



When Danny Simmons moderates panels at the Pratt Institute on the issue of artist gentrification, drawing attention to the burgeoning but chronically underexposed crop of fiercely talented, multi-ethnic underground hip-hop bands with amps buzzing currently in the overlooked Brooklyn neighborhoods of Ft. Greene, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Clinton Hill, you know something's afoot.

The Def Jam Poetry co-founder has launched Seeds and Bones, a new label to showcase the sounds of a growing collection of bands fronted by rhyming MCs that mix punk, jazz, rock, bhangra and funk flavors with booming beats and mad lyrics.

In support of that effort, several instrument-wielding hip-hop crews quaking the local underground took over the Brooklyn Brewery for a beer jam – the same stormy September Saturday that David Chappelle's Wattstax-inspired block party went

down in Bed-Stuy, featuring band-backed megastars like Mos Def and Erykah Badu.

The conspiracy-minded are wondering if the faders are synched for a hip-hop band boost, something unprecedented since Run-DMC and Aerosmith first busted through the false, dusty walls of brittle sheet-rock separating rap and rock-n-roll to scream "Walk This Way!" At the very least, it seems acts that can play and rhyme, rock and vibe live are cusped on a third wave.

Not confined to a single borough, label or producer, the genre has spread organically and globally over the last few years, spawning efforts from Canada's Northwest Territories (Unonymous) to St. Paul, Minnesota (Heiruspecs) to Stockholm, Sweden (Beatsquad).

Mugshot spotlights the Crown City Rockers, a Bay Area outfit shifting acid jazz with old world, squeeze-box minor key piano runs, break-beat

squeaks, and tight muted bass lines as well-worn and funky as a good pair of ass huggers. There's also Dujeous, vibing together since they were squeezing lunchtime jams into their high school days at the red brick, castle-like Armory building made famous in *The Fisher King* on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

Finally, a real live Q&A with Dionysos of Real Live Show, an NYC collective of improvisational maniacs who never plan anything, but create spontaneous splatter jam, audience-inspired, genre-busting "residences," with positive results.

It ain't just about The Roots anymore...

**WORLDWIDE,
IT'S ALL THE WAY
LIVE...**



Dujeous (l. to r.): Taylor, Tomek, Mojo, Rheturik, Mas D, Dave, Apex

DUJEOUS

THE TRIPLE-MC FRONTED CREW AIMS TO SEIZE THE MOMENT

But We've Got To Ask: When Do They Sleep?

"... there's a 7-Eleven with mountains looming in the background..."

Mojo, one of three MCs fronting New York City's Dujeous, framed the scene for *Mugshot*. On the road in Utah, the hip-hop band was piling seven-strong in a van to trek north for a gig in Jackson Hole at the Mangy Moose, where the powder-punks, board-bunnies and cowboys get their drink on, nestled under the towering peaks of Wyoming's Grand Tetons.

Booked to entertain the anxious snow-worshippers, along with Quannum Project artists Lifesavas, Dujeous was co-headlining a post-screening party for the world premiere of *Soul Purpose*, a new ski and snowboard flick from Teton Gravity Research, which licensed the bands' joints to boost the soundtrack.

Dujeous rocked the one-night Western stand to christen a mini-tour in support of their first full-length release, *City Limits*, out on Third Earth Music, with the band returning immediately to NYC for some sets at Don Hill's, and to finish editing a video for their cut "Sometimes," which

will debut in October. A leg of East Coast après-ski-movie gigs with screenings set for Philly, Boston and New York will follow in November.

Yet the crew, together now eight years in its current form, is already at work on a second album, at their new uptown studio on 207th Street in the Inwood section of Manhattan. Built by Dujeous guitarist, engineer and co-riff-writer Taylor, the spot also serves as the headquarters for the band's Wax Poetic (Wax Po) Productions, a collective charged with churning out hits for like-minded artists. A Dujeous joint featuring John Legend, whose *Get Lifted* is expected to drop in October on Sony's Very Good Music, is already in the can, and the band is helping Bronx-Harlem hip-hop duo Equilibrium track its debut LP and pop a street-buzzin' mix tape as well. One ventures "sleep" connotes a luxury long past for these b-boys.

"We try to be prolific with it," Mojo says, which has been the case since he, Mas D and Rheturik — Dujeous' nucleus of MCs, friends since they could barely walk — started skipping lunch in junior high at Hunter College High School to

freestyle and jam with any kid who would pick up an instrument.

Though a long way from their red castle school days on 94th Street, Dujeous — a moniker the longtime friends made up as kids to tag anything they considered indescribably dope — still thrive on spiking tradition, and evoke tireless DIY determination, whether it's bartering bass lines for studio time (which is how they recorded *City Limits*), guerrilla marketing sonically on 16-millimeter, or booming their plugged-in, triple-threat rhyming.

The hip-hop band's remaining challenge is cracking the clay others have forged, namely The Roots. To remain steadfast to the ideal they spit on "The Rules," a track with the chorus "...don't follow the rules and you won't blow..." the band seems to realize they must continue to break the mold in a dynamic (the hip-hop band) no longer novel or gimmick.

While conceding the stereotype, Mojo dismisses any bland generalizations as lazy,

and points to the new revitalization of hip-hop by live crews juicing rappers in the studio. Dujeous is attracting otherwise band-less hip-hop artists needing fresh live beats to 207th Street, just as the Wax Po MCs had magnetized the musicians, and vice versa, years ago on 94th Street. "I think there's definitely a revival of the live sound," Mojo says.

Their effort shows. The rhythm-rhyme solidarity of *City Limits* is tight, with the lidded lounge groove, clipped chorus flange and MC flag-raising of "The Rules" shifting seamlessly to Soukous guitar lines and David Guy's border brass on the herb ode "Good Green," which tracks on *Soul Purpose*.

The MCs' tales are ear-perking, and each spit with distinct phrasing, and vocal and lyrical depth. Their rhymes ride over Tomek's high-hat sizzle and the muted, fuzz-tone creep of Apex's warm bass lines, a combined half-step, held-back-'til-it's-hot-and-funky groove that vibrates your ileum.

Fruition was exactly the goal of *City Limits* – a title Apex says is a metaphor for traversing the personal and physical barriers of the city, and the visual and visceral emotions the street grid evokes, to "balance all aspects of our sound, of seven complex people."

The title track is an ode to New York's toughness, possibilities and incongruities. The brim-low poetry, minor melody, moody Miles riffs, and old school, rubber-duckie scratching reminds everybody they're tredding on Gotham's streets.

"Footholds in the firmament, gravel and granite... young when I broke the code, I had to crack it, no regard to what the limits were..."

As to the new album, Mojo seemed hesitant to put any, well... mojos... on the proceedings by making any early predictions. But when *Mugshot* mentioned the "Good Green" cut and its reference to "government issue 33," and hinted at a certain predilection for "G-13," he responded immediately: "Then you got to hear this joint I did called 'G-13.' For real, yo," he laughed. The *Bastard* EP compilation includes cuts from J-Smoke and Aesop Rock as well.

Take note: Dujeous is decidedly homegrown. Mojo directs the videos, Mas D and Rheturik design the artwork, Apex handles PR, Tomek aids Taylor on the knobs, and everyone, Mojo emphasizes, contributes creatively to the hot tracks.

By Shane Kite. Photos courtesy of Dujeous.



Real Live Show and friends lit to r/m Shelley Stimulus, Dionysos, Dujeous, Tomek, Aesop, Tacus, Colt, Rachel, Greg.

REAL LIVE SHOW

Dionysos, MC of wine and one-tenth of the core of Real Live Show (no set list, no agendas, will ride any vibe) spills the reels to *Mugshot* about how the band pressed the improv to the acetate on its debut release and overall imperative assertion, *Class Is In Session*, out now.

MUGSHOT: In *Class* on "Everytime," the lyrics: "In every way, every one plays their role; Every part of everything has divine design; it's the same shit, and it happens every time..." sound like the creative, collaborative process, the give-and-take vibe live when it's working. Was it a contrary notion to be in the studio?

DIONYSOS: Not at all. Whether it's on the stage or in the studio, if everyone is playing with one another, the vibe escalates – and you get hot music.

Did you record the tracks live as a band?

Yes. Everybody came through to RPM studios and we did a lock-in for two days straight. The room there is big enough to have all the musicians play together.

How do you approach your live shows? Is there a set list?

At our residencies we never have a set list. That is when we create. Sometimes we may anticipate the theme of the show and come prepared to work that out. At those shows we just let the musicians begin and whatever pops into our heads, we go into it. Stim [co-MC] and I have been performing together for so long that we can complete each

others' thoughts and lines without prior conference and completely in the moment. When we do shows outside of the residencies, we put together a loose set, but seldom stick to it. The set is just there to give the show a dramatic arc.

What theme coalesced on the album for you?

Class Is In Session means that life never stops teaching you, so don't stop learning. Sometimes we forget to learn because we are not in "school." But every day is a new lesson. And every song we put down was a new lesson for us and our audience. The composition notebook has always been an image associated with us because Stim or I are frequently caught jotting down rhymes, plans, or just thoughts to remember in a composition notebook. Teaching ourselves – the whole theme for this campaign was a cosmic gift.

What sets you apart from other hip-hop bands?

We are better. Our music is more dynamic and complex. We don't just play a beat and rhyme over it. Our music is progressive. We don't try to make the "radio-joint" and the "hard hip-hop MC joint." Our instrumentalists are young legends in all types of music. Jazz, funk, soul, gospel, electronica, etc. We are not slaves to "real" hip-hop. That term is limiting to an artist's scope of creativity. Music is music. As Stimulus says, "I'm not a rapper, I just rhyme a lot."

By Shane Kite. Photo courtesy of RLS.