

# 3

# the hard way



It is just after twelve on a very hot Wednesday when I arrive at the headquarters of Three the Hard Way. The results of this week's chart returns will be released early this afternoon and fingers are tightly crossed waiting for the phone to ring. The boys have already scored the top slot twice in a row with their debut single 'Hip Hop Holiday.' But don't think they can give up their day jobs just yet, as any honest rap crew will tell you, it's not about a salary. Lead rapper Chris Maiia (Mighty Boy C) is absent with leave, working hard for the money. In the house are Lance Manuel (DJ Damage), Mike Patton (Mike Mix) and their manager Lucky (Luciano) Lopesi. As we sit down, my opening question is horribly predictable. How does it feel?

**Mike:** "It was more of a surprise than anything else . . . a real shock."

**Lucky:** "I freaked out when marketing the single with Festival Records because of the way the New Zealand public buys NZ hip hop. I thought there was still this mood that says if it's not from the States then it's no good. We were surprised that the public was buying, and even when it first debuted at number 12 we were real happy."

**Mike:** "I think it's the younger audience that is buying the record because they haven't got that attitude. If it sounds good to them they will buy it no matter where it comes from."

And there is definitely no arguing about whether Three the Hard Way sound good. It's a combination of things: the heavy booming beats, the original fast-scratch style and the deep

vocal delivery and perfect timing of Mighty Boy C. Not to mention the fact there is something particularly likeable about a band who fly in the face of musical fashions and proudly wear the old school tie.

**Mike:** "One thing you have to give Chris respect for is he has kept the style that he had when he first started rapping."

**Lance:** "He has taken a lot of slack for it, people say he's an old school rapper and tell him to rap like the new guys but Chris isn't trying to sound like anyone else."

**Lucky:** "What Chris would say is stay true to your game, stay true to yourself."

You could be mistaken for thinking Three the Hard Way are the proverbial overnight sensations, but that's far from the truth. They have, in one form or another, been here for years, paid their dues and been one step ahead of the pack.

**Lance:** "We've always been into the hip hop area of things. Mike used to do dances with Voodoo Syndicate, Chris and I were in Chain Gang and years ago we were in a group called BB3."

**Mike:** "When we first started out as Three the Hard Way we had a real George Clinton/Parliament feel to our music, but it seemed to us that not many people were into that kind of sound. Now that American rappers, who have always been into that feel, are being played on mainstream NZ radio it's starting to get recognised here. And we do listen to that gangsta music, the lyrics might not relate to us but there is good rapping and

good music." All three are sitting pretty at the top of the pile, rather than cashing in on their success Three the Hard Way are content to drip feed themselves to the nation. Their second single, a cover of Jimmy Cliff's 'Many Rivers To Cross' is due to hit the airwaves in April and a long-player will be released on Deepgrooves mid-May. On the live front they also choose to keep a low profile but for a much different reason.

**Lance:** "Chris and I both have young sons and we don't like to part from our family so much. Even when you're performing you think about your kid. The family comes first for us."

**Lucky:** "I've got two kids also and that was one of the main reasons why we kept the last tour nice and short cause we wanted to get home to our families. Three the Hard Way aren't into two or three week tours. We like mini-tours!"

Soon after Lucky departs, heading to his day job. Mike plays some very early Hard Way material and the talk shifts to topics much more light-hearted. But still on everyone's mind is that phone call.

**Lance:** "We hate Wednesdays now. It's good being number one but how long is it going to last? I'm just trying to think of something to say in case it's not number one."

He needn't have worried. Just after one o'clock the call comes through from Festival Records. 'Hip Hop Holiday' remains at the top for a third week.

**JOHN RUSSELL**

## HUNTERS & COLLECTORS

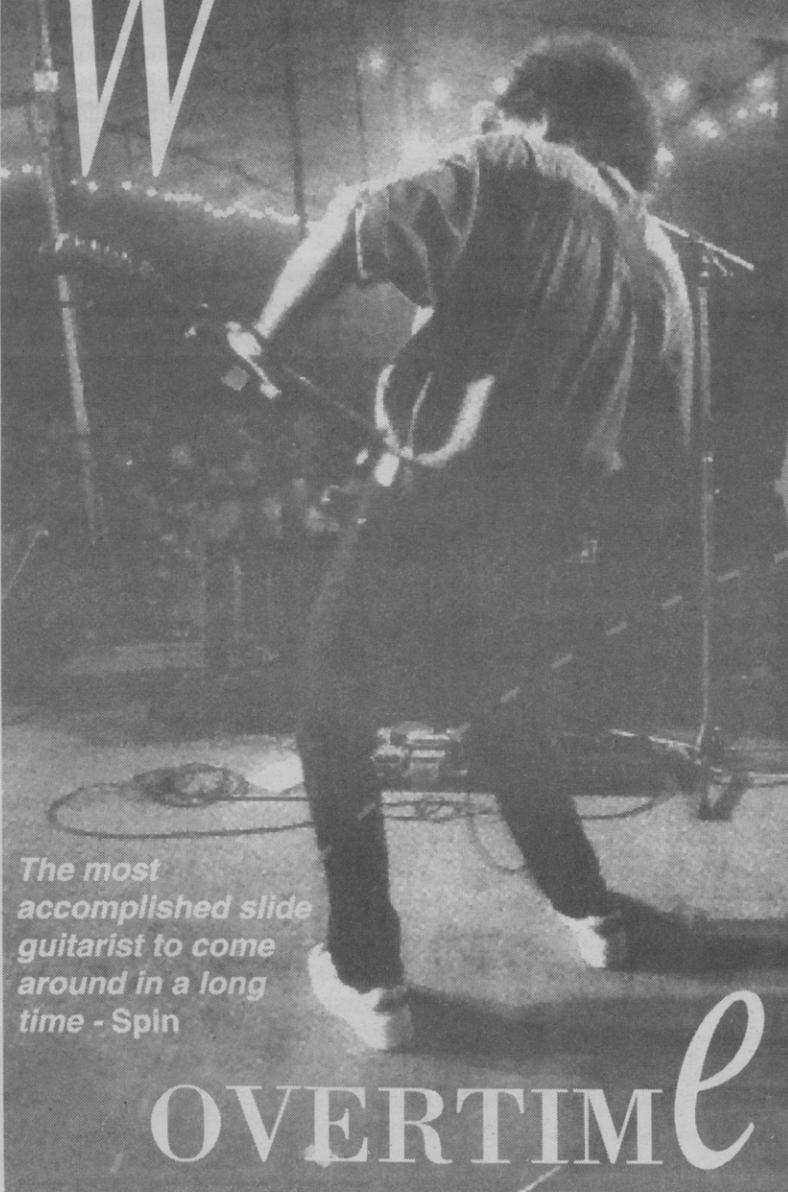


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