESENTS A SYMBOL OF OUR GENERATION. IT IS AN ICON. IT IS AN AWAKENING EXPERIENCE. IT CHECKS ALL OTHER FORMS OF HIP HOP. IT IS AN ART FORM WITH SO MUCH SOUL AND INTEGRITY THAT IT WILL CRUSH THE ART WORLD INTO EARLY RETIREMENT AND SHOW THAT THE ART ON THE STREETS ARE THE REAL LIFE GALLERIES. THE ART GALLERIES WITH DEEP CONNECTIONS WITH THE ART MAFIA, HAVE BEEN SLAVING YOU FOR THE PAST 50 YEARS OF YOUR PRECIOUS LIFE, FINALLY GETS TO SAY YOU'RE THE "FLAVOR OF THE MONTH" AND HAVE FORGOTTEN YOU WITH THE NEXT. MOST ART SCHOOLS HAVE A DEEP CONNECTION TO THIS HIDEOUS IDEA FOR ART, NOT ENTIRELY, BUY FOR MANY IT HAS BEEN A BREEDING GROUND TO CONTROL ART. SOCIETY WANTS TO CONTROL THE ARTS AND GRAFFITI IS UNCONTROLLABLE. ART CREATES A NEW LEVEL OF INTELLIGENCE AND DESTROYS AND CREATES SOCIETIES. ART IS VERY, VERY, POWERFUL AND ART SHOULD BE FOR THE MASSES AND NOT THE ELITIST. HALF OF THE YOUNG GRAFFITI WRITERS LIVE IN THEIR OWN LOCAL FANTASY WORLD THEY'VE CREATED AND DO NOT HAVE ANY INTEREST IN PUSHING THE GRAFFITI ART MOVEMENT EXCEPT FOR PUSHING THE LOCAL SELF. NOT TO DISRESPECT AND MUCH PROPS TO THE O.G.'S BUT MANY WRITERS FELL OFF IN THE PAST BECAUSE THERE WAS NOTHING NEW COMING IN AND THEY SAY THEY'VE GROWN UP BUT IN FACT THEY HAVE GIVEN UP ON THE ART. THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS GIVING UP ON GRAFFITI, IT'S JUST THAT YOU ARE IN ONE OF MANY TRANSITIONAL PHASES GRAFFITI WRITERS GO THROUGH BECAUSE OF PRESSURES FROM THE OPPOSITIONS OF THE TIME (MAY IT BE FROM WRITERS OR SOCIETY). WHERE ARE YOU MUTHAFUCKAS? WE THE GRAFFITI NATION NEED YOU TO REPRESENT THE PAST AND THE FUTURE, BECAUSE ALL THIS IS STILL VERY NEW AND IT IS AN ART MEDIUM FOR LIFE. SO LOOK FOR THE REAWAKENING OF THE MOST POWERFUL ART FORM IN THE WORLD. WE DON'T HAVE TO REACH FOR A GOAL BECAUSE WE ARE THE GOAL AND WE ARE THE MOVEMENT!!! WE ARE A MASSIVE UNCONTROLLABLE ILLEGAL FRENZY THAT QUENCHES THE THIRST OF THE ARTISTIC CRIMINAL MIND TO VIEWING THE WHOLE, AS A CONTROLLED MOVEMENT. THIS IS THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA IN CHAOTIC THEORY. THE DRAWINGS FROM THE BEGINNINGS OF MAN MATCH THE GRAFFITI IDEOLOGIES OF THE PRESENT DAY. WE HAVE COME FULL CIRCLE IN OUR WORLD HISTORY OF MAN. WE HAVE BEEN IN A SITUATION WHERE THE BLIND (SOCIETY) HAVE BEEN LEADING THE BLIND (GRAFFITI). WE MUST BREAK OFF FROM THE ART WORLD AND CREATE OUR OWN SEPARATE ENTITY. SO FUCK THIS POST-MODERNISM, BULLSHIT-FUCKCRAP! WE DON'T EVER CROSS OVER, THEY CROSS OVER TO US! THE GRAFFITI WRITERS ARE THE URBAN SHAMANS AND THE STREETS ARE OUR MODERN DAY CAVES. WE WILL ONE DAY SERVE A VITAL PURPOSE BY EXPOSING THE MASSES OF A COMING OF A NEW (ART) REVOLUTION. THE REVOLUTION STARTS IN THE YEAR 2000 AND IT WILL BE ON EVERY SURFACE EXCEPT YOUR TELEVISION. THE PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES ARE NOT HAPPY. IF THIS ULTIMATE AND UNIQUE MEETING DOES NOT HAPPEN IN THE NEAR FUTURE, GRAFFITI ART WILL GET MORE EXPOSED BY THE WRONG INTENT AND PURPOSE AND ULTIMATELY GET SOLD OUT TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER. DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE OLD WRITERS, MEET AND LEARN. TO ME, KNOWING THAT I'M GOING TO DO GRAFFITI ART FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE IS THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE IN GRAFFITI.



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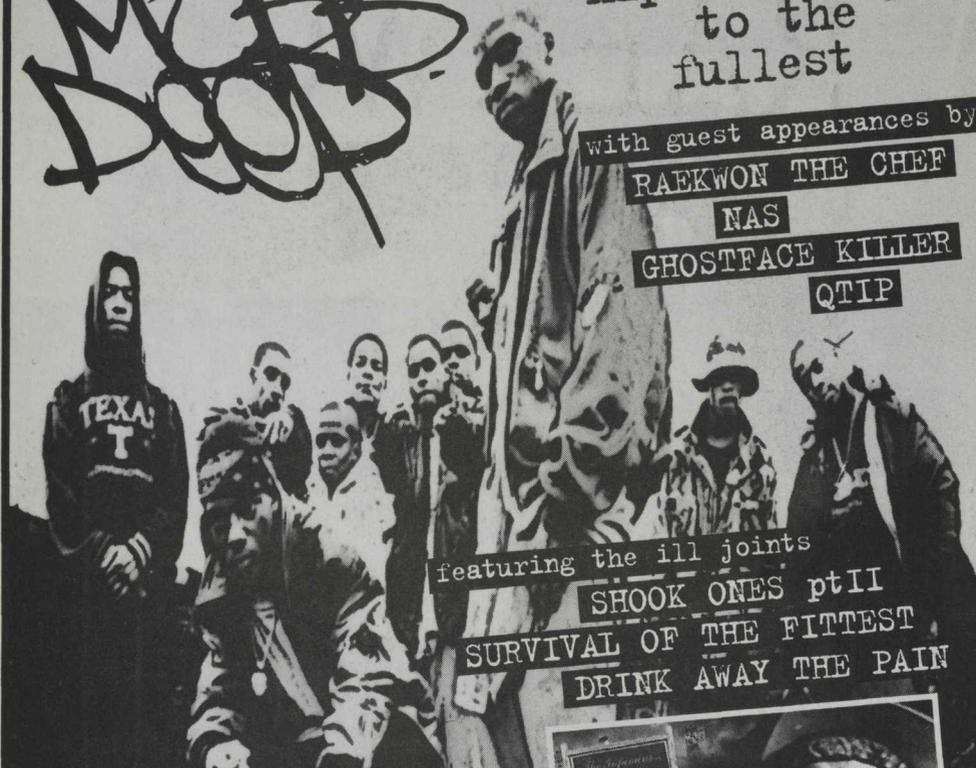
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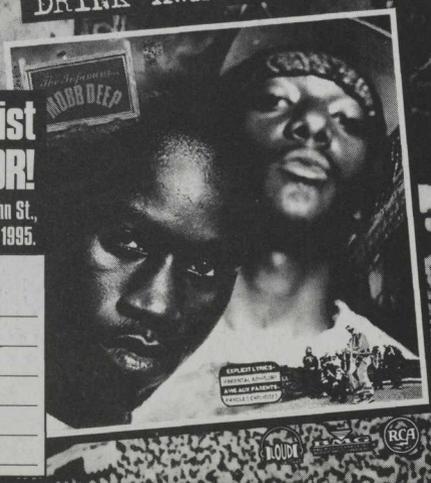
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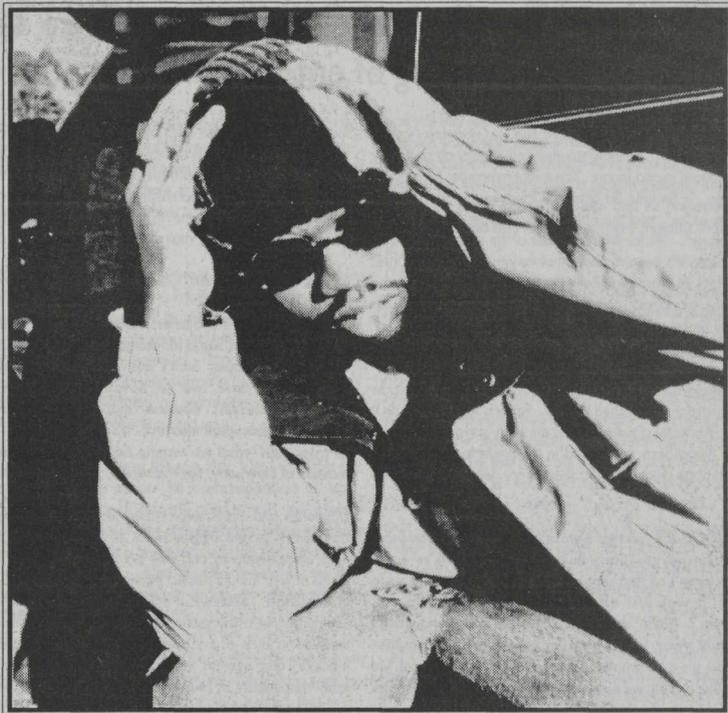
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RAEKWON



THE CHIEF

REFLECT LIKE THE SKY BE BLUE, TRUE. WU-TANG SAGA CONTINUE...

by Flipout

After the *Enter the 36 Chambers* operation, the Clan continued to keep the industry under lock by allowing individual swordsmen to organize and participate in their own missions in order to accumulate additional current for their respective families. The most well known of these individual jobs were: #1- Bobby Steeles, who recruited outside help (Prince Paul, Fruikwan, Too Poetic) to form a sub-organization called the Gravediggas. Their specific goal was, for the most part, misinterpreted and overlooked. Debates still arise concerning the methods used in that particular hit; #2- Johnny Blaze took the first solo plunge backed by Steeles as usual, with his hit on the industry called, *Tical*; #3- Ason Unique took matters into his own hands and returned to the original *36 Chambers*, only he used the Ol' Dirty Version. It was confusing at first but very, very effective; #4- The most recent attack, *Only Built for Cuban Linx Nigguzh* is yet to be put into action. Sources say that Lou Diamonds and Tony Starks have once again joined forces. You might remember their previous successful jobs: "Can It Be So Simple", "Heaven and Hell", most recently, "Glaciers of Ice", and the official release from "Only Built..." entitled, "Criminology". As for the remainder of the swordsmen, Rally Fingers and the Gza, it's been rumored that they are working on their own projects. In fact, at press time, Rally Fingers had made a hit on the *Tales from the Hood* soundtrack called, "Let Me At 'Em" and the Gza organized a small underground job targeting major labels, called "Labels" on the Wu-tang label.

The four titles of the aforementioned hits by tag team Diamonds and Starks have their own philosophies attached to them. Reports show that "Can It Be So Simple" was actually a testimonial to the early days of these professionals' lives. Being born and raised in the projects of New York, Diamonds went through plenty of difficulties before gettin' to where he's at now.

"We were just tryin' to tell you that it wasn't that simple. If you listen to the song, the lady's sayin', 'Can It Be So Simple?' but we're lettin' her know that it wasn't all that simple for us. The shit that we were on, you know. It was just all about survival, trying to eat, yaknowhati'msayin'? Havin' dreams and shit cuz everything wasn't comin' to light right away, until we started doin' somethin' positive. Nowadays though, it's a bit simpler. As far as nigguzh is political, we got more knowledge on shit, we doin' something positive. That's something that be makin' it simple. Yaknowhati'msayin', but that song was just to let you know that we ain't forget what wasn't simple to us though. As far as living in the jungle and all that shit. So it was never simple, we were just explainin' to you how it wasn't that simple, you know?"

Glaciers of Ice was the unofficial first release from *Only Built...* It was actually a B-Side put out to the media only as "a piece of bread to feed the hungry." The track featured Diamonds and Starks of course but it also featured relatively new Wu member Noodles from Bushwick on the second verse. Noodles was first recruited to take the place of Lucky Hands (aka Goldenarmz) while Lucky was locked up. Even though Lucky Hands has been released, Noodles has already been officially initiated into the Clan and will continue to hold his position. Noodles was also involved in Ason's project on the track called, "Snakes." His style of

Shaolin Island serves as the headquarters sible for approximately five major jobs to Their initial hit on the industry in 1992 novices involved in the game at the time and sting operation effected every b-boy on the increasing the standard of excellence for eration, known as *Enter the 36 Chambers*, thinking of entering this lucrative business:

tactics is more devious than other clansmen and he has been overheard stating to an ill-timed adversary, "Proceed with caution as you enter the symphony, degrees of punishment increase intensely...Mysterious movement, thoughts run down the shaft of the brain, violent temperaments left continents dented. Poison vintage wine rhymes I invented. Struck by the drunken punches that puncture the heart; vital sparks from the arteries stop."

Diamonds enlightens the "Glaciers of Ice" philosophy:

"The treasures are in Glaciers of Ice." To us, our careers are based on like a piece of ice. It's like a fat diamond that we caught that's worth alot of money to the people. So it's like we the treasurers of our shit you know? We makin' sure we're holdin' down our fort regardless. Yaknowhati'msayin'. Because "that's the power to hold g's, guns, and grands." Yaknowhati'msayin'? It's like ain't nothin' in this world to stop us from doin' what we wanna do. It's just another way of sayin' the masters of ceremony, the treasurers, yaknowhati'msayin'?"

Diamonds and Starks were raised just down the street from each other in Parkhill and Stapleton respectively. In their younger days they would run into each other frequently and they eventually formed an alliance in rhyme because of their mutual respect through experiencing the same affects of living in the jungle. Because of this connection between the two, even though Diamonds cut a distribution deal with Loud associates, Starks will still be involved in 80% of the operations. Although Starks participates without monetary gain in mind, the inclusion of him in Diamonds's project will inevitably reap plenty of benefits for the two of them. Furthermore, take into consideration that Starks will sooner or later be approached himself by a distributor, and his product will feature Diamonds in the same manner.

"It might take the listeners a year cuz there's alot, alot of shit. Learn cally and the beat's is just sick. All nighttime. Play my shit at night, and just enjoy the shit. It's definitely

for the merciless organization that is responsible. The organization is the Wu-tang Clan. marked the beginning of the end for all the for all future novices. This classic eight man map while re-establishing and appropriately masters of ceremony hereinafter. The observed as a reminder to all half steppers They best protect they neck.

"Yo man, we gonna be like the new EPMD man. Yaknowhati' msayin'. We bringin' the east coast back to life for real for real, yaknowhati' msayin'. I'm lookin' at it like this, like yo: Before the world comes to an end, y'all gonna know us as being legends you know, as far as being a tag team and flipping mics. We just gonna play our part. That's how it's gonna be, man."

The Wu-Tang discipline runs deep in these two swordsmen. They are very focused and more than adequately trained to knock out all unprepared adversaries while gaining world wide respect at the same time. Although Loud's marketing program is exceptional in the game, Wu-tang took it upon themselves to present the Clan in its highest potential. Through 500 shows they are yet to displease an audience. With platinum plus status, and a newly formed Wu-Tang label rest assured that the Wu will always have a means of supplying the consumers with their potent product.

"My team is definitely the Mike Tyson's of this rap shit. Like I said, this shit is from the heart, we gonna keep makin' fat joints regardless of what. You'll never be able to stop a hit from comin' out the camp, yaknowhati' msayin'. Because you got nine different mentalities, and nine nigguhz is gonna make sure the shit is right before it hits the streets. It's like havin' the best product, you know. If the fans are fiendin' for the best product, we gotta make sure the chemicals are strong enough to get them high. YAKNOWHATI'MSAYIN'?"

The Wu-tang Clan will continue to be based out of the same temples where all of their years of training took place. Although many seek escape from the jungle, these individuals have realized that the situation in which they were raised and the people around them are part of the reason they are who they

to learn all the lyrics on my album, the lyrics. We definitely comin' lyrical can tell you to do is listen at drive fast, have your seatbelt on gonna be worth your money."

are today. The act of turning one's back on the people who know you for who you ARE is a result of one becoming "industrialized." Many suffer from this disease and the result is usually loss of appetite or hunger because of an overzealous pursuit of the bi-product of Hip Hop, C.R.E.A.M. Although the ultimate goal in the game is to get paid in full, one must not forget to recognize the difference between rap and Hip Hop. As for those who enter the business with only money on their minds and no regards to creativity, respect and originality, they most often fail at their attempts because real Hip Hop heads detect fraud immediately.

"...I ain't turnin' my back on people in the projects that I know were down with me from day one, yaknowhati' msayin'? When all I can do is, you know, show my love, come through and still buy shit out of the regular corner stores. Smoke blunts with my peoples you know, keep it real like that. I'd rather be around nigguhz that I've known all my life than be around nigguhz I don't know. [At the same time] you could politic a nigguhz though. You know. If a nigguh know you know what's goin' on and he respects that then you gotta respect that and stay away from corny nigguhz that be gettin' caught up in this shit."

Through all of the solo projects and guest appearances, the Wu-tang Clan will always exist. Any tight knit crew knows the formula to an unbreakable bond with your blood brothers: full respect for one another through a knowledge of each others up bringing as well as from sharing mutual experiences. The bottom line is, you must be able to relate and grow from one another. The Wu-tang Clan have earned a level of respect from their peers and listeners alike that is simply a sign of gratitude for supplying them with the "best product." So in New York, when foreigners have to make sure they exit the train lines one stop before they enter parts like Crooklyn, the Clan members can comfortably roam throughout all the boroughs- solo, if so desired- because of the love for their people they emit so vividly through their work. Keeping it real never meant more. Many other artists also deserve and receive this calibre of respect from their peers and followers (Nas, Tribe Called Quest, Rakim, Too Short, KRS-One etc.) but no single squad has ever had the concentrated effect on the industry that the Wu-tang Clan has.

"Wu-tang ain't never gonna break up, you know, just based on the fact that everybody keepin' it real with each other. Knowin' where we came from and all of that. Shit'll be aight though man. So don't ever think in your life that we gonna fuckin' break up man. We just gotta eat , cuz everybody grown men and they got they own families. The whole key is that we need to live you know? Like that. We're makin' this shit work man, by us bein' real with ourselves and bein' real to the people we be around." Word.

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| ARTIST: | RAEKWON THE CHEF |
| LABEL: | LOUD |
| ALBUM: | ONLY BUILT FOR CUBAN LINK NIGGUNZ |
| PRODUCTION: | RZA |
| MEMBERS: | RAE & GHOST FACE |
| HOMETOWN: | SHAOLIN, NY |

CIPHER



STEP INTO THE CIPHER

Cipher's entire album was recorded, mixed and digitally mastered in their basement in-home studio known to them as The Jungle, which they personally built themselves over the last two years. I've seen the jungle and all I've gotta say is, "very impressive." The hard work certainly paid off and is definitely put to good use because if it's not Cipher laying down tracks, then they're busy producing other MCs. I even got to witness G² on the Tech 12's- the kid's got skills. "On the two turntables I would say he's nice."

So what can people expect from the new album, 360°? What vibe are you trying to get across in your music and your lyrics?

G²: It's mostly east coast type of slow head-nodding beats and pretty complex rhymes...mostly it's just skills. Nothing really deep, a lot of metaphors... just comparisons and flav like that. It's not really a big message record or nothing, it's just basically kickin' it over dope beats.

There's some new flavor in town and it goes by the name of Cipher. These two brothas known as G² and Clean are ready to let people know they're comin' full circle with their rookie album entitled "360°." Although Cipher calls Vancouver home, they attribute much of their influence to their years spent in Boston.

thing's connected, 360 degrees, what comes around goes around. But it's basically just kickin' it in the cipher circle with my different boys who are on the album. Just like whatever, passin' mics, it's just the Cipher.

Clean: I mean, I think the first single basically tells it all. It's just for our peeps, ya know? Just so you can roll around. It's not a party album. It's not a save the world album, yaknowwhat'im sayin'. It's just about the group. It's about what's going on, ya know?

Givin' props to your homies?

C: Yeah, givin' props to the homies, givin' props to the industry. Just talkin' about every day shit.

For people who don't know what your name means, do you want to explain it to them?

G²: If you want to get the deep meaning, it'd be like, whatever circle, every-

BY HUGE BAHAMONDE

CIPHER

C: The Cipher clique runs deep.

So you guys are originally from Boston?

C: Well originally I'm from here and we hooked up when we was down there at school and stuff, and then we got back here a couple of years ago and set up the studio and basically started rockin' all the beats up here. So I mean, yeah, we're on the west coast and everything, but most of our vibe and flavor is all east coast.

So everything's home made, you do everything right here?

C: Yeah, exactly, everything's done right here.

Did you learn to make beats just from listening to stuff or did you actually study music in school as well?

C: I played jazz and classical trumpet for like 15 years and I went to Berkeley College of Music and graduated with my degree. I majored in commercial arranging and minored in music business and management. The studio stuff I was doin' outside of school and I worked at 3 different studios within' Boston. I did work in Atlanta and New York and stuff, I like all sorts of music like jazz, classical, but yeah all soul is ill.

G²: We got mad soul crates over here too.

C: You defiantly have to put together your skills from everywhere for Hip Hop. A lot of the R&B and stuff all just revolves around Hip Hop beats.

What was your first experience with Hip Hop?

C: The first time I went to New York, in 1983. Friends of the family

were listening to this new shit. I picked up the wax and still have it in my collection. That was the beginning for me. I ran to the movie theater when Breakin' came out, when BeatStreet came out... that was the shit, man.

G²: First time I really new that I was going to commit to Hip Hop was when I saw that huge concert called ummm... Fresh Fest Summer Jam-like shit. In one show, I saw Biz, BDP, Ice T, Doug E. Fresh, Kool Moe Dee and Eric B. Man, Eric B came out with a huge pyramid an' shit. I had no idea back then that these groups were makin' history

C: After I peeped the original Malcom McLaren & the Supreme Team LP, I walked around this city for about a month straight; to every fuckin' record store, every electronics store I could...pointing to the cover photo which depicted two I200's and a PMX 9000. Finally, somebody said, "yeah...we can do that...those are good turntables, man". That's the original shit, man.

After checking out their promo tapes, I can definitely feel the creative influences comin' from all over. Cipher is self produced and handle all their own business personally. Their first single "Peeps" will drop anytime soon, if it hasn't already, along with the video of the same name. Make sure you peep the remix, "Peeps- the Sequel", which reminds us that there's, "no space to hesitate." Point blank, Cipher aren't new to this, they've been deeply involved in Hip Hop since about the age of 13. So with years of experience and skill refining, G² and partner Clean are now ready to display to the public that when it comes down to it, your best product comes out when you're chillin' in the Cipher with your boys. 360", it's come around. Get ready.

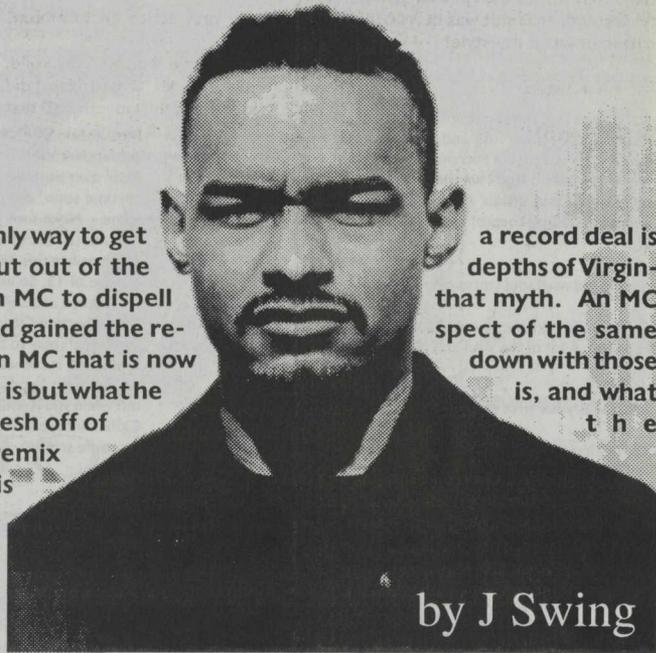
| | |
|-------------|------------------------|
| ARTIST: | CIPHER |
| LABEL: | MOCCA |
| ALBUM: | 360 DEGREES |
| PRODUCTION: | CIPHER |
| MEMBERS: | G ² & CLEAN |
| HOMETOWN: | VANCOUVER, BC |



Clean & G² in their studio known as 'The Jungle'

Mad Skillz

Nowadays it seems like the only way to get by who you're down with, but out of the '90s Hip Hop scene comes an MC to dispell that came out of nowhere and gained the respect of the same people that inspired him. An MC that is now people not because of who he is but what he he possesses. An MC that is fresh off of Artifacts "Dynamite Soul" remix and is about to set it off with his own debut album appropriately titled "From Where?" VA baby. Don't forget it 'cause "the name's Mad Skillz and the year's '95."



a record deal is depths of Virginia that myth. An MC spect of the same down with those is, and what t h e

by J Swing

So what was it like trying to come up outta Virginia?

It was hard, 'cause we don't have much of a hip hop scene, like in New York or something like that, 'cause it just ain't there. People don't embrace it like they should.

How did you get yourself noticed?

My man had this college radio show, and I used to co-host it with him, so we would let heads up there on the weekends, and

just, you know, getting open, just free-style, just whatever few people we had, just like some Stretch and Bob type shit. And I got into this seminar, I got accepted into the New Music Seminar MC battle in '93, and I came in second place in that.

That was that Supernatural one, right? How do you feel about that battle?

I mean, I felt like I beat him, and a lot of other people did, but I'm glad I didn't win, because after a while I actually sat back

and researched it and found out that the winner never does anything anyway.

Have you ran into him since then?

Yeah, I've seen him, we've talked, but I'm not really sure if he's ever going to come out.

After you came second in the Seminar, what happened?

That same year, I went to a convention in

Atlanta, and I met Q-Tip from Quest, we kept in touch, and later on in the fall when they went on tour with De La, I would go out with them and do spot dates and stuff, and sometimes just jump on stage and get open, whatever, and that went on for the rest of the year. Then the following year me and Tip went up to Stretch and Bob's one night and did this freestyle shit that came off.

That's that shit Stretch put on his freestyle record, that shit was ill. Was that written or was it freestyle?

That was freestyle.

Word? All of it?

Not the whole thing. Not that shit where I was going through all the MC's, where I was going through the names of songs and shit like that, kind of that "Hip Hop vs. Rap" shit. I had wrote that. But the beginning where I started off, and at the end, I was just going off the dome.

Was that your first trip up to...

Yeah, that was the first time I had ever been to Stretch and Bob's.

What was that like?

It was real... odd, because I knew it was a lot of people listening, you know, and I knew I couldn't fuck up. Stretch and Bob show me love now, but back then I was nobody, knowhati'msayin'? I knew I had to prove myself, but it came off pretty nice though.

What happened after that?

After that I got a deal on Big Beat.

Did you cut a demo for that?

Yeah, I had a demo, I had some self-pro-

duced stuff. Clark Kent did some stuff for me after the seminar, but they didn't really like that stuff, so they claim, but I still got the deal.

So they signed you off that stuff they didn't like?

I think they signed me off that freestyle at Stretch and Bob's. Yeah, I think I could say that they signed me off that shit.

Who did the production on the album?

The Beatnuts. Large Professor. Buckwild, he did three. This kid named Sean J did three. I did one, and this kid named JD that Q-Tip manages, he did two. This nigguh's incredible kid, this nigguh's in-cred-i-ble... yaknowhati'msayin'?

"I just wanted to make sure that even if a head didn't like me lyrically, he can't deny those beats"

So you've just got mad producers on it.

Yeah, I've got 'nuff heads, 'nuff heads with the beats.

How much freedom were you given with this album?

I was given a lot of freedom, I mean, I think I got over pretty well, knowhati'msayin'? I mean, they wanted certain things that they could take, you know, whatever, but in the process I never lost skills, I never was not representing who Mad Skills was during the whole duration of the album, I was myself. And that was the best album I could make at that time so I'm proud of it, I'm ready for nigguhz to hear it.

What are your favorite cuts off the LP?

This shit called "Get Your Groove On", "The Nod Factor", this shit called "It's Going Down".

To me, "Extra Abstract Skills" is some shit...

Oh yeah yeah yeah, I was about to say that.

How did that come about?

I mean, Paul (Extra P) was already doing two beats, knowhati'msayin', and he had already done "Skills in '95" and I wanted the next shit that he did to be different from anything that I had got from him, knowhati'msayin'? And I didn't want the second beat to sound like anything he ever did before, so we really dug for that shit. I didn't want it to be a regular beat, I wanted

it to be some out of here, psycho crazy shit. And we was at his house one night fucking around and we came across the loop and he just started freakin' and I was like "Yo that's the loop, that's the loop I want. Just put some drums to that shit and let's put a fuckin' tuba in it, and all kinds of shit." And he did it. And I

was like "Yo, you should rhyme over this," and he was like "Yo, whatever, kid." So then I asked Tip "Yo, Paul got this dope beat, I want you to rhyme over it, and I want to call it 'Extra Abstract Skills'". He was like "Oh shit, that shit is raw, alright". So it took a while to get done but we got it done and it came out dope. It hits you real hard, and real fast, knowhati'msayin'? That shit is tight, I love that shit.

What are you trying to bring to the people with this album?

It's not like any hard ass shit that's going to go over your head, yaknowhati'msayin', just what nigguhz are going to be able to get with. Just a little something for everybody on there.

From what I've heard from the advance tape *Big Beat* sent us, it sounds like the lyrical content is your main focus. Lyrics are number one and you let someone else worry about the beats.

I just wanted to make sure that even if a head didn't like me lyrically, he can't deny those beats, it just can't happen, he can't not like one of the two. So for the beat heads, I got nigguhz on there they should be checking for, and for the lyric heads, I know they gonna be checking for it 'cause I'm on some next shit for real.

How would you describe your style, and don't say mad?

My style? Real conversational, very witty, and thought provoking type shit. I know a lot of times nigguhz don't feel like thinking, they just feel like hearing that shit, knowhati' msayin', which is cool with me 'cause I'm a lyricist and I can do it all lyrically, so it's just a little something for everybody.

What MC's have influenced you?

Definitely Rakim, Quest.

How about MC's that are coming out now. Who impresses you?

I like Mic Geronimo, knowhati' msayin', Mic Geronimo's cool. The Liks, Mobb Deep, The Roots, I love The Roots. Wu Tang, the whole Clan. Biggie of course. I'm just glad the east coast nigguhz are coming back a little more, 'cause we've really been on some representation shit in like the last year, knowhati' msayin'?

True. What was it like in the days when everyone was focusing on the west?

It was sad. It was real sad. Especially when you're living over here. You watch TV all day, east coast nigguhz is getting no love,

knowhati' msayin'? They puttin' like fuckin' Salt 'n Pepa on, and shit like that. I feel like we make records for the skill of it, yaknowhati' msayin'? Like we try to be great MC's on this side, I think that's the difference between us and them, knowhati' msayin'? So instead of me having an album, and talking about the same things that fuckin' Jeru or O.C. talked about on their album, I try to distance myself and try to establish my own identity. I feel like they talk about pretty much the same thing.

Being from Virginia, what were your earliest experiences in hip hop?

Before I lived there, I lived in North Carolina. I was really into it then, knowhati' msayin', way back in like early

"We try to be great MC's on this side, I think that's the difference between us and them."

BDP days, Kurtis Blow, I mean I had access to it, knowhati' msayin', but I was so much into other shit, but as I grew up I got a hold on it, and I started collecting tapes from BLS and old shows and shit. I embraced it real early, knowhati' msayin'? But I never thought I would be an MC for some reason, 'cause I used to DJ.

Word!?

I was DJing before I was rhyming.

Do you do the cuts on the album, or did you bring in someone else?

Nah, nah, I didn't. I got Roc Raider, he did some cuts. I also got DJ Riz from the Flip Squad...

Damn, so you just got the superstars up on the tables!

(Laughs) I went all out, kid.

Finally, Where do you see hip hop going with number one, yourself, and second, in general?

With me? I want to get more on the beat side, yaknowhati' msayin', and start producing more, 'cause I do beats and shit. But I want to get my shit tight and establish myself as a producer. That's why I only did one joint on this album. Just so people would know what my flavor was like. Then I'll get a little feedback and see if heads be like "Yo I like that shit. That shit was tight!". I want to establish myself more on the production side. As far as hip

hop in general, I'm hoping that kids start to control their own shit more. 'Cause if they don't then we just going to be lost. Nigguhz need to start getting their own companies together, their own labels and get more creative control over their shit, instead of just being told what to do and just running into the studio and do-

ing it. Nigguhz need to wake up on the business tip. It's like ninety percent fuckin' business and ten percent music.

Cool. Is there anything else you want to speak about?

Yeah, I just want nigguhz to keep supporting the real shit. 'Cause that's what's going to be around when all that other shit is fuckin' faded and gone.

ARTIST: MAD SKILLZ
 LABEL: BIG BEAT
 ALBUM: FROM WHERE?
 PRODUCTION: VARIOUS
 HOMETOWN: RICHMOND, VA

re: Views

Long Play

Grand Puba
2000
Elektra

87%

Yes, Grand Puba's something special. Sounds corny as hell but the Grand man makes a phrase like that sing. Literally. It's the man who will "make your stinkbox wet." You might trip when you first listen to this album but by the time you get to "2000" you'll forget about the first 4 or so songs. It's not that they're wack, but they need to grow on you. Puba is a fuckin' seasoned professional at punchlines and delivery, so play that shit over and over and just chill with your crew or your girl or even your fuckin' moms on Thanksgiving. Well, maybe not if your grandma is at dinner because Puba is like the Tom Jones of Hip Hop. He chills with his homeboys while swooning the ladies at the same time. Yeah. The cover of the album features Puba maxin' beside a jet black Lamb. So he's obviously gettin' paid because, you know how it go, "Romance, without finance is- you know the rest, baby." The beat's are some smooth-ass r&b&hip hop beats. You know that shit, that "Sugarhill Mary" with Meth Survival of the Fittest remix' type shit. Naw but listen, he's still got those bounce tracks givin' me flashbacks of, "C'mon honey don't front!" that gets you out your seat like Miller stepping back behind the line to hit that tre for that come-from-behind game winner. "Backstabbers" will have you smilin' at Puba's reaction when he finds out his best friend is tryin' to boof his girl while he's on tour because it's a thin line between love and hate. For real though, Puba's shit is just plain enjoyable shit, some shit to listen to anytime you've heard to much flavor of the month shit. As always, Puba ain't just talkin' about skins all the time. First time around he dropped "Wake Up", then the second time he exposed the "Soul Controller". Now in the 2000, I heard the Kronkite on "Change Gonna Come." "...But as long as you're talkin' about, 'Yo! I'll blast this niggah and I'll blast that

niggah' you'll grow bigger as a rap figure. But that's still black on black, welcome back(Cotter). It's time to graduate from that." After listening to that one, you start to believe that, Moses really did ask Puba how to part the Red Sea. Buy it.

-FreeStyle Crazee

Pump Ya Fist
Music Inspired by
the Black Panthers
Avitar Records

75%

This LP was inspired by the Black Panthers movement and recently the movie about the Black Panthers directed by Mario Van Peebles (which will not be in theatres in Canada). Many tracks stand out like "Ah Yeah" by KRS One, "Frustrated Nigga" by Jeru tha Damaja, "Family Day" by Grand Puba, "Recognition" by the Fugees and "Shades of Black" by Rakim. KRS One is the baddest teacher ever and I couldn't wait to get my hands on this compilation just for his track alone. Let me tell you that "Ah Yeah" is the bomb. The brothers rhyming style is the illest and I can't say enough about his brilliance. "This is not the first time I came to this planet/ but everytime I come only a few can understand it... they tried to lynch me/ burn me/ starve me/ so I came back as Marcus Garvey..." etc. Unfortunately, THEY are still around. On the much too real topic of lynching, Mumia Abu Jamal is about to be executed August 17 for being a part of the Black Panthers movement (he was the Education Minister in Philadelphia). What are you gonna do about it? Write to the facist governer Tom Ridge at the Main Capital Building, room 225, Heresburg, PA, 17120 or call (604) 322-6461 and get involved in a local Third World Alliance campaign. Jeru's "Frustrated Nigga" is also busting out with pure knowledge. Psychoanalyse this! My only complaint is that there isn't enough sisters representing on this album. Overall, the album contains the essence of Hip Hop and it's worth the money. So check it out and stop being a pawn in the game.

-H. Ahmad

AMG
Ballin' Outta Control
Select

30%

Outta control is right cuz this album ain't tight! Yo, what was AMG thinkin' releasin' this sophomore effort? Whatever it was, he's just guaranteed himself a place in The Museum of Hip Hoppers Who Fell Off. First of all, the whole album is straight boring with eleven songs all about the same thing, himself and bitches. I wish I neva listened to the whole tape cuz once you've heard one song, you've heard 'em all. The production is mediocre and full of extremely played out samples (i.e. "Juicy Fruit" by Mtuné); the lyrics are of sub-standard demo quality; the flows are all the same in every song; and the actual subject matter is repetitive and played as hell. This opinion is comin' from a niggah who tripped off his first album. Remember "Vertical Joyride", "Janine" and all that? That shit was dope. The difference between this album and his debut album is the absence of DJ Quik. It seems that Quik and AMG had a bit of a falling out, so I guess Quik went his own way, taking all the soul and creativity with him. With all this in mind, lemme tell you my people: I wouldn't take this one for free let alone buy it from the store. I hate to dis but: Truth is the mission in every Elements edition. Checkmate-rate: 30%.

-Checkmate

ed note: Checkmate don't give a fuck.

Funkdoobiest
Brothas Doobie
Immortal

69%

The triple x-rated porno king is back, along with his two brothas Tomahawk Funk and that Mexican, Ralph. Yo! To start with, I thought their first album had some funk on it like "The Funkiest" and rock steady to the "Freak Mode" y'all and whatnot. It was a young bunch of Cali b-boys buggin' out and having mad fun. I can hella relate, ya know? That was 1993. Now in 1995 we need to see who survived the over satu-

rated days of two years prior and who emerged from the shit clogging our ears with more mature material and actually TALK ABOUT SOMETHING. Alright, Brothas Doobie is a definitely matured Funkdoobiest. I don't know who did the production but it's tight, a little too tight though cuz on some cuts they used drum loops that have been overused to date. BUT HEY! I like most of it anyway. They get priggety props for the "Style Wars" intro, "THIS IS IIT!!! THIS IS IIT!!!" followed by their first single, "Rock On". I don't like this version. I like the Buck remix and the version my man Kemo hooked up even better. "What the Deal" is dope and is followed by "Lost In Thought". I don't know about you but that shit sounds a bit like "Half Time". It bounces though, regardless. "Dedicated" would be an example of sampling an overused loop but the remix on the twelve is fresh. "Ka Sera Sera" is a dope b-boy jam at it's best. The beat is raw boyye. Yaknowhat'imsayin'? "Pussy Ain't Shit" is some shit they should've left in '93. The remainder of the album loses momentum and by the time I got to "Who Ra Ra" I got the feeling that they put all their dopest cuts on the first side because the second side had too many "jams" as opposed to "songs." The difference? Listen to the album two years from now. Let me end this off on a good note by quoting Son at his best "...bond is my word but first do the knowledge. If your soul loves the sun, money rock on...".

- FreeStyle Craze

Special Ed Revelations Profile

86%

He didn't fall off. He came back, fat. If you don't know who Special Ed is then keep listening to Green Day. Still representing Flatbush Ave. Ed has returned 5 years after the release of his last LP, *Legal*. Remember how he was always smilin' in his pictures? Some people think he's turned "hardcore" for the 9-5. The truth is, his label always picked those pictures to create that image, he hated that shit. How do I know? I read that shit in an old-ass Word-Up magazine interview from 1989. Basically, if you used to like him, liked him on "Crooklyn" and on the first single "Neva Go Back" then buy it! As Ed states, "I'm in

the mix but I'm not diluted." Dope ass jammies include "Freaky Flow", "Everyday is a Gunshot" and my personal jizz track, "Crazy". Remember, Ed is still the world's greatest liar and he proves it on that track. I must admit though, after a few listens I had to fast forward a couple of joints to get to the ily ones. Oh yeah, I never really liked "Hoedown" back in the day. Special Ed is magnificent, so bring the ruckus, the motherfuckin' ruckus.

-Flipout

Madskillz From Where?? Big Beat

91%

Who the fuck is this guy? Where did he come from? Read Swings interview and find out all that good shit and more. All I can tell you is that Madskillz is an individual with mad skills. Direct from Punchline Ave and Metaphor Metropolis, Skillz brings skills back in to 95 while teaming up with some of the illest producers in modern day Hip Hop. How does Extra Large Professor, Q-Tip and the fuckin' Beatnuts sound? Dope as fuck if you ask me. The Beatnuts hooked up a crazee fat-ass loop for the track, "Nod Factor." Holy shit! This track feels like you're listening to Skillz spittin' out his dopest freestyles while a live DJ goes back and forth with a dope break. I must admit that a few songs outshine others, but I'm sure when I listen to this shit a year from now, they'll all sound nice again. Yaknowhat'imsayin'? Madskillz definitely knows how to make people like his shit because he comes super raw with lyrics **everytime**. *From Where??* also features a couple of guest appearances but I'mma save that surprise for you. I will tell you though, that some Virginia nigguhz jump on a joint and fully -sorry I gotta use the word- represent. The funny thing is, even though Madskillz represents VA to the fullest, you'll realize sooner or later, that he's actually representing Hip Hop so hard that it almost makes me cry tears of joy. Well, maybe not cry but maybe bust my own freestyles, dance, then -in no particular order- drink beer and smoke some bud. Oh yeah, and later maybe grab a girl...ah fuck it you get the idea. Buy it or forever be wack.

-FreeStyle Craze

Twelve Inch

The Notorious B.I.G. One More Chance (remix) b/w The What Bad Boy

80%

Yeah, mm-hmm, sure B.I.G., you get all the honeys and they all wanna get-witcha, mm-hmm... not this one. Any how, ain't nothin' changed, Biggie still ego trippin' over a variety of beats. Some are for the radio like the first remix version of "One More Chance", you know the kind of beat that Jodeci and Brandy fans could easily get with. Then there's the 2nd "Hip Hop" remix where he jacks the "Droppin' Science" break that can move anybody from the clubheads to the break boys. When you hear "One More Chance" you know it's B.I.G and Bad Boy proceeding to give you what you need in the "9-5 mutha fuckers". Although "One More Chance" was somewhat commercial, Biggie was easily forgiven by the underground gods after they heard the B-side, "The What". It's just dope. What more can I say except you really can't go wrong these days puttin' Meth on your shit. Don't get me wrong though, apart from his fellow clansmen, this is the dopest guest appearance the Meth has done to date, not taking anything away from Biggie though, who does his fair share of damage too. With the easy listening track on the A-side and the fresh remix on the B-side, this 12" has something to offer everybody. And if you're just a brainless "trick", then maybe you should check for Biggie himself.

-Ebony

GZA/Genius Labels Wu-Tang

78%

Nowadays, it seems like we've got Wu-Tang comin' at us from every direction. But for the hard-core heads out there, this doesn't bother us one bit. "Labels" is the newest joint from the scientist of the clan, The Genius. After hearing this cut for the first time, it gave me flashbacks

of the KRS One jam "Hip Hop vs. Rap". I remembered the way KRS mentioned dozens of groups and artists and rhymed them into verses and made it dope. Well, this time the GZA takes it one step further by using the names of Hip Hop record labels and weaving them into a complex web of words and phrases that takes aim at the record industry. GZA lets us know first off, "You gotta read the label. If you don't read the label, you might get poisoned." (Referring to the shady label big-wigs that try to lure them into a trap.) It's fun to try to pick out every label name that the GZA spits out and twists into a rhyme. "Tommy ain't my muthafuckin' Boy, when you fake moves on a niggah you employ/ I'll Death Row an MC with mic cables/ the Epic is that I Rush Associated Labels/ from East-West to Atco I bring it to the Next Plateau/ but I keep it fat though." As you can see, the brotha says what he feels while displaying nice mic techniques. He's speakin' about some serious business. The production is the standard, exceptional, Wu-Tang-esque fare that we've come to know and love. All and all "Labels" is tight and on the money. Maybe a lil' short, but it leaves you wanting more.

-Huge Bahamonde

AZ
Sugar Hill
EMI

100%

What you want kid? Ill production, lyrical superiority, tight flows, Miss Jones blowin' some soul. **What?** "Sugar Hill" is all of that. On his debut single, AZ is just pickin' up from where he left off on Nas' "Life's A Bitch". Production is handled by DJ L.E.S. comin' with some Premier-style, fat shit that's gonna bang at a party, when you blazin', when you sexin', **what-ever!** Miss Jones handles the chorus with that soulful voice of hers and when AZ sets it off - niggah it's on! "I wanna villa in the Costa Rica/so I could smoke a little reefer/enjoy how life's supposed to treat ya..." **Word up!** Check the Checkmate rate: 100% no doubt! Sugar Hill, baby, Sugar Hill, baby - buy it!

-Checkmate

The Grass Roots feat. Elemental
Drama
b/w Living Underwater
Black Employed Records

80%

Elemental, coming out of the Toronto area, have released a nice sounding debut twelve inch. I like it. Both songs "Drama" and "Living Underwater" are on the vibe tip (production wise), which gives it that smooth oceanic flow that you can bug out to. G-Knight's on the knowledge tip to some degree while displaying an MC style that I can't compare to anyone else. That impressed me. It's very rare in this day and age for Hip Hop artists to come with originality. Be it beats, lyrics, style, whatever. Plus, production was done by the Grass Roots who also did shit for Juno award winners, Ghetto Concept. Elemental is definitely worth checkin' in my book. In fact, I'd like to peep the up-coming Grass Roots EP. This crew is definitely on the right track and I'm curious and anxious to hear from them in the future. But for now, check the Elemental 12" because I said so.

-Ebony

Raekwon The Chef
Criminology
Loud

90%

The good news about The Chef is that absolutely nothin's changed! He's still raw, the RZA's tracks still bang. Ghostface is present and still mashes - ya might as well protect ya neck all over again, kid! Rae's on that reality, criminal fly shit and this sophomore single is appropriately entitled "Criminology". "Extravagant, RZA baked the track and it's militant/ then I react like a convict, and start killin' shit." What more can I say other than it's dope! If you're a Wu-Tang fan I suggest you buy this shit. Time for that all important Checkmate rate: Yo, I get so hyped when I hear ill Hip Hop that I wanna give this the whole pie too! But because I think there's gonna be even better shit on his album, Only Built 4 Cuban Linx Niggahz (Wu-Tang never releases the best tracks as singles) I'm gonna say 90%.

-Checkmate

Dr. Frankenstein
Frankenstein's Pain
b/w Peace & Quiet
Knowledge of Self Records

75%

Speakin' for myself, I think this kid got lyrical skills. His shit is mad original with the style that he spits. He got this sick sing-song flow and besides that - he be sayin' shit that makes sense. I think he's comin' out of Toronto but I hear definite New York influences, Brooklyn maybe. Anyway, I wanted someone else's opinion so I played it for my homeboy from L.A. and he thought it was total garbage, but here's the Checkmate rate: Dr. Frankenstein's dope. His production is tight, and his lyrical delivery is solid. Straight up this kid can rhyme!

-Checkmate

Sunz of Man
Soldiers Of Darkness
b/w 5 Arch Angles
Wu-Tang

81%

Sunz Of Man is the next shit branching off the Wu-Tang tree. This crew is representing some eerie mystical flavor coming like supernatural spirits walking through walls and shit. 'Nuff people compare them to the Gravediggas' stylo, but me being the Wu-Fanatic that I am, this 12" sends me to another mind state. Actually, two of the Sunz of Man kicked a verse each on, "Diary of a Mad Man" but nobody knew who the fuck they were. And we still don't. The B-side "5 Arch Angels" features three more members, the 60 Second Assassin (who sang background vocals on C.R.E.A.M. and Glaciers... "It's been a long time..."), Hell Raizer and the Holy Psychiatrist. The production is well taken care of by the 4th Disciple. I must attach a warning label: These songs aren't for the weak hearted or minded. You asked for the rough shit and Wu-Tang is givin' it to ya live and direct, but only for the select few. That's probably why the single only came with dirty versions, no radio friendly shit here. The shit is definitely for real.

-Kemo the Labrat

Mobb Deep
Survival of the Fittest
Loud

85%

"Survival of the Fittest", the next offering by Mobb Deep, is as deep as the first-"Shook Ones" Parts I and 2. I love this remix. The music creates a mood which crystalizes the lyrics of these two QB soldiers. The words reflect their hard reality, that living in the projects "...only the strong survive..." Prodigy and Havoc rhyme tight, their voices and style echo cold pain. "If worse comes to worse/ my peoples come first." The remixed beat is mellow than the original and definitely still ill. The additional vocals by Crystal Johnson are nice and smooth but sound kinda out of place. It took me a few listens before it really hit me in its full dopeness. The track is a profound and innocent commentary on life in Queensbridge, New York and reflects all of the places where the raw effects of the system shows up- and it don't make you feel good- it makes you do some stupid thinking and that's always worth it. "Survival of the Fittest" remix will surely be added to Mobb Deep's bag of classics.

-H. Ahmad

Nit Wits
Then There's Nada
b/w 360°
Tremor

74%

Nit Wits have dropped their first single and video in the form of, "Then There's

Nada." With Kemo the Labrat on the production end, these two Latino brothers, Amazon and Primero, have some shit they want to get off their chest. Their first single is just a taste of what the Nit Wits are going to bring the Hip Hop game in the '95/'96 season. Although they're rookies to the industry, they've been working on their shit for many years now. So unlike others who think the world is one big freestyle, the Nit Wits prefer to fill their listeners heads with some real insight on their experiences and views on life. Sure, these two can kick dope freestyles and whatever, but they know that listeners don't want to hear them talk about how dope they are for a whole album. The B-side, "360°" features Radekwon, who left Vancouver about four years ago and moved to Brooklyn. You can hear the Brooklyn influence in Kwan's verse, as he dictates an intricate tale about a "hustlin' ass nigga from the streets of New York." Primero and Amazon tell their own stories about different individuals who talk the talk but don't walk the walk. Primero made me crack a smile when he ended his verse with, "...a role you portrayed. You're lyrics never ended this way." Overall, Nit Wits are just one of the more mature groups from the city of Vancouver. Other crews should recognize, realize and not fantasize, that they'll be forever segregated from the rest of the world if they don't start thinking about this shit seriously.

-Flipout

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"What set you from, fool!"

by Paul Beatty

In the nineties Black is a religion with no ecclesiastic grand poohbah but plenty of clergy persons and missionaries. Friday nights the urban contemporary Reverend DJ's lead the congregations and proselytize the backsliders. Sistren and Brethren, tonight's sermon concerns communication. Let us turn to vinyl scripture. A Tribe Called Quest. Rap apostle Q-Tip sayeth unto Phife-dog in freestyles, "Check the Rhyme: song 9, Verse 6, "If knowledge is the key, then show me the lock." Although Hip-Hop sermons are thematically black, many faithful radioland parishioners are white. Ardent believers who say their "Amens", "True Indeeds", and "Parley Parleys" at the breakbeats in the benediction. White listeners should be ever mindful of EPMD's hardcore admonition, "Don't get to close or else you might get shot." Tipper Gore and the rest of the censor police are also wary of angelic white youth adopting radio/street values - afraid their naive progeny might emulate a cool ghetto stutter and in the process develop a permanent stammer...

Nowadays, I run into would-be Todds. Fab Five Freddy Frankenstein creations outfitted in the expensive accoutrements of young blackness. The fashions are exact. The colloquialisms forced, but passable. The streetsaunter pops. The stitches concealed by adopted roughhouse attitudes. "Wassup, nigga?" The first "nigga" flies out of their mouths, a test pilot on reconnaissance for any queer looks and reactions. "See niggas don't know me. Even though I'm from around the way and back in the day. They can't see this. Knowhati'msayin'?" No.

Appreciation for culture is cool, but I am skeptical that it will lead too significant change in the status quo.

Excerpts from editor Eric Liu:
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