

Diamonds In The Raw will take you on a trip through Washington DC's inner-city streets in search of talented musicians struggling to survive in a game where the odds are stacked against them. For the first time ever, step into the world of the DMV!

Diamonds in the Raw:

"The Past, Present and Future of DC's Hip-Hop Movement"

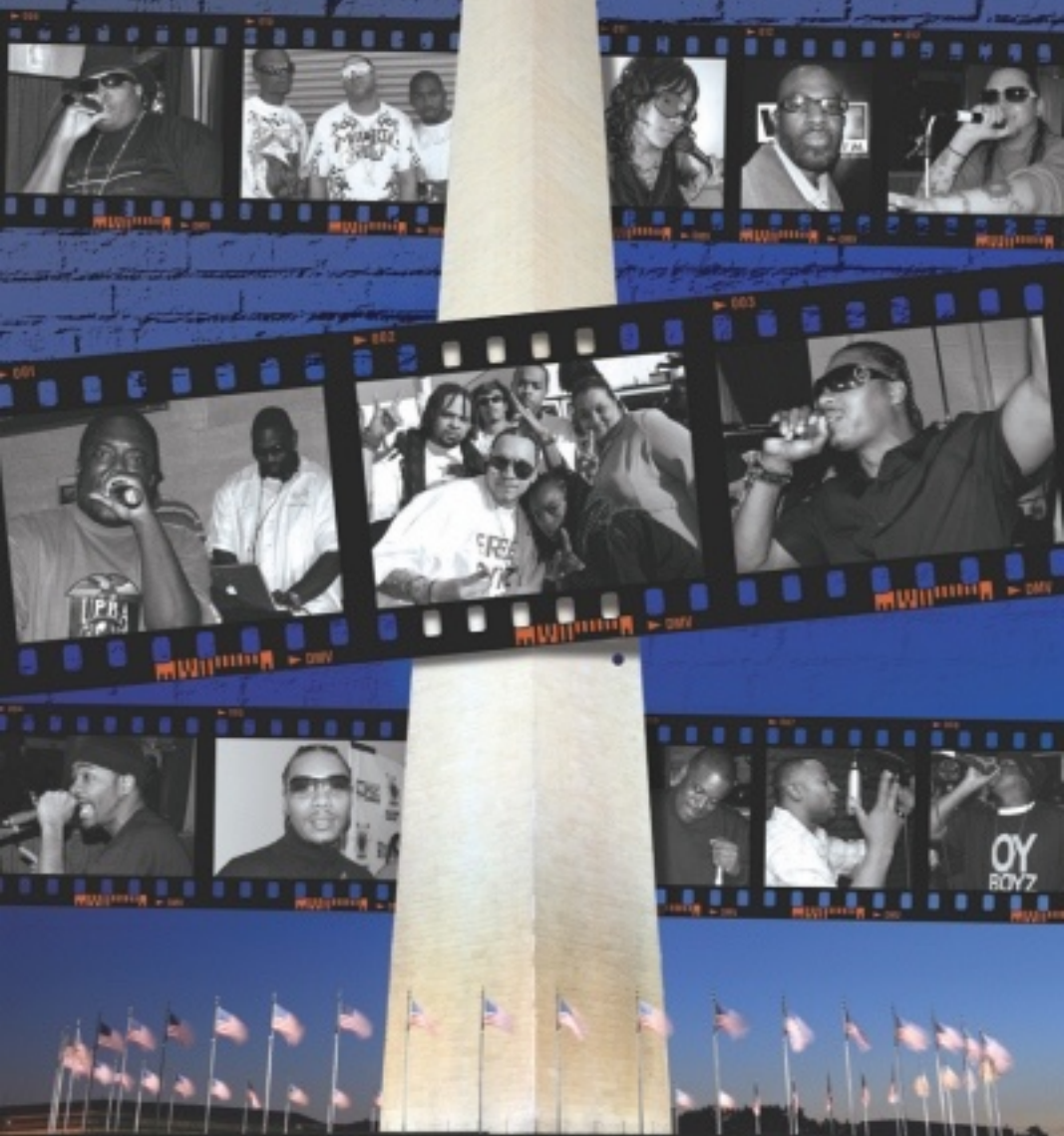
By Sidney Thomas

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DIAMONDS IN THE RAW



SIDNEY DC SUPER SID THOMAS

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Paperback ISBN: 978-1-64719-331-7

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2021

(#6) The Go-Go Rappers

The go-go industry was so dominant in the DC area that hip-hop music had a difficult time becoming established. So by necessity, the most talented rappers in DC gravitated towards the go-go scene. Many rappers during the 80' and 90's got their chance to shine by rapping on stage with the go-go bands. Tony Blunt, P.O.P. (Prince of Poetry), Hechinger Mall Zhigge and Fat Rodney were some of the names that dominated the go-go/rap game.

On the national level, hip-hop was growing by leaps and bounds and the more records that were sold, the more hip-hop culture became interlaced with popular culture. As hip-hop increased in popularity nationally and ultimately internationally, its popularity also grew in DC. Go-go bands began to perform more cover versions of rap songs. The problem was most go-go bands didn't have an actual "rapper", they had instead what was called a "talker". In fact, the most important member of the band (other than the percussion section, of course) is the talker.

The talker doesn't have to sing or rap very well, the key skill is a charismatic way with the audience. He or she must have a dynamic personality, excellent leadership skills, and a loud and clear vocal presence on the microphone. His job is to organize the other parts of the band, to coordinate the transitions from one song to the next song, and to and shout out different neighborhoods or local celebrities in attendance. The talker is the true personification of the term "master of ceremonies".

When a go-go band attempted to perform a hip-hop song, the talker would rap the lyrics over the go-go beat. Some talkers were better than others at this task. Depending on the verbal ability of the talker the performance could range from good, to bad, to downright awful. Some bands wouldn't even let the talker try to rap, they would bring in another member of the group who had some degree of lyrical skills and let that person take a crack at it. Truth be told though, unless the rapping was pitiful, the crowd couldn't care less, they were there for the go-go and if the band was cranking they were satisfied. One Wednesday night at the Chapter III nightclub something happened that would change that attitude forever. DC Scorpio proved that a kid from the neighborhood could write a rap song about DC and it would be heard all over the world.

DC Scorpio

On April 15, 1987, the Chapter III held a rap contest that was judged by rap superstar Doug E. Fresh. The winner of the contest would have the opportunity to perform at a big concert being held the following weekend at the Capital Centre. A young lyricist who went by the name of DC Scorpio won the contest by rapping poignantly about the drug trade and violence that was wreaking havoc all over the DC metropolitan region.

DC Scorpio: I went to a go-go, Experience Unlimited was playing at the Chapter III nightclub. They were having a rap contest and Doug E. Fresh was the guest judge. The winner of the contest would appear that weekend at the Capital Centre. I blew everybody (in the contest) out in terms of freestyling and lyrical content. And Doug E. Fresh gave me a shot, I went to the Capital Center and performed the same song, which was called "Stone Cold Hustler".

“Stone Cold Hustler” was then released as a single and quickly topped the local charts. DC Scorpio was a natural entertainer, he had teen idol looks, and possessed a powerful command of the stage. As DC’s first rap star, he instantly became a local celebrity. His fame grew even brighter from his dynamic performance of “Stone Cold Hustler” on the “Go-Go Live” VHS concert video. Another video of the song even began playing on BET.

DC Scorpio: I was hearing about Run-DMC, LL Cool J, Salt & Pepa and Public Enemy (from New York). I was a young little cat at the time, but I figured I could do that too. I decided to get into it. I liked the rhythm, I liked the music, I liked the rapping. One night I went to a go-go at the Panorama room to see Chuck Brown, and this particular night Chuck let me get on the mic. After he heard me rap he said, “Don’t stop doing what you’re doing”. After I performed at the Capital Centre, I met up with Donnell Floyd and Quentin from Rare Essence and they said that they wanted to help me put my record out. And that’s what I did and it’s been going on ever since. But Chuck Brown really got me started in this music thing.

Stinky Dink: Scorpio was a pioneer in this DC rap game, he was a real talented brother. Scorpio is probably the purest rapper to ever come out of DC. He was a “real” rapper. He was like the DC LL Cool J, but back in those days his style didn’t go over well in DC because the city wasn’t ready for that style. This is still when rap was seen as “bamma”.

Gothos (G.O.V.): If you listen to “Stone Cold Hustler” by DC Scorpio, he tells you about all the drugs and the drug dealers’ lifestyle that was going on in the streets. In fact, Scorpio gave you the blueprint in 1987 of what other rappers like Jay-Z started talking about many years later.

DC Scorpio: I was doing a lot of ghost-writing for bands. Writing hooks for Rare Essence, writing songs for Chuck Brown. One time I wrote this hook, “3 in the morning the pancake house”, and Andre from Rare Essence (White Boy) he called me and I laid it down for them. And the next thing you know Jay-Z picked up the hook and

used it in one of his songs. Everybody was asking me why I was beefing with Jigga and them. I was like, "I'm not beefing", they were talking about Rare Essence had a problem with him using it, I didn't have a problem with it. I'm so creative, I knew I could create it all over again.

I also had a part in writing "55 Dollar Motel". I didn't write the whole thing. Me and Vinnie D. sat up this room in his mother's house and came up with the concept. I begged him not to sign with Donnell Floyd, I don't have any beef or hold no grudges against Donnell or anything. Vinnie had some good success with that song, 55 Dollar Motel.

Vinnie D

The record "55 Dollar Motel" was a huge hit in DC during the mid-late 80's. The song, which Vinnie raps in a cadence clearly influenced by MC's like Slick Rick and Dana Dane, describes the hilarious adventures that he and a young lady share in a motel room.

Vinnie D: Around that time my favorite rapper was Slick Rick, the Ruler. \$55 Dollar Motel was pretty much a true story. The hotel was the old Stage Coach Inn next door to Triples night club. The actual price was \$54.00 but that didn't sound right so I changed it to \$55.00. I made a demo and went to the label which was at the time run by the late, great Foots from Rare Essence. Funky Ned engineered the song which was recorded in a studio over top of Discount Mart in the Eastover shopping center. Byron, who plays keys for Rare Essence, is actually responsible for the hook. It was just a song until he sampled my voice and triggered it like he did. If you listen to the older Essence tapes around that time, you will always hear the same pattern used on the hook, but a whistle was used. Byron is a really talented dude.

I did a few shows at the Capital Center. I remember this one show in particular, I was opening for Run DMC and Public Enemy in front of about 18,000 people. I had three dancers: Sean "Puffy" Combs (P. Diddy), Obatye, and Ron DeBerry, who's known for throw-

ing parties around the area. After the show, Puffy was the only one complaining about how much money I paid him, the other two were satisfied, ain't that funny?

DCSuperSid: LOL, Diddy was your back up dancer!

Vinnie D: Yeah, LOL! Another time I was at a DC radio station waiting to do an interview. Snoop Dogg was also there for an interview and I slid him a CD. By the time I got home I had a voice mail from Snoop saying hit him back 911. From there we stayed in touch and I signed to his label Doggystyle. I released "Trouble" and "Just get carried away" which were both on the Doggystyle All-Stars *Welcome to the House* album.

Fat Rodney

Another DC rapper, Fat Rodney, never had the commercial success of DC Scorpio, but he had something equally if not more important: universal respect in the streets.

Rodney performed frequently with the go-go band Rare Essence. CD's of those recordings are considered classics and many are still circulating around inner-city DC. Because Scorpio was a radio favorite and Fat Rodney was a street legend, it was inevitable that they would eventually clash. They engaged in several high-profile "freestyle" battles with most people believing that Fat Rodney came out the winner.

Stinky Dink: Scorpio and Fat Rodney were rapping against each other at the Chapter III nightclub. Fat Rodney started "getting out" on Scorpio. Scorpio came back at Rodney and the things he was saying didn't go over well with the crowd. The things he was saying kind of stigmatized Scorpio because the tape from that show went all over DC in about two days. He was talking about how he had a record deal and Rodney didn't. He was talking about how he rides around in limos. He was talking about how many records he sold, because at this time "Stone Cold Hustler" was selling a lot of records

and Rodney didn't have anything out. The famous line Rodney came back with was, "You're in your limousine, the party is over, I drive by in my Range Rover", and that killed it!

DC Scorpio: Let me break it down: me and Fat Rodney came up with this thing together. Me, Fat Rodney and King Kain were sitting in the Pancake House just talking. And Rodney just said, "Why don't we put something together, since you the hottest rapper (which was me at the time) and I'm trying to come up, that me and you are beefing. I'm from Uptown and you're from Southeast. You come on stage with Chuck Brown and I'm gonna come on stage with Rare Essence".

We would meet at the go-go and we would battle (on the mic) but it was a "fun" battle. It was battling for his people and my people to meet at the next go-go. One show I would let him get out on me, so we would meet at the next show. The next show he would let me get out on him so we could meet at the next show. It wasn't no actual beef, it was a planned beef.

Tony Blunt: Fat Rodney was the best. I knew him from the streets but unfortunately I never got the chance to get down with him as far as the music thing.

Hevewae: My first rap CDs were Rakim, Scarface, and Redman. But what really got me into it was Fat Rodney, that's why you always hear a little go-go flow when I rap.

Stinky Dink: Fat Rodney made it cool to rap. I want a lot of the young artists to know this. Because one thing about the DC hip-hop scene that's different from the New York hip-hop scene is that Jay-Z and Nas can tell you about the rappers that came before them. A lot of artists from DC think they just grew up out of the ground; or that their influence came from elsewhere. But I'm going to tell you that at one time rap was seen as some bamma stuff in DC. And the dude that made it cool for all of us to rap was Fat Rodney.

Chucky Thompson: Rodney represented the truth about hip-hop; if he rapped about having a Mercedes or a Range Rover he was actually driving one. With him being from DC, he was like B.I.G. before B.I.G. was B.I.G. - that was the persona he had. He had a lot of street respect, but he was also getting hip-hop respect because he would get on stage and rock the stage from the front to the back. He would have people lined up and waiting for him to hit the stage.

Stinky Dink: Fat Rodney was like Biggie before Biggie. Heavy dude, everybody knew he was in the street “getting money”, he was up in the go-go with his diamonds on. He was an entertainer. I first met him down at Norfolk State, where I was going to school.

Rodney would come down to Norfolk and he would be battling New York dudes on “the yard” - straight crushing them. I was already rapping down Norfolk. I was “Stinky Dink” down at Norfolk before I was “Stinky Dink” in DC.

One time me and Fat Rodney rode down to “Aggiefest” together at N.C. A&T. After the show, we stayed up all night rapping, going back and forth all night. He really gave me some good pointers. The first thing he told me was I needed something to come out on stage with. In those days, everybody had a chant. Tony Blunt had, “Give em’ what they want Tony Blunt”. Fat Rodney had, “What you gonna do Fat Rodney”. Go-Go Nate had, “Go-Go Nate is one of a kind”. The only person that didn’t have a chant was the P.O.P., So then I came up with “Stinky Dink get rickety-raw”. Rodney was a big influence on my career.

Tragically, Rodney’s potential was never fulfilled. He was fatally shot at the Crystal Skate roller skating rink in Temple Hills, MD.

DC Scorpio: We were going to do this thing called “King of the Go-Go”. Unfortunately, it was cut short. About a week before we were supposed to go to the studio, Fat Rodney was killed trying to break up a fight. It was a real tragic loss because Fat Rodney was a real good dude. If he would have lived, I’m quite sure he would have been a superstar.

According to the *Washington Post* article reporting his death, the reason Rodney was at Crystal Skate was to promote his new single. He had recently signed a contract to record an album and the first song was called “Busting Out”. His sister, Jay Lynn Martin, was quoted in the article, “He was just at the wrong place at the wrong time. Everybody loved him. He didn’t have any enemies,” she said.

In the same article, Annie Mack Thomas (“Ms. Mack”), then co-manager of Rare Essence, said, “He was a part of us. This is more than a shock. It was like a close family member being taken away.” James Funk, a member of Rare Essence, added, “Most of all, I’ll miss his brotherly love. His reward was making people happy.”

The person responsible for killing Fat Rodney was never arrested, but another *Washington Post* article a couple of years later may have shed some light what really happened. Jeffrey Thomas, who was linked to a gang called the “Fifth and O Crew” was being tried in DC Superior Court for the killing of Anthony Stewart, the leader of a rival gang known as the “Morton Street Boys”. Thomas told the jury that Stewart was stalking him and he felt he had to kill (Stewart) or be killed himself. Thomas testified he believed Stewart was after him because he had seen Stewart shoot Rodney “Fat Rodney” Martin, that June, outside Crystal Skate in Temple Hills. Thomas was eventually acquitted of murdering Stewart.

The album Rodney was working on was never completed. Prior to his death, Rodney had signed with TASS Recordings and was working with local producer Chucky Thompson. The title song, “Busting Out”, was released posthumously as a single under the name of “Rappin Rodney”.

Stinky Dink

Fat Rodney took DC rap to another level, but a young rapper named Stinky Dink was about to emerge and take the game even further. Stinky Dink began rapping regularly on stage with Rare Essence and quickly built a massive following.

Stinky Dink: I started writing in 1983 or 1984. But you know rap wasn't a real popular thing in DC, so I kept it to myself. What made me go forward with it was I had an English teacher at HD Woodson Senior High School that let me perform in class. In fact, I did a rap that I later performed with Rare Essence. After the class, a lot of my classmates didn't believe I had wrote it myself. They were asking me what radio station I had heard the song. So, I'm thinking to myself, "That joint must have been the bomb". That feedback inspired me, so I kept writing.

When I stepped into the go-go I took it to a different level. I brought lyrics – a more lyrical style of rapping. Also after I started rapping, other rappers came out of the woodwork. Every band seemed like they had a rapper. I was 18 years old performing 4 or 5 nights a week with the hottest band in the city. I wasn't even old enough to get in the clubs. I wasn't even supposed to be in the night-clubs where we were playing. Then it got to the point where people would come to the R.E. (Rare Essence) shows just to battle me. They would have the advantage because they could sit at home a make up raps about me. I had to battle them freestyle - and I was still winning.

Stinky Dink then released a single called "One Track Mind" that grew into one of the biggest records to ever come out of DC. The song seamlessly blends Michael Jackson's "Human Nature" sample with Stinky Dink's incredible lyricism. "One Track Mind" was released in 1991. (Three years later, the rapper Nas released his breakout track "It Ain't Hard To Tell" which used the same sample)

Stinky Dink: It's a true song. April 10th 1990 I only had \$100 in my bank account. I was one man, I only had \$100 to my name and I said I was going to make it in the music business. That was my mentality. Lyrically, "One Track Mind" isn't even in the Top 100 of songs that I've written. But it is the realest song I've ever written. After I wrote it, I let my man C Muzik hear it and he said right away, "We have to record this one". He had the money and we went to the studio the next day.

A producer named DJD did the original track, he brought in the "Human Nature" sample. Then we took it out to Horizon studios and Paul Walker, CJ, and Milton gave the song a professional "studio" sound. In fact, Milton, who used to play drums for Chuck (Brown), did the drum "kick" on it. That was actually my first time being in a real recording studio. We put the single in the stores and it became a smash. Even to this day, DJ's still tell me "One Track Mind" will get the party started. If you go to any caberet this weekend you'll probably hear it. When I signed with Luke Records, I signed my publishing over to Luther Campbell for a \$10,000 advance. At the time, it seemed like a good move because Luke was really successful. He was moving a lot of units and doing a lot of touring. Luke eventually re-released it and is probably still collecting royalties from it. I know some dudes who were in the military and they said DJ's are still playing it in nightclubs over in Germany.

I call myself "The Best That Never Made It". The name Stinky Dink is synonymous with DC rap music. I can go to the go-go tonight and people will still ask me to get on the mic. They still want me to perform "Rickety Raw" and it's 20 years later. I was out before Biggie and Pac, I was out before Jay-Z.

The turning point in my career was when I got locked up. In 1991, I signed with Luke Records. Things were going well, and I was traveling to other cities doing shows. But between shows I was still in the streets, and I had caught a drug charge: possession with intent to distribute. It's my first charge, so I'm thinking I'm going to get probation. I met with my lawyer and I brought all the awards I had won rapping, and I brought copies of my contract with Luke.

November 30, 1991, I did the biggest show of my life, it was at the Capital Centre with the Geto Boys, Leaders of the New School with Busta Rhymes, EPMD, Chubb Rock - all of the big artists at that

time. December 5th I had to go to court for the charge. I had just met a female at the Capital Centre show and I had planned to hang out with her after my hearing. They locked me up that day and I never heard from her again in my life.

I went to Lorton to do my time and when I got down there they already knew I was coming. It was like, “Stinky Dink is on the yard”. It was some hating on me because I had some street fame, but it was mostly love. I never had any problems down there.

The influence that rappers like Fat Rodney, DC Scorpio, Stinky Dink, Tony Blunt and P.O.P. (Prince of Poetry) had on DC was enormous. Go-go was still king but DC was beginning to develop a parallel hip-hop community. Young musicians began to see hip-hop as an viable alternative to go-go. The next generation realized that they could cut a rap album and get it played on the radio, they could make a rap video and get it played on BET. The success of the go-go rappers gave the next generation the gift of hope.

(#17) The Black Indian Saga

His name is Joshua Paul (a.k.a. Black Indian), and he is one of the most remarkable rappers to ever emerge from DC. He came from the streets of Southeast to live out every MC's hip-hop fantasy of hit records, critical acclaim, worldwide tours, a major label record deal, and most importantly: unprecedented street credibility.

Black Indian got initiated into hip-hop by hooking up with several local crews, beginning with Infinite Loop, an influential collective of DC rappers and hip-hop producers. He eventually got involved with the Earthbound clique. "Earthbound was basically a crew of DJ's, b-boys, and taggers (graffiti writers). I was hanging out with this guy named Mouse from Maryland Avenue who was a great graffiti artist," says Black Indian. From there he started attending the famous Freestyle Union sessions at 8 Rock in Southeast. "These events were organized by Toni Blackman," he recalls, "We would have ciphers. Somebody would DJ or bring their beats and we would have freestyle sessions all night."

The Freestyle Union allowed Black Indian to find his voice. "I could always rap, and the Freestyle Union sharpened my skills even further," he says. "At the time I had dyslexia but it wasn't diagnosed yet. I didn't understand why I could verbally express myself so well but I was having so much trouble in school."

After graduating from Fletcher Johnson Jr. High School, Black Indian attended the Duke Ellington High School for the Arts, it was there where he got slightly off-track.

“I was still living in the hood and I would carry my gun with me for protection,” he explains, “One day at school somebody saw me with it and turned me in.” Black Indian was immediately expelled and sent to City Lights, an alternative school for behavioral management. “I have to give Toni Blackman a lot of credit. She could have turned her back on me after the gun charge but she didn’t. She made sure I kept coming to the Freestyle Union sessions.”

It was also through the Freestyle Union that Black Indian got involved with Kokayi, Sub Z, and the Opus Akoben family. When Steve Coleman, the saxophonist and one of the leaders of Opus Akoben, was looking for another rapper, Black Indian was hired to accompany them for their European tour.

“They saw I had skills and they arranged for me to go to Europe with them. At the time I was only 15, so Ezra Greer the bass player, had to call my mother and get her permission for me to go.”

The tour was a great success and Opus Akoben went on to release the highly regarded album *Art of War* on the BMG France label. After returning from Europe, Black Indian began working with local producers HL and Aquaman and did shows with a group of Infinite Loop rappers called 13 Degrees to the East comprised of Los, Theory, Big Joe, D-Man and Little Black). Black Indian decided to join forces with them and together they formed the super-group Live Society. It was while performing with Live Society that the owners of Planet Chocolate City, a local clothing store, heard him rhyiming and introduced him to Michael Brewington (also known as Mike Nice), a local music promoter and manager.

“After Mike Nice heard me freestyle he immediately wanted to sign me,” Black Indian remembers “He had the money to buy a lot

of equipment. We were buying ASR's, MPC's, \$2,000 microphones. All of the stuff was in Mike's basement where we had a studio. We recorded and released the single "Get 'Em Psyched" on the local label Liaison. Then we shot the video for the song right in the hood on 8th and H Streets."

Meanwhile, Black Indian was still touring with Opus Akoben. By his estimation, he has traveled to Europe on at least 9 different occasions with Opus Akoben and Steve Coleman. They finally parted ways on amicable terms when Black Indian's debut single "Get Em Psyched" turned out to be an amazing success. The video for "Get 'Em Psyched" hit the Music Video Box, a viewer request music video channel at the same time Nelly dropped "Country Grammar". Black Indian remembers this time vividly.

"The first week Nelly's video was number one, and mine was number two. The rest of the summer I was number one, and Nelly was number two. I had just signed with Mike Nice's label Maximum Capacity. When my video started blowing up it attracted a lot of attention from the major (record) labels. MCA-Universal Records called Mike Nice and offered us a deal. We had just recorded a second single, "Makin Cash Money", produced by (and featuring) Biz Markie. The Biz Markie connection got us spins on the New York radio stations, and that record started blowing up too."

Black Indian released the *Get Em Psyched* album and he was on top of the hip-hop world. It seemed like all of his hard work in the studio and on tour was finally going to pay off. Then suddenly, everything fell apart - the relationship with his label went sour. MCA-Universal Records had advanced Maximum Capacity a large amount of money in order to promote the album. Mysteriously, much of the money had vanished.

"The record company wanted to know where all of the commercials were? Who was doing the promotions?" Black Indian

remembers. When MCA-Universal requested an accurate accounting of what happened to the money, they were rebuffed.

Then, when it seemed things couldn't get any worse, another scandal materialized when somebody at Maximum Capacity started running a so-called "Soundscan Scheme".

"Although I was moving a lot of units, I may not have been selling as much as I thought." Black Indian recalls. "They were paying record stores to give my album credit when a customer purchased an album by another artist. If you went into the store and purchased an Outkast or Babyface CD they might scan my CD instead. The scheme resulted in my numbers being artificially inflated. These were the type of tactics that major record labels do all of the time. For example, If a record sells 500,000 copies, they will buy the other 500,000 themselves, then say they have a platinum selling artist. The problem at Maximum Capacity was they got caught."

In spite of his label uncertainty, Black Indian kept touring in support of his album. He would dominate live shows with his lyrical prowess and stage presence.

"I did shows with Kurupt, Master P, Snoop and E-40. I went to the Bayou Classic in New Orleans and sold out the House of Blues two years in a row. I had gained a following in New Orleans. If you look at the cover of my album, I'm wearing my hair in dreadlocks and I'm smoking a blunt. You don't have to be a genius to figure out where Lil' Wayne got his style from. If you look at the Cash Money videos during that time, Baby, Juvy and Wayne wasn't even doing it like that."

Black Indian was in Los Angeles doing a show with Mos Def and the Black Eyed Peas when he met a young lady who owned a tattoo parlor in Las Vegas and the two clicked right away. He relocated to Las Vegas and the couple soon became engaged. Black

Indian hooked up with some studios in Vegas and he started recording again.

“I flew in some producers from DC to help with my album. OC did several songs, G-Camp did a couple of joints and KO produced the title track “The Future.” Black Indian continues, “I was also smoking a lot of weed in Vegas. I would smoke weed almost all day.”

Hip-hop paid Black Indian’s bills, and between his studio work and his live shows, he was doing well financially. Black Indian was also receiving money from the work he did with Opus Akoben.

“The records I did with Opus were released in Europe and I was still receiving royalty payments,” he remembers, “I have to thank Kokayi and Sub Z for that. I was so young at the time it would have been easy for them to ‘get over’ on me. They made sure my paperwork was straight and I got all of my publishing credits.”

Although money was never a problem for Black Indian, his lifestyle eventually began to take it’s toll on him - both mentally and physically – and his drug usage was pushing him closer to the edge.

“The way I was smoking weed was crazy. At one point I started tripping. I went into the closet and I refused to come out. I was even smoking weed in the closet! We lived in Sahara Gates, which was a very exclusive community. My bedroom window faced the mountains. When I finally came out of the closet, the sun was rising over the mountains and it hit me directly in my eyes. I heard a voice saying, ‘Leave and never come back.’” Black Indian packed up and left Las Vegas that same day. He returned to DC a changed man.

“After I ‘saw the light’, I stopped smoking,” he says, “I just lost my desire to smoke weed. I cut my dreads off. I started having more respect for myself and for my life.” Coincidentally, Black Indian’s mother is Anita O’Brien, the pastor of Light Works Ministry, a church in Southeast DC.

“I started to read the Bible every day. Because of my dyslexia reading was usually difficult for me, but I wasn’t having any problems reading the scriptures. When my mother saw that I was serious about my faith, she asked me if I wanted to go to ministry school. I studied hard and soon I became a minister. I also got married.”

Black Indian had become a new man, but hip-hop was still in his blood. He got a call from a friend who was living in Japan. A company there named Futureshock was interested in Black Indian’s music and wanted to sign him.

“The company had heard my last album *The Future*,” he says, “In particular, they liked the song “Dip”, produced by Kokayi. That song was about smoking ‘dippers’ (marijuana joints dipped in PCP) and was recorded before I had become saved. I went over there (Japan) and talked to everyone and everything was cool. They started rolling up blunts. When I told them I didn’t use drugs any more they were a little disappointed. We went into the studio and laid some tracks down. After the studio session we went out to the club for a couple of hours. As we were leaving the club, I noticed we had 5 or 6 beautiful women with us. They asked me which girl I wanted - I had the first pick. I explained to them that I was married and dedicated to my wife now. They were extremely disappointed. They were expecting to see the Black Indian from the *Get Em’ Psyched* days.”

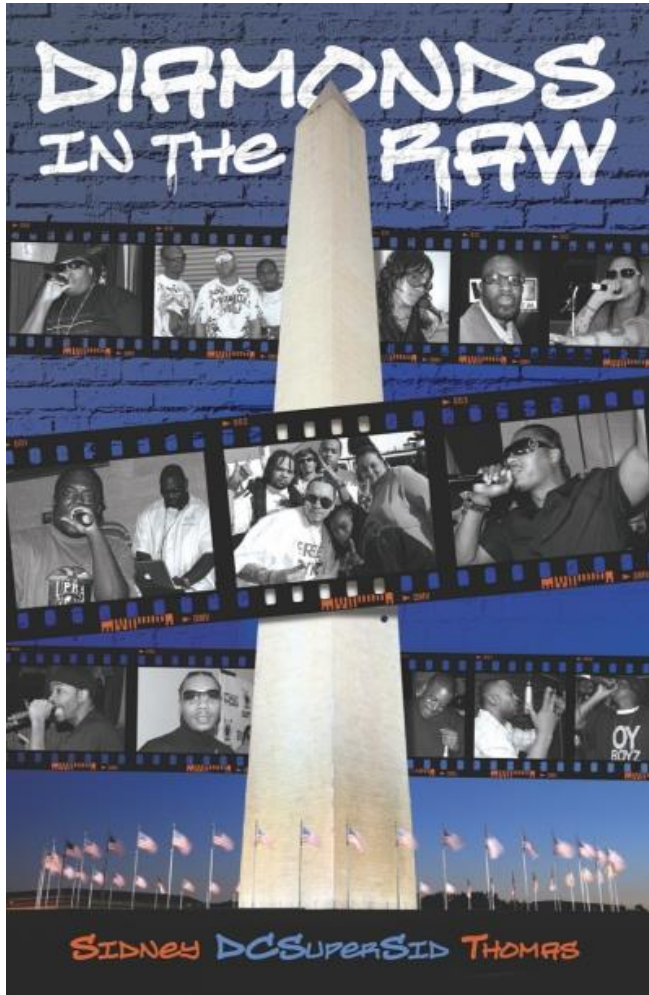
Black Indian came back to DC and got a job with a non-profit organization called 4 C’s. He serves as a court liaison, advising and mentoring juvenile delinquents and youth offenders. His job is to mentor and advise the kids who enter the juvenile justice system. He works with the courts and probation officers to get troubled youths back on their feet, and can sometimes even get their juveniles’ sentences reduced on his testimony to their potential and character alone. After they’re released, he helps his juvenile “clients” get jobs and get back in school.

“I’m dealing with kids every day who are looking at 10 to 20 years,” he says mournfully, “There’s a great deal of hypocrisy in the hip-hop industry. A lot of the rappers who love to talk about thugging and gang life are really going home to houses in gated communities. These kids that I’m working with now actually live in the hood.” Black Indian continues speaking, but with a little more conviction, “The trick is to make some serious hip-hop music about Christianity. When I was younger, I thought Jesus was corny. I got into the 5% Nation because that’s what all of the rappers were talking about. If we can make Jesus ‘cool’, we can change the world. I want to be the first rapper to blow up with a positive message.”

Black Indian is not just “talking the talk” when it comes to delivering a positive message – he is also “walking the walk”. In 2006, Black Indian released the gospel rap album *Proverbs 1-31*, featuring songs like “He’s Coming Back”, “I Will Pray for You”, and “When We All Get to Heaven”.

“I named the album *Proverbs 1-31* because that’s my favorite part of the Bible,” he says, “Proverbs gives you lessons on how to live and I want people to have that kind of wisdom. I also want people to hear the message with some real hip-hop. The music on my CD is the real deal. Listen to the CD - you’ll hear gritty snares and banging hi-hats; and my next album will be even better. This is just the beginning!”

After enduring the trials of thug life and surviving the tribulations of the music industry, Black Indian has emerged unscathed. He has lived many lives and is still only 31 years old. With his wealth of experiences and a solid spiritual foundation to support him, Black Indian is truly a man on a mission.



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