

Trouble at the Bluenote @ Basement Jazz Bar: Oh Eye Records Showcase  
By: Stewart Dalley

America is credited with creating rapping, albeit with a distant nod to the original rhyming traditions of many African tribes and since its inception the musical form has been taken to heart by the world's disenfranchised youth. Countries who were once only consumers have in the last few years started to create their own rap music. Having recently put together a hip hop World Cup qualifying tribute radio show it was surprisingly easy to locate tracks from across the globe – with the exception of South Korea, where American born Korean rappers only appear in the bridge of a boy band's pop song. What has drawn them together has notably and equally disappointingly been poverty, racism and a lack of opportunities and although Scotland failed to qualify for the World Cup many of these subject matters have proved to be creative fodder for many of our MCs.

In the past Scottish rappers were lamented for falling into the same trap as many of their English counterparts – rapping with American accents. Thankfully that has now been redressed with the majority of our rappers choosing to drop all fake accents, which has seen a healthy uprise in their credibility as they come on strong in their own voice and dialect. Preferring, as they do, to use street slang from their own neighbourhoods, as opposed to adopting Americanisms that make no sense to the average listener.

July 12<sup>th</sup> gives anyone who has yet to experience a Scottish MC the chance to dip a toe into the world of Scottish rap, with a showcase courtesy of one of the country's leading hip hop labels, Oh Eye Records, at Edinburgh's Basement Jazz. Still in its infancy the label has only six releases to date, but they serve as milestones in the growth of an art form which most bookies wouldn't have given you odds on happening a decade ago. Headed by Scottish rapper Reachout the label has been responsible for releasing homegrown talent to critical acclaim including the Eye Drops compilation album, Reachout's own 'Roks 'n' Rolls' album and an EP by stable mate, STS.

Still in preparation for the night Yvette Fugue, co-owner of Oh Eye Records is looking forward to their appearance, if she's not slightly unsure as to what form it will take. "We don't really know what's going to happen, we've not rehearsed anything. Pat {Reachout} is in Dublin at the moment putting together the music for his new album so we haven't had much time to get things organised." Adding, "It's going to be a jam session from those who have been connected with the label over the years." Accompanying Reachout will be fellow MC Kibo (Gael Force), DJ Nasty P, STS on decks and sampler, Nick McCallum on flute, Si Thomlinson on electric bass and Vinnie Bonner on drums; for what is sure to be a energetic and melodic introduction to Scottish hip hop.

In addition to Oh Eye's output there is a plethora of other artists and independent record labels servicing the increasing demand for homegrown hip hop. Riz/Eastborn has just signed to UK Rap Records and amongst other things will be releasing his debut album 'Word Perfect' any time soon. He shares the spotlight in Glasgow with Freestyle Master and Steg G of Powercut Productions who have just unleashed their blinding 'Universal' EP. Paisley gets in on the act with production guru STS who is gearing up to release a new Gael Force album with another Paisley inhabitant Kibo in the autumn, which will either be entitled 'Winds of Change' or 'Feel the Wind'. Then there's Belles in Monica whose releases have picked up praise from all corners of the globe. East Kilbride is also set to throw off its tag of 'home to Aztec Camera' with the appearance of 2<sup>nd</sup> Nature. With Clydebank being put on the map thanks to the relatively new 4 Most collective - fronted by longstanding rapper RC with DJ skills coming from one of the city's finest Nice of Freakmenooovers fame. The unlikely setting of Ardrossan is also thriving with hip hop culture in the shape of All Time High, whilst in the capital, Edinburgh is churning out some quality tunes with Scotland Yard, Incorporeal Crew and the aforementioned Reachout all worth searching out.

But its not only rapping that Scotland has turned its hand to. Hip hop as a collective art form is a five-element affair with rapping only making up for one dimension. Break dancing is an equally important ingredient and Scotland is awash with quality breakers thanks to crews such as Glasgow City Breakers, Floor Freaks, Necros, White City Breakers and The Clan who all regularly make appearances at hip hop clubs and gigs. Graffiti too is plain to see with complete 'pieces' being thrown up in underpasses and discarded buildings throughout the country. DJ'ing is also something we particularly excel at, with a DMC World Champion in the shape of Edinburgh's Plus One and ITF (International Turntablist Federation) medals thanks to Richie Ruftone. Gourrock even has its own hip hop DJ class and shop *Skratchofreniks* run by well-respected DJ Bunty of the Table Gimps, DJ collective.

As Reachout himself says, "The fact that people can even refer to 'Scottish hip hop' as a recognisable genre is progress." But of course we should try to move away from labelling it as a Scottish thing, as it tends to limit its aspirations. After all we don't refer to the works of bands like the Reindeer Section, Biffy Clyro and Ball Boy as Scottish indie they are part of a bigger sum. Likewise, Scotland should drop the geographical labelling of hip hop and maybe then it will truly progress.

**Oh Eye Records Showcase @ Trouble at the Bluenote @ Basement Jazz Bar, Chamber Street, Edinburgh, 12<sup>th</sup> July.**