

In 2005, the Roc-A-Fella legacy lives on. Despite the divorce of Diddy and Jigga, the label continues to thrive and is well on its way to proving to the world that it's bigger and stronger than ever. Memphis Bleek

kept it hot with the Jay-Z starring "Dear Summer," sexy newcomer Teairra Mari is giving the Roc newfound youth, and Kanye West is about to dropout of college all over again. Yet, it was the Roc's Young Gunz who had the most to gain. With their debut release, *Tough Love, Nicetown*, Pennsylvania natives Chris and Neef proved they could roll with the best of the Roc Familia. However, sales weren't quite up to their expectations. We recently caught up with the *Brothers From Another* to discuss how they plan on becoming the Roc's torchbearers; their business practices; recording on the road; and grillin' up a mean burger on the streets of Philly.

"My family is his family and his family is mine."

# Ready. Aim. Fire!

The YOUNG GUNZ  
set ablaze the  
Roc Family  
Torch.

BY ANTHONY Q. CASASNOVAS

# SUMMER IN THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE

How the 'hood keeps it poppin' during the sunniest of seasons

Now that you're big time, are you still holdin' down Philly?

**C:** Yes sir! We moved our moms out, but we still in the 'hood! (Laughs)

**N:** In fact, we had our listening party back in May right in the city. When we're in New York we're just doin' the I-95 up-and-down!

What do you do for summer fun in Philly?

**N:** We cook out! Just last week we had a cook-out for a whole week – for nothing! It was just nice out. We had some nice days last week so we was cookin' out on the block.

**C:** Yeah, you know how we do! A few cases of Coronas, a bunch of burgers, a bunch of dogs, some sausages – we even got the old heads on the block do some salad up for us. We just out there partying!

**C:** We also go swimmin'...

**N:** And amusement parks. Last summer we took the whole 'hood to Dorney Park in a bus ride.

**N:** For the Fourth of July we head to South of the Border to get the fireworks for the kids, man! (Laughs) We do it all and we ain't ever leavin'!

So you guys are Philly-for-life?

Hopefully not! We love to be in the 'hood and that's all we know and everything, but we ain't sayin' that's cool. Everybody should get the chance to move out the 'hood. We just ain't make enough to move out us and all our loved ones yet. When we get to that point we'll have all the real family, all the real homies, all the real thugs up in big houses, you know what I'm sayin'? But as far as right now, we got our moms out. That was our priority – that was the thing we had to do. Otherwise, we're still good for right now.



**BLACK BEAT:** As your latest album title – *Brothers From Another* – suggests, you guys are practically like siblings.

How do you manage to keep your relationship so tight?

**NEEF:** [Unlike us] most things you see in the industry is put together and time will tell whether [other groups] will split up. But with us, it was before this rap thing. It was before Chris even knew how to rap! We was ridin' with each other, going to school together and comin' up together. You know, we was even doin' what experimental young'uns do: smokin', gettin' into trouble – you know. We was wildin' out! (Laughs) But we stepped up early, with a lot of light. Our fathers were never around and our stepfathers was doin' time, so we had to hold it down for the family. My older brothers was gettin' into s#it, so we was close to our mothers. You know what I'm saying? We was puttin' it down and on the same page. Just tryin' to get our moms up on an out that m\*the"

f\*#ker, but we still in it. We still hungry, man. We still puttin' it down. We really is *Brothers From Another*, this is real rap. My family is his family and his family is mine.

**CHRIS:** We ain't get what we expected [from *Tough Love*]. We recorded this album on the road during the Jay-Z & Friends tour. You know, there was that R. Kelly situation with Jay, Roc-A-Fella split up around that time and there was stuff goin' on back home. It kept us together and basically [during the recording] we were also dealing with day-to-day stuff.

So did all of those experiences somehow make it into *Brothers*?

**C:** Yeah! You know we had the [Apple] G4 with us every night, so we'd just go into the "studio" and talk about what happened. The "studio" was really just our hotel or bus! We'd be recording in hotels, from room-to-room every night. By the time we came off the tour, the album was done.





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**I'm sure recording an album like that kept the album way under budget too, right?**

**N:** Exactly! We were saving all those recording costs, because this time around we were definitely more business-minded than anything. We got our lawyers together and accountants right, man. That way everyone can just remain focused [on the music] and be on the same page. First time around, it wasn't like that. S#t was unorganized. We felt good recording *Brothers*, we was comfortable.

**Do you feel like you're carrying the torch of the "new" Roc-A-Fella?**

**C:** Well, we was carrying the torch before the split up, you know what I'm sayin'? We put it down, we wasn't in nobody's shadow. We was comin' with Chris and Neef out the gate. Our first single, "Can't Stop, Won't Stop" was nominated for a Grammy. We came out real strong and appreciate all the love and sup-

port that everybody been showin' us. We made a hell of a statement in the game with the *Tough Love* album, but we ain't really sell as much as we thought we should. As they say, "It gets greater later" and our new one is just retarded.

**Is that the reason you decided to also go with fewer guest spots?**

**C:** Yeah, we actually did a song with Jay, but it ain't come out right. [It's funny] because even with Jay on a track, we ain't gonna throw it out there just because his name is on it. If it ain't quality we ain't gonna put it on the album, otherwise we'll come off lookin' crazy and [in this case] Jay would have come off lookin' crazy.

**N:** Yeah, and like I said, this time we were much more business-minded. We know about our publishing now and everything. We don't want a bunch of features. We don't want everybody eatin' up our publishing. Granted, if we get something hot we'll consider it. We got a west coast joint on there called "Tonight." Daz did the beat while we was on the road and it came out hot. You just can't deny heat, but I'm not just gonna be callin' everybody to be like, "Get on this joint. Get on that joint." It's a waste of money and eats up our publishing. There's already two of us and we split everything 50/50 from the gate! From now on, we're doin' fewer features. On our first album we had damn-near the entire squad off the Roc. (Laughs) That's how we got down! We got love for everybody, but now they on our level with that bulls#t.

**Now that you're talkin' all this business, tell us about your label...**

**N:** Yeah, we had to start up our own label, man. You know what I'm sayin'? We got a business mind. That's what I'm sayin' — we ahead of the pack. We had to step it up early up in Philly, 'cause it gets real out there. So we started up our own label, G.I.F.I.: *Get In where you Fit In*. We got our artists, like Pooda Brown. That's my [older] brother — we lookin' out for him, 'cause he's

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retarded [on the mic]. We also been keepin' the mixtapes out. We already on *G.I.F.I Part 3*. You can also check out *Young'ns In Charge* and *30-Minute Shootout* with Whoo Kid. We done did mixtapes with

everybody, with every one we switch it up.

**With all of this stuff poppin' off, what's the girl situation like?**

(Both laugh)

**C:** Nah, we both bachelors right now.

**What about any celebrity crushes?**

**N:** You know, I love 'em all! (Laughs) But, you know, that'll only be for the moment. Once you get 'em — like 50 says — when he had Vivica, he thought he was on to something, but not a week went past where it was nothing. That's how it be, man! **RO**

## HOT OFF THE BBQ

**WHAT'S (LITERALLY) HOT ON A PHILLY BLOCK?**

**What's the Young Gunz's favorite food off the grill?**

**C:** Cheeseburgers! You know, cheeseburgers with the barbeque sauce. It's all about keepin' it simple.

**What about Philly Cheese steaks?**

**C&N:** Yeah!!!

**N:** That's our s#t!

**C:** That's the twist!

**N:** There's a lot of other stuff goin' down though — that's the last thing!

**What's your favorite summer drink?**

**N:** I like clear fruit drinks.

**C:** Yeah, I like VitaminWater too. Iced Tea — Mystic Iced Tea...

**N:** Homemade Iced Tea from the Chinese store! (Laughs)

**C:** We keep it simple, man!

