

4:45pm. "Hello, is Tone Loc there?"

"Yeah, but I'm eating my breakfast. Can you call back?"

5:10pm. "Hello, is Tone Loc there?"

"Yeah but he's in the shower or something, his food didn't agree with him—can you call back in 20 minutes?"

Yep, that's the joy of being a media professional. It's a nice sunny afternoon and I'm trying to call Tone Loc, who is playing some parties in Sydney, then he's coming here to do a couple of gigs and a dance party. Only Tone's tired and I'm tired, trying to recover from a Dance Party the previous night. What is it with these things, why do they seem to be taking over the nightlife—and do they have any importance? Well, let's talk with Tone first.

Tone Loc is the latest in a long line of fairly illustrious acts to grace the Australian party scene. These one-nighters have brought everyone from the likes of Transvision Vamp and Boy George through to Inner City and the Jungle Brothers down this way lately and now Mr Loc, who has fortunately been lured over the Tasman.

5:35pm. "Hello, is Tone Loc there?"

"Yeah, this is him. How ya doin'?"

A hell of a lot better now. So tell me about yourself Tone, how did you get started?

"A lucky break, that's all. Somebody called me and asked me if I wanted to do a record 'cause of the way my voice is and I said yeah and the rest is history. I've been rapping professionally for about two and a half years now, and I started rapping about nine years ago."

The LA rap scene has really come of age. It now seems like almost every hot new rapper has some West Coast connection.

"The LA rap scene is the number one rap scene in the United States.

All the Californian rappers are high up in the charts and the East Coast rappers have fallen back. We bring something brand new to the rap game. Everyone knows it comes from the East Coast, but people are realising that LA is number one now."

Well, West Coast rap is fairly different sounding—you've created a new sound really.

"Well, I like to think so. I've done it kind of my own way. I went out of my way to do something different, sort of mainstream, so more people can identify with it. I did my own record."

The album has a real funky feel to it.

"Well, you know, I like the funky stuff myself. I mean, take the title of the album *Loc-ed After Dark*. That's my style of rap. Slow, funky, night-time rap."

How about the Dust Brothers—the tracks they did on *Loc-ed* are great, 'Cutting Rhythms' and stuff, and now they've really become the producers of the moment, working with Mellow Man Ace and the Beastie Boys.

"Yeah, the Dust Brothers did some tracks on my album and Matt Dike is responsible for most of my music. I just let him know what type of song I want to go for and we always come up with something suitable for my style. So with that in mind, we work pretty well together and we'll always be comin' out with some good records. As far as working with the Dust Brothers goes, they're good guys and they're talented, so it's pretty pleasurable."

Matt Dike and Mike Ross also run your record label Delicious Vinyl which is fast becoming a West Coast Def Jam with all these hot young acts.

"Yeah, Delicious Vinyl is making the major hip-hop music in the States now, with guys like myself, Def Jef, Body & Soul and Young also. We're gonna make a major mark on hip-hop."

Well you've definitely made a mark with 'Wild Thing'—it was the first rap single to go to No. 1 on the pop charts. A total crossover success

Ramalamadingdong, Bigger Than King Kong

Tone Loc, Rap, Dance Parties and the Meaning of Life



story.

"Yeah, well I guess it had guitars on it that people could say 'Oh, I've heard them somewhere.' But I think it comes back to it being funky. It had a

good beat, you could dance to it."

On the downside of this mega-stardom, you've been branded a sellout by some elements of the rap community. Despite

Loc-ed being a good hip-hop album, the success of 'Wild Thing' came in for some criticism.

"Yeah, there's been a lot of criticism coming my way, 'cause a lot

of people feel that true hip-hop is one thing and because 'Wild Thing' hit the pop charts as well as the black charts, they feel it's not. But regardless of what they say, what I write is all rap because I'm a rapper. Basically, their records haven't got it and they see me with all this money on top of it all. But I think that down deep, any of these guys would cut their own balls off to reach the kind of people I reach with my music."

You also pulled out of playing England recently. Why was that?

"I was real tired at that time and I just wasn't in a mood to fly over there. I had just come out of a three month tour and I was tired—I don't even like England that much anyway."

Yeah, I don't blame you—the weather's much better in LA anyhow. Your show looks pretty physical, there's a lot of leaping around and dancing. That's something a lot of rap acts, people like MC Hammer seem to be aware of—a better live presentation.

"Definitely. People want to see a show. They've been standing in line for an hour and they want to see some dancing, they want to be involved in some crowd participation. They want a good show and guys like Hammer and myself are doing just that. Adding some spice and some life."

And on that note, Tone Loc vanishes to do a soundcheck. For such is the life of a star and Tone Loc is most definitely a star. He's produced one of last year's most recognisable and universal pop hits. In one of his own videos, Tone parodies himself in 20 years time, strutting his stuff Vegas style. Yet somehow I get the feeling that in 20 years, we will be seeing lousy showbands tearing into 'Wild Thing' with the same abandon that we see lousy showbands tearing into 'La Bamba' or 'Louie Louie' nowadays—while Tone, who undoubtedly doesn't have too much trouble paying the rent, will probably own LA.

So how does one get oneself into

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