

ARTS & CULTURE

The
Rascalz
stir it up

photo by Ross Chapman



BY PATRICK BLACKIE

The Marquee, the chameleon of musical venues, played host to the Vancouver based hip-hopers the Rascalz last Thursday. Anyone who left this show unfulfilled is either a poor judge of a good show or was in the wrong place.

The night began with a hip hop quartet, solo MC and finally a solo DJ, all in preparation for the impending musical riot. They were all good, but the crowd was lost in their anticipation, and couldn't afford the attention.

Then the Rascalz, led by MC's Red One and Misfit and DJ'd by Kemo, came on, starting with the single "Gametime/ Sharpshooter" (an obvious but unfortunate choice, whereas it is one of the less fulfilling songs on the new album, *Global Warning*).

The show was consistently potent. The set, composed primarily of new material, was broken up on a couple occasions by the groups full time breakdancers — Zeb and Dedos — who danced skillfully for the captivated audience.

The Rascalz are still taking in primarily Canadian attention, but they say that they are expanding into all markets, slowly but surely.

"We've got some underground hype [in the US]. It has a lot to do with radio stations playing our stuff more," said Misfit.

He also pointed out that although they are only now starting to receive the recognition they deserve, competing in the US market is not a priority.

"We're [concentrating] on the whole world. That's the meaning behind *Global Warning* — to let everyone know what we're about."

The Rascalz also have the reputation of combining all the elements of hip hop — MCing, DJing, breakdancing and graffiti. Dedos, an accomplished graffiti artist, was responsible for the album cover to their 1997 release *Cash Crop*, among other projects.

"[Combining MCing, DJing, B-Boys and graffiti art] wasn't intentional," said Dedos. "It was something we were all into at the time, and it just happened."

Live shows are important to any group, and a group that establishes a tight, powerful live show is destined to some degree of musical appreciation. The Rascalz have a fantastic live show, the kind that even a non-hip hop fan has to be able to appreciate. Red One and Misfit actively keep the crowd captivated with impressive rhymes and constant movement while the B-Boys further to entertain with an almost impossible style.

"Our live shows are how we get out to people, make an impression, and hopefully that impression will stick," said Red One.

And of course, there's the beats.

The Rascalz have been climbing the Canadian music ladder in the last few years, slowly establishing themselves as a force to be reckoned with.

"We've been doing some trailblazing, going places, doing shows and making statements that will tell people that we are setting precedent," said Misfit about the groups rising success.

The Rascalz declined a Juno award in protest of the fact that no urban artists or awards were televised in the 1997 award show. The next year, it was televised, and the Rascalz performed.

They have also been active in fighting racism, as well as being involved with the Free Tibet movement.

"If we have a positive image, if that's what people get out of the Rascalz, that's good," said Red One. "It's all what you get out of it."

With the release of their new album and the radio time it has been receiving, the Rascalz are on their way up. They have a tight live performance and are equally tight in the studio. They are setting up shop at the very top of Canadian hip hop, and all signs indicate that they could stay there for a while.

However, it is a big market, and there is still a lot that can be done for the Rascalz and their stature in hip hop in general. In the mean time, if they ever come this way again, dip into a social lubricant or two and check it out. It'll be worth it.



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