

# Hip-hop at the Pop Explosion

by Stephan MacLEOD

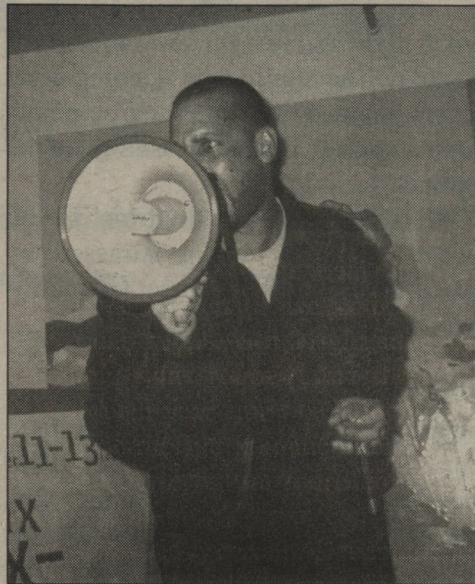
SAGE FRANCIS AND LOW PRESSURE  
AT THE KHYBER

Before he took the stage, I was told by a friend that Governor Bolts of the Low Pressure crew is one of those artists who walks the fine line between genius and insanity. Tonight's show was more the latter than the former, due to the fact that he was completely wasted. But it was so much fun. Starting off the set by announcing that he was going to tell a story, Bolts proceeded to rap the entire plot to the Michael J Fox film, *Teen Wolf*.

"Backspinning with a beer in my hand/I'm a teen wolf," was the chorus he stammered, while the audience showed their appreciation with howls. Bolts then rapped about having sex in a nursing home, a fantasy world of cuckoo clocks, and finished off with a Weird Al style hip hop parody of the Billy Joel song "Piano Man" that described his adventures following a midget around at a rave. It's rare that I'll break into a hysterical fit of laughter at any show, let alone a rap concert, but when Bolts said, "Your wife is a cabbage patch doll," I completely lost it.

Next up was another member of the Low Pressure crew, Josh Martinez. Martinez has an incredibly fast style of rapping. He is a genuine hip hop hippy with a slightly nasal voice that sounds like he could have an asthma attack at any moment. But what a dope asthma attack it would be.

RooseveltTharpa, who are about to embark on a tour with the guys from Low Pressure, performed a long set displaying their many styles. Comprised of Tachichi, Kunga 219, Caleb Simmons, and DJ Gordski, RooseveltTharpa brings together the distinct styles of all the artists into a supergroup that is at times mindblowing, and other times inconsistent. The highlight of their set was when Caleb busted out a phat beatbox while providing harmony over the beat and an occasional scratch sound, all using only his mouth. Tachichi and Kunga



Sage Francis at The Khyber.

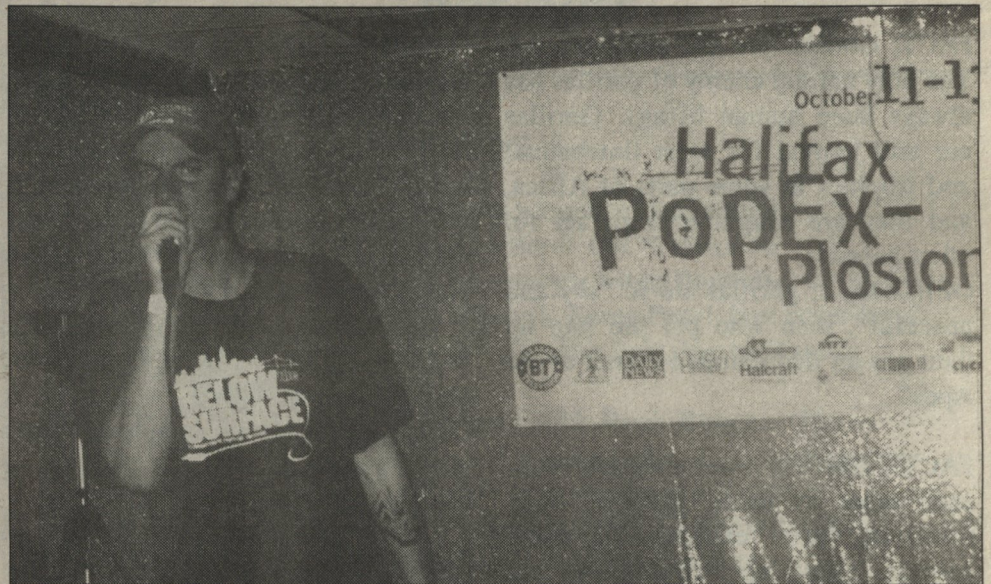
freestyled over Caleb's sounds and Scratch Bastard eventually joined in with a few real cuts.

Slam poet champ Sage Francis began his set blindfolded with Xs over his eyes. After being led out to the microphone, he proceeded to open his mind and soul to the audience through

**"An addictive 24-hour candlelight vigil in TVs. Freedom will be defended at the cost of civil liberties."  
-Sage Francis, "Makeshift Patriot"**

his intense poetry and quick word play. The first song he performed, "Makeshift Patriot" was about the aftermath of September 11th, and filled with chilling imagery and questions.

"We taught that dog to squat. How dare he do that shit in our own back yard!" Standing on a chair and rapping through a megaphone, he ended the song by wrapping a microphone cord around his neck, acting out the chorus, "I hang myself at half mast." It was an unsettling and powerful image that set the tone for the rest of his performance. Francis' introspective hip-hop, breathtaking poetry, and



Sixtoo at the Velvet Olive.

humorous freestyles (to the tune of Jay Z's latest hit) left the audience spellbound. And the occasional sing-along ("Make love to the present/Fuck the past") made this night of hip-hop an intense and unforgettable experience

1200 HOBOS  
AT THE VELVET OLIVE

The Velvet Olive seems like an unlikely venue for a night of hip-hop performances. The bouncer at the door would not allow Matthew Dorrell inside until he took off his toque. Apparently Halifax rapper Six Too, who was performing along with fellow 1200 Hobos members Scratch Bastard, Buck 65, and Mr Dibbs, had the same problem. Despite the bouncers, Six Too managed to perform wearing his trademark baseball cap - but I heard that hip hop fans wearing sports jerseys had difficulty getting in. Perhaps the Velvet Olive's dress code is the explanation for the darkly dressed break dance posse wearing black hoodies.

However, the pretentious atmosphere of this expensive, trendy restaurant could not put a damper on the evening's performance. Newly inducted member of the 1200 Hobos crew Scratch Bastard started the evening with a fiery set of scratches and juggling between two turntables.

Six Too started off his set with

a bit of turntable science, then proceeded to rock the mic with some poetic raps.

Buck 65 played one of his first shows since returning from a cross Canada tour with a set of brand new songs, and a preview of tracks off his upcoming two albums. His new songs are breathtaking and range in topics from people's lives falling apart, smoking, to how good he looks.

The audience was given fair warning before Mr Dibbs' DJ set that things would get intense. At this year's Scribble Jam in Cincinnati, a hip hop event hosted by the 1200 Hobos' founder, a gigantic mosh pit broke out during his set. I was unsure if he would be able to pull off a similar show in the Velvet Olive because earlier in the day he ate twenty burgers (no buns) as part of his all-meat diet. Perhaps his metabolism uses hamburgers as jet fuel because his set was fast and rowdy. Mixing together classic heavy metal riffs with old school hip hop beats and subsonic bass frequencies, Dibbs transformed the evening of hip-hop into a rock show. By the time he placed "War Pigs" on his turntables, a small mosh pit broke out. Judging by the intensity of his set and the response from the audience, Dibbs could have easily fit into any of the hard rock shows also going on that same night throughout Halifax.