

Rappin in a Loki Scottish HipHop

In December 2004 I met up with Loki to have a chat about his music and the Scottish HipHop scene, Kris The Lyricist was also there. The following text from the conversation/interview has been transcribed/tampered with by Tomas Rev.

Martha Brophy : I've seen you live a couple of times, how did you start up in the Glasgow HipHop scene?

Darren Garvey (aka Loki): I was always into art, drawing. I did a bit of acting with Red Index Productions (shout to Kevin Devine) while at school and did A grade drama. In the house I would make up dance tapes, mostly sampling. My dad suggested writing a hook, some lyrics, so I did this story about a boy in school called GuMBo who got bullied, 'GuMBo's Balls'—which was quite humorous, got a laugh, the kind of encouragement I needed. Red Index were producing a soundtrack and I offered some of my stuff to David Burnett, but it went nowhere. Kevin Devine gave me a contact, for me to take my music further, and that turned out to be Big Div from Kriminal Recordz. We did a demo which included 'It Seems Like Only Yesterday' a track that goes down well in the city.

I would write in the house, practise, rehearse; tighten up the lines, write, practise and rehearse, so when I went out on the Open Mike Circuit I could deliver—in a professional manner. Those in the scene know what I mean. You are judged on this circuit by audience approval to the lyrics, your style, delivery, timing, your (mis)demeanour. I would also get involved in the 'Battling Rap' scene. This is a kind of rappers contest, live on stage—trading verbals, head-to-head. The audience decides the winner. Loki is the name quality is delivered. I need to stress the importance of coming to the mike in a professional way—practising, rehearsing (to be good), writing tight, concentrating on each syllable. Hone the talent because mike-time is real-time. I'm hungry for it.

MB: What's this 'Spitting in Cyphers' thing about?

DG: Well it's another part of Rap's underground city. In these 'Cypher Circles' rappers, mc's would gather and just rap in turns, on all kinds of things; routines; appreciation's; mentions, they'd have the back-pack, the hoody, a smoke and attitude.

MB: So Open Mike Circuit would be where?

DG: A few places—Strawberry Fields was probably the main one for me, Stereo, 13th Note—the place I've played the most in



Glasgow, Jaspers, at Hamish's Hoose in Paisley, and at the The Arches I supported 'A Guy Called Gerald'.

MB: I saw you at the 13th Note at a PowerCut productions gig for the Clyde Built album and again at Stereo. I was totally amazed by the lyrics, the immediacy and sound—rapping in a Glaswegian accent was like wow, what is this!!!!

DG: This is my style. The subject matter—life in Glasgow schemes has a universal urban message. Rapping Glasgow style is honest, true, it reflects my personality and it gives meaning, real meaning to experience as lived right now. How it sounds is an intrinsic part of the Rap. This is why I work on every line, syllable, to get it right—it's in your face.

MB: It sounds like there's an audience out there looking for this...have you done any recordings?

DG: Yeah, my first album was 'Welcome to the Ninth World', Splash Productions, September 2003, and coming soon 'Friendly World', Kriminal Recordz—it was recorded at Urban Studios with Big Div in the chair with Casual 7, Woodchopper DoJo, aided and abetted by my hype-man, Kris The Lyricist, who is also with the Kriminal crew.

Kris The Lyricist: I back Loki up on vocals and raps. I keep the hype up while he grabs a few deep breaths. I also do my own stuff as well. I like to think of my stuff as quirky, humorous and serious—I hope it reflects my personality. 2005 is the year of the professional so do the 'work out' or 'get cut out'

DG: Yeah, we can step up to anyone.

MB: 'Friendly World' is coming out soon, where can you get it?

DG: We are looking at a date near the the end of February 2005 for the album and the single 'Sunshine and Short Skirts' on the Kriminal Recordz label. The single should have a few bonus tracks not on Friendly World, available from places like Fopp, Avalanche Records, Rub a Dub, y'know independent shops. You can get the info on the website.

MB: I was about to ask about the website.

DG: Well I have my own site
www.misterlowkey.moonfruit.com

MB: The website's really good, loads of information but the music hits you first.

DG: Yeah that was a deliberate ploy to immediately get your attention, it's like the 'money shot' thing—presenting the music comes first and foremost. It's been up since July 2003, there's been about 9000 hits. It's a great way to keep in touch with our fan base, let people know when we're playing, if we're releasing anything.

MB: So the albums, are they cd or vinyl?

DG: Friendly World will be on vinyl. Vinyl is crucial, especially when we're playing live, it gives the DJs material to spin for us MCs. The old school way was about the DJ, he was the man and the MC was just there to rap over the beats.

MB: Have you ever thought about Pirate Radio?

DG : It's not an option really. We can't afford to have our equipment confiscated. The net has changed everything as well—there's loads of radio stations. I'll mention two—radio magnetic www.radiomagnetic.com and Sub City Radio, www.subcity.org.

MB: To get back to Scottish/Glaswegian HipHop. Would



you tone down your lyrics to get a wider audience.

DG: I'm very much aware of this 'sell-out' tag if I get to promote my music on the UK HipHop scene, I would in certain respects 'play the game' but I maintain the philosophy of 'loyalties over royalties'. You can only tone down somethings, it's about a rawness—say what you want to say, which is honest, is me, is the West of Scotland. People generally deliver in an American accent because that's the way it's heard. The Proclaimers were distinct because of their 'Scottishness'. I'm not about TARTAN BISCUIT TIN, shooting haggis aficionados. I live in an urban, underground city whose sounds have as much validity as London, NY, Paris—and if they don't like it TUFF.

MB: How do you make a living!!!!

DG: At the moment I'm living in Support Accommodation for Young Homeless People—it sounds bad but it's ok—I've got my own flat basically. I do the occasional radio slot for BBC Radio. I also work in homework clubs which involves 10 year olds in schools—so when they get to my age (20) they will be major rappers. But I'm a full-time Rapper—I'm hungry for mike-time; that's the life, I've got something to say—no back up, go for it—full on. Still spitting in cyphers for y'r life.

MB: I noted the New Buzz stuff on your website. Are you giving mentions to people on the scene.

DG: The thing is I want to give big respect to: Baltik, Can Dan, Skandal, Kids that be Sick, Gard Feez, Elixir, Gasp and the Easy Rider Graffiti Crew.

MB: Have you ever thought of writing a book?

DG: I would love to put my lyrics in the cd cover—sooner or later I'll be able to do that. But as far as doing a book is concerned that's in the Lap of The Gods.

MB: I'm going to the bar, does anyone want a drink? Don't let me stop you talking.

Kris: Well I would like to plug the album...

Loki: www.misterlowkey.moonfruit.com

Kriminal Recordz: www.kriminal.co.uk

MAJOR THREAT: www.majorthreat.tk

RESPEK BA : www.respekba.tk

