



BY ANTHONY G.
CASASNOVAS

With so few females in the hip-hop game today, it's always surprising to see who will be the next slammin' femcee to battle her way to the top. It's also always interesting to see just what typically male camp of rappers this wander woman will come from. Missy's taking a short breather from all the hotness she dropped on the world for a few consecutive years. Though there are rumors of upcoming releases, Foxy will soon begin her fourth year on hiatus. The world just isn't ready for the underground fire that Jean Grae breathes. And, really, where do we begin with Lil' Kim? The poor girl has been on the receiving end of many jokes lately, and her

ongoing plastic surgery just isn't helping her case.

This leaves us with two very different choices. Comin' straight out of the Bronx as a member of Fat Joe's gritty gangsta rap clique, Terror Squad (see this month's feature), is the foul-mouthed, hard-rhyming Remy Martin — who won respect defeating Lady Luck in a closed-door rap battle. However, when it comes to rapping with a style and flair that only a lady can bring to the mic, hip-hop fans may want to turn their attention to the one and only Shawwna.

Hailing from the midwestern metropolis of Chicago, but reppin' for Ludacris' own Southern-fried Disturbing Tha Peace collective, Rashawna Guy has a style that is much less gritty and in-your-face than a Foxy, Kim or Remy. Instead, she's bringing a much more hard-edged MC Lyte type of vibe with her solo debut, *Worth Tha Weight*.

What really makes this girl worth the wait is the fact that she's

comin' from all over the place. She can be party-ready one moment and completely introspective the next. This sort of mix of club-ready and substantial music has earned her the title of "the female 2Pac" from Def Jam South CEO and former Geto Boy, Scarface. Being from Chicago, she admits to adapting styles from both of the United States' coasts. "Being from the Midwest is fun because you get everything," she readily admits. "You get a little taste of the West Coast, you get a little taste of New York, you get a taste of the South. We have our own also, so it's like a big melting pot of all that circulating. It's like the center of a cyclone and we're right there in the middle."

Coming from a melting pot such as Chi-Town makes Shawwna's addition to the melting pot of personalities that is Disturbing Tha Peace a perfect move. This mature 26-year-old mother of two and daughter of four-time Grammy Award-winning blues guitarist, Buddy Guy, got her

start in the latter half of the '90s as a member of the socially conscious female duo, Infamous Syndicate. Along with her street poet friend Lateefa, the two won the hearts of locals, earned radio play and a spot on the Lyricist Lounge tour. Their debut set, *Change The Game*, was a jump-off for the young Shawwna, but her progress would be stifled when their label was bought out and they weren't re-signed. She wouldn't really resurface until then radio personality Ludacris offered her the opportunity to lace the hook on his breakthrough hit, "What's Your Fantasy?"

Part of the reason her time has taken so long to come could be blamed on Chicago's scene, which tends to move at a snail's pace — which Shawwna has been known to call a "turtle." "In saying that — have you seen how long it's taken us to solidify our own artists in the rap game? We've had R. Kelly, we had Da Brat — but she was more based in Atlanta with Kris Kross and them. We mean seriously, specifically comin' out of Chicago and representin' Chicago," she says, in regards to the lack of star power coming out of her hometown until recently. "I guess 'cause house music was really our thing, that it took us a while to really grasp

MORE

Shawwna

THE FIRST LADY OF DTP PROVES SHE'S WORTH THA WEIGHT

Shawna

CONTINUED

onto it and really believe in ourselves as being able to hold weight. It also helps to have artists comin' out of the Midwest like Nelly out of St. Louis, Eminem out of Detroit, and Pete Pablo. It gave us a little more strength, a little reassurance that we can hold it. When I said we were turtles, it was because for a long time New York's been bangin' out artists, LA has been bangin' out artists, the South has been bangin' out artists and Chicago — we just now catchin' on. But at the same time, you gotta remember that old child's story — the race of the tortoise and the hare. And you remember who won?"

From the current look of things, it seems as if Shawna was the tortoise in that race. Now, instead of worrying where her next paycheck is coming from, she's more focused on how to balance both being a star rapper and loving parent — a similar conflict that her father faced when she was young. "It's hard being a mom and being on the road. My children are young (ages three and seven), so I still want to be with them most of the time. I'm missing stepping-stones and these are the years that you never get back. So, I'm missing a lot of it — that's the hardest part," expresses the first lady of DTP. "But at the same time, they love what I do. They want me to do it. They're my motivation. They're my drive."

Shawna also stays motivated and inspired by her "big brothers" in the DTP — whom she plans on staying with in the years to come — and what the future holds. Much like her rap idol and "blueprint," Ice Cube, Ms. Guy hopes to one day

"I want people to understand that *Worth Tha Weight* was kinda just an album for me to get everything off my chest."

"Being from the Midwest is fun because you get everything," explains Shawna. "You got a little taste of the West Coast, you get a little taste of New York, you get a taste of the South. It's like the center of a cyclone and we're right there in the middle."

become a film director. Aside from that, she wants to come with even more textured music and lyrical substance. "I want people to understand that *Worth Tha Wait* was kinda just an album for me to get everything off my chest," she says. "My direction changes every day. I think part of that is due to my eclectic-ness. I was brought up

around so much different music, that I developed a respect for instruments and artists. If I woke up tomorrow and wanna play the guitar, then I'm gonna have some songs with a guitar. I want to do something with Miri Ben-Ari — the violinist who did stuff with Kanye."

With this sort of boundary-push-

ing diversity in mind and a platinum-certified crew to back her up, there's no doubt that this Chi-town tortoise will be runnin' laps around all the hares of the industry for years to come. ■

After a short stint as one half of the female rap duo Wyzones Syndicate, Shawna got her breakthrough when then radio personality Ludacris (pictured on the set of his "Splash Waterfalls" video) asked her to lace his "What's Your Fantasy?" single with a hot hook.

