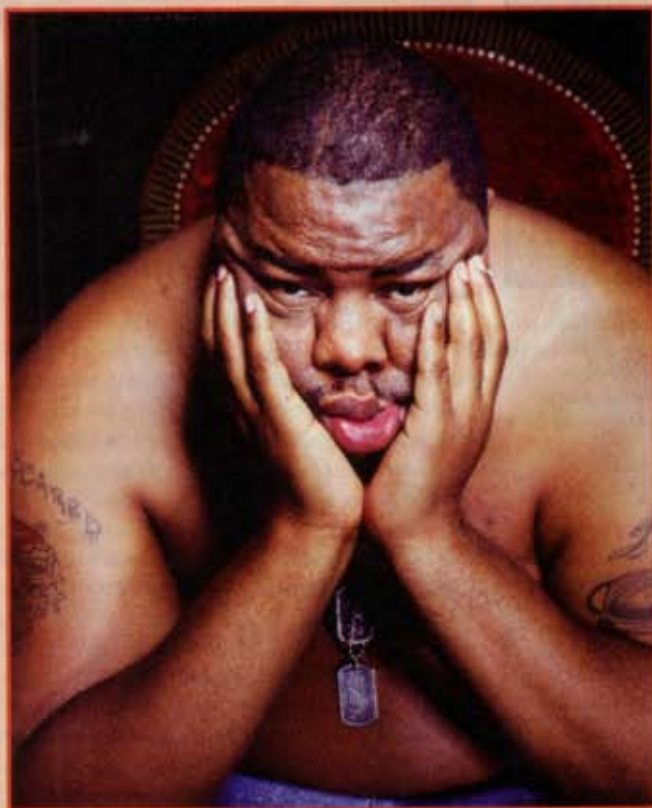


RAP ROUND-UP

BIZ MARKIE



The Biz's Diabolical Return!

When you think of the most thugged out, hardcore pimp gangsta in the rap game today, who comes to mind? If you answered Biz Markie, you've justified being slapped upside the head with a palm full o' freshly picked boogers. While he's definitely not known for being a rock slinger, cold-blooded hustler, the Biz is recognized worldwide as a cross-dressin', haircut needin', diabolical *Weekend Warrior*.

Marcell Hall (Biz's birth name) hasn't graced us with a goofball, out-of-tune, sample-laden LP in almost a decade now. It was way back in '93 when he dropped the LP *All Samples Cleared!* That particular set was released into an air of controversy surrounding the beat-boxin' Biz and the sample-using practices of the hip-hop biz. After being sued by Gilbert O'Sullivan for the unauthorized sampling of the song "Alone Again (Naturally)" in Biz's own "Alone Again," the hip-hop world was turned upside down like a

scrawny kid being bullied for his milk money. The ruling that resulted from the lawsuit required that all samples must be cleared before releasing a hip-hop record. This courtroom drama hurt Biz's record sales and temporarily scarred his career. However, while this incident may have slammed the lid down hard on the Biz, his toilet was not yet flushed.

The Biz retreated to Maryland and took up the lucrative job of DJing. Since then, he's been spotted all over the place – the Super Bowl, the NBA All-Star Game, the Grammys and a plethora of celebrity parties. And his talent on the tables isn't the only thing that's been in demand – he's been on both the small screen (obeying his thirst for *Sprite*) and on the big screen, practically playing himself as a rapping alien in Will Smith's *Men In Black II* (which also featured a Michael Jackson cameo). His most noteworthy appearance would have to be his basement dungeon interview in the beat-box documentary *Breath Control: The History of the Human Beatbox*.

Indeed, the man never left the music biz. He's done so many cameos as a tongue-tablist and rhyme-dropper that it's almost unbelievable that he hasn't recorded a new LP of his own 'til now. He sees it like this: "I'm not going to do an album just to do it. I haven't had that feeling until now. It's gotta feel right." Well, the diabolical one is back, making the music with his mouth and posing half-nekkid rockin' tribal gear with a lizard on the cover of his new *Weekend Warrior* LP, and oh snap(!), it feels right.



TONY TOUCH

Toca Throws Down Another Chuchazo

For every Black Panther there's a Young Lord, and for every 50 MCs there's only one Tony Touch. Draped in the vibrant colors of his Puerto Rican flag, one could say that Señor Toca is quite the mix-tape revolutionist. With about 3.7 billion mixes under his belt and lyrical contributions to about another 2.1 bil-

lion cuts, this Brooklyn "Taino Turntable Terrorist" is surely one of the busiest DJs in the game.

"Everybody has their own distinct sound," says Tony. "Kid Capri's got his sound. Clue's got his sound. Flex's got his sound. And I've got my sound. My sound is straight Nuyorican soul." Anyone remotely into hip-hop has probably heard Mr. Coco Tosso (one of his few Nuyorican names of endearment) either mixin' it up on the tables or lacin' tracks with his Spanglish skills as one-half of the Diaz Brothers. His talent has been recruited by the biggest squads in the game, from Busta's Flipmode Squad to Fat Joe's Terror Squad, and the most respected MCs on the sub-level, from Dead Prez to the Native Tongues stable. He's also toured with the likes of Guru and the Roots, and most recently appeared on *Saturday Night Live* as Eminem's DJ. Aside from producing some of the dopest beats to ever come out of Bushwick, he's been a B-boy since the days of Crazy Legs and the Rocksteady Crew, so it's no wonder Tony receives the respect he does. In the vein of his *Power Cypha: Fifty MCs* trilogy Touch released *The Piecemaker* through Tommy Boy Records and now, three years later, he's still sippin' *Bacardi 1873* and slaps *The Piecemaker, Vol. 2* down on the domino table.

Once again, he's got more appearances than this writer is willing to count, featuring the Wu, Slick Rick, Doug E. Fresh, Biz Markie, Masta Ace, Redman, Erick Sermon, Sean Paul and even salsa legend *Once Upon A Time In Mexico* co-star, Ruben Blades. He's a two-time "Best Freestyle" award winner and this mix is just another intricate carving on the Taino's stone totem. Without a doubt, Toca's game isn't over just yet, but he's won this round with a capicu.

YUKMOUTH

West Coast Beast Terrorizes Oakland

Rising out of the sea like some sort of nuclear waste produced monster of the deep, Yukmouth is prepared to douse his foes with the glowing radioactive flames that he's spittin'. He's goin' to battle, Toho style, subtitles and all. Oakland better call on Mothra to protect their land, 'cuz Yukmouth is takin' it to 'em — *Godzilla* style.

That's exactly what this half of the Oakland-based group the Luniz wants to do — come at you big. Regarding his latest project, Yukmouth states, "*Godzilla's* bigger than life; it's the biggest album I've ever done and that's what the title is all about." Being big, sorry... *being Godzilla* and braggin' about it are familiar territories to Yukmouth. In 1995, Yukmouth along with his junior high school friend Knumskul went platinum with their debut single, "I Got 5 On It." The LP featuring that popular cut even managed to knock the King Of Pop's narcissistic double-disc LP, *HiStory*, off the top of the R&B/Hip-Hop charts. And it wasn't long before P. Diddy did his thing with the Luniz, getting them to cameo on a few songs. Now, cutting drugs out of his diet, starting his own label (Smoke-A-Lot Records) and [not really] donning a rubber green dinosaur suit, Yuk is more focused and ready to add more platinum hits to his arsenal.

Yukmouth's latest is more like a Japanese monster movie bash than any of his prior LPs due to the sheer number of cameos he's enlisted and all the disses that he belts out. Apparently, in Yuk's world, it's the now-fatherly Master P who is this *Godzilla* rapper's King Ghidorah. "I mean, I mean," Yuk repeats. "It just

wouldn't be a Yukmouth album without a Master P dis." Looks like a kaiju battle royal for sure. Question is: Should we be concerned with how many CDs he's going to sell, or how many buildings are going to get crushed in the process?



MAGIC

Former No Limit Soldier Is Now On His Own

Magic is now *On His Own*. No, this doesn't mean David Blaine trapped in an egg-splattered plexi glass box over the river Thames. Nor does it mean Johnson going one-on-one versus Bird. The Magic currently in question is none other than one of Master P's former No Limit soldiers and after a string of popular LPs on that once bloated label, he's decided to go solo.

Going solo just happens to be something this rapper has dealt with throughout his life. Growing up in New Orleans' notorious 9th Ward, Magic was surrounded by a family of musicians. His grandmothers were members of church choirs and his mother was a professional singer who sang in a couple of Broadway plays. His father, A. Wood Magic, from whom the rapper gets his name, was considered one of the finest trombonists in New Orleans and traveled the world showing off his talent. Though young Magic appreciated the sounds of jazz, gospel and classics, hip-hop was more his style. He would eventually befriend local legend and the first major player on the Ca\$h Money Records Label, Pimp Daddy. Inspired by his new mentor, Magic started honing his skills on the mic. However, before Magic could fully exploit his talent, Pimp Daddy was tragically killed, leaving a questionable void in Magic's future. His mentor had left him solo and when he turned to his family for support, they suggested he just give up the rap game altogether and get a ordinary job to support himself. He wasn't going to give up that easy and wound up going solo as he entered the drug game to make a living.

After getting into a bit of inevitable trouble messing around as a drug hustler, Magic wound up meeting with No Limit's C-Murder, who signed him up to his No Limit imprint, Tru Records. After two solid releases with No Limit and an LP that suffered from abysmal sales during the crumbling of No Limit, Magic felt it was time to once again do his own thing. "The truth is I have a lot to prove," says Magic. "I want to show that I could have been the n*gga years ago. I can stand on my own two feet as an artist." It may require a couple of Magic tricks, but he may just be able to prove that he can finally do it all *On His Own*.



Literary MC Chooses The Road Less Traveled



SLUMLORD

Typically known for its cracked bells and cheese steaks, Philly has also made a name for itself in the ever-growing hip-hop scene. A new slumlord has moved into the tenements of Philly's rap game. He's slingin' his product around the "City of Brotherly Love" and even the most respected critics have become addicted, unable to put down his intoxicating product once they've picked it up. Fortunately, the stuff Slumlord is pushin' is less likely to crush a community like the poisons of most street hustlers and more likely to become a *New York Times* bestseller.

James Reese (AKA Slumlord), a Philadelphia native, became intrigued with the glamour life that the rap industry seemed to promise those that hit it big in the game. At age 17, he wanted the women, the fame, the jewelry and all the other material clichés that platinum-selling recording artists gain. However, as Slum grew older, his perception of the life he wanted began to mature. "My aspirations have changed over time," says Slumlord. "It's gone from wanting the women, the fame and economic status, to just wanting to have a better life for me and my son." This change in objectives has led Slumlord to not only pen his own lyrics about the street's trials and tribulations, but novelize these stories as well.

Being a skilled storyteller has always been a key to success in the hip-hop world and Reese takes this ideology to the next level. Along with the release of his blazin' debut LP, *Bigger Than The Game*, Slumlord has also written the novel *Honor Among Thugs*. Using his knowledge of the streets and thug life, he constructs the life of Eddie Doolittle, a struggling paraplegic trumpet player tackling issues concerning thug honor and loyalty. As a pusher of streetwise music and literature, Reese is a rare case of the Slumlord hustler who has chosen the admirable path of modesty over pop glitz and stardom.



STIMULI

Mental Stimulation From Brooklyn's Underworld

When the doctor taps your knee and you respond with a kick, that's stimuli. When you touch a hot plate of Swedish meatballs and quickly pull away to ice your finger, that's stimuli. And when you're noddin' your head to the wicked rhymes of a 24 year-old freestylin' MC at one of Maria Davis' notorious open mic nights, that's most definitely Stimuli.

Thanks to the influence of his brother Lord Digga, Stimuli has been rhyming for more than ten years. Digga, a member of Masta Ace's crew, let his little brother join in all of his activities. "I would tag along, hanging out everywhere my brother and Master Ace were, whether it was the studio or the basketball courts," Stimuli remembers. At age 15, the constant taggin' along finally paid off when he was able to drop some verses on Masta Ace's superb *Slaughterhouse LP*. He would later appear on 1998's *Flip Squad All Stars LP*, which also featured NYC's finest DJs and MCs. His hard work and perseverance as an unsigned artist won him the ORB-E Emerging Artist Award in 1999, where his judges included the likes of industry giants Fat Joe and Russell Simmons. "The award offered me the chance to perform and

really show that I can rock a crowd. I'm not just a studio MC," confirms Stimuli.

Just a studio MC he is not. He continues to provide live mental stimulation at open mic events and has been distributed to new fans via the coveted mix-tape circuit. His own full-length mix-tape, *Let Me Show You The Way*, has proved that Stimuli is simply not just the brother of a hip-hop notable. In Stimuli's own words, "I just want to provoke thought and emotion through my artistry." Stimulation by way of thought provoking and emotional lyricism? It sure beats letting the doctor bash your knee in with a tiny rubber hammer.