

QUEEN OF RAP

Women in rap are a rare breed, most of those making a play in this intensely male field are usually in the hard and sexy vein, lots of cleavage and cycling shorts but little dignity. This is where Queen Latifah is truly different. She does not only produce fine, funky rap music, but she does it without compromising any of her principles. In fact, she uses the rap medium and the notoriety it's brought her to further her them.

started helping, and we did a demo that was played for Tommy Boy. They accepted it and we were away. As far as the Native Tongues posse goes, they were kind of like the first people I met when I got into this business. De La Soul are labelmates of mine, we met when I got signed and I did shows with the Jungle Brothers when I first started, so we all just wound up being good friends."

Does the whole 'independent female rapper' thing ever raise any



Queen Latifah

Aside from rapping, touring and even producing she manages to involve herself in acting, fundraising and even speaking at American Universities. In among all this, Latifah managed to find time to talk with us about life in general and rap in particular, right from the beginning.

"I just started rapping in High School and a friend of mine who was a DJ into doing production

eyebrows among rap's mainstream? "Oh no, not at all, not over here anyway. It was a long time coming and people were ready for it. I think guys as well as girls were into it and, as far as other rappers go, we're all pretty good friends really, so it's cool."

What about the reggae thing? It seems pretty strong in New York as most rap from there has a lot of

reggae feel to it.

"We've got quite a big regga thing going on round here, but it's always been around so it's nothing new. There's been a few reggae artists who broke big and had major records like Shabba Ranks and Maxi Priest. With that more hardcore reggae thing happening, the ragamuffin stuff like Shabba, it's opening the field up more so I'm happy."

New York seems to have a much funkier feel to its music, stuff like funk and jazz and reggae seem more prominent in East Coast rap, whereas the West Coast stuff seems to rely on harder raps and lots of punchy samples.

"I think we have a mixture of all of that, we've got some of the hardest groups like Leaders Of The New School who are like main source, they like those dirty old samples and they put a hard beat to it, and then you've got that funky stuff like Tribe Called Quest and you've got real clean stuff like Heavy D, you've got a whole realm of different stuff happening."

What about a live scene? I remember there was a lot of hassles with rap shows and gang violence not so long ago.

"We haven't had any gang violence cause we haven't got any gangs in New York, that's an LA sort of thing. There aren't that many clubs open in New York now though, we had the violence I guess, just not the gangs! We got a few places happening every week or so that people go to, so there's still a cool scene, but it's not as live as it used to be."

What's coming up for you now that *Nature Of A Sista* is out?

"For me, I just hope to continue making music. Rap is going up and up, it's going to sell a lot more still, and it's going to continue to be strong and positive. I'm happy about that cause that's the vibe I'm on, good vibes."

KIRK GEE

S.M.A.K. Is Good For You

There's a bit of a new brand of bands recording at Auckland's Frisbee studios, identifiable by the fact that they're not on Flying Nun, they're not into My Bloody Valentine or the Swans, nor are they posing as long-haired American "grunge" merchants, they're... well, it's hard to say

been kicking around since last July. Bob and Andrew who run Frisbee heard them rehearsing and said "Hey, we wanna record you". Bob and Andrew have pretty good taste in music all round and good ideas to get with it. They want to release a string of 7-inch vinyl singles from some of their favourite bands



what they are, but who they are is bands like the Psycho Daizies, Gestalt and S.M.A.K. who have just released a cassette album called *We're Glad We're Bad*.

S.M.A.K. (L-R top) Bad Al, Marty Sauce. At bottom Dan Straight and Kenman.

It's wild and crazy guitar rock such as hasn't been made in this town for longer than I care to remember. At last, a bunch of guys who wanna make rock 'n' roll like it should be — loud and stooped, down and dirty, raw and raucous!!

S.M.A.K. are a bunch of young guys in their early 20s who have

(including the Axemen, Axel-Grinders, Psycho-Daizies and Shaft) and then compile them all onto a CD for overseas release and call it *Heinous Hits Vol. One*. But meanwhile, back to S.M.A.K. How they got together and the way they operate is similar to one of those degenerate South Island bands like the Scuzzbuckets, rather than a CV-toting, paisley shirt 'n' pony tail Auckland Arts Council band.

Al met Marty at a party. "How fast can you play bass?" said Marty. "I don't know, I've only been playing for a month," says Al. "Have you got a car?" says Marty. "Yep," says Al. "Do you drink beer?" says Marty. "Yep," says Al.

"Practise is on Thursday," says Marty. Because their attitude is kind of irreverent, some folks at BFM have said they're not 'serious' enough for airplay which I guess means people don't start nodding off as soon as

they strike a chord, or it could mean that Marty Sauce cites Ted Nugent's 'Wang Dang Sweet Poontang' as a guitar influence instead of the Pixies or fuckin' Baiter Space.

"It's sort of like an uncool thing to like to play basic rock 'n' roll that's just totally bad," says Marty

So bad it's great! Actually, *We're Glad We're Bad* is a beautiful recording, where feedback is installed like Batts in the attic keeping everything warm and songs kind of explode like rotten vegetables when Marty starts straddlin' a colossal guitar solo. Which is another aspect of S.M.A.K.

that some misguided 'modern' souls think is a no-no — they're missing out on so much!! It's just that somewhere in a song there comes a point where the guitar's just gotta break free and anyway they're not entirely solos because they're embedded in all this other guitar from Al and bass from co-songwriter Dan Straight and samples from Bruce Hubbard's sampler and feedback and real good singing and snatches of New York Dolls tracks in the background and dumb conversations recorded between tracks. My two favourite tracks are 'Aunt Sally', and 'Down By The River', inspired by the movie *River's Edge* which Marty saw twice when he was 16. Which just goes to show that S.M.A.K. have a serious, sensitive side too.

See them at the Powerstation with Room 101 and Dead Flowers on 14 February.

DONNA YUZWALK

FUTURE RECORDINGS

PUSH PUSH, Trillion Shades of Happy.
THESE WILDING WAYS, Paul.
JESUS & MARY CHAIN, Honey's Dead.
GEORGE MICHAEL E.P.T. (Extended Play Thing).
SOUP DRAGONS, Hotwired.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, Human Touch, Lucky Town (two albums).
D.A.D., Riskin' It All.
MELISSA ETHERIDGE, Never Enough.
10cc, Meanwhile...
CHURCH, Priest=Aura.
RIDE, Going Blank Again.

EMF, Unexplained (EP).
JAMES, Seven.
ADRIAN BELEW, Inner Revolution.
YNGWIE MALMSTEEN, Fire & Ice.
SUGARCUBES, Stick Around For Joy.
PUBLIC IMAGE LTD, That What Is Not.

IAN McCULLOCH, Mysterio.
TEARS FOR FEARS, Tears Roll Down (The Hits 1981-92).
RECOIL, (DM's Alan Wilder) Bloodline.
FIREHOSE, Totem Pole (5 covers).
A.R.KANE, Americana.
GARY MOORE, After Hours.
LIGHTNING SEEDS, Sense.

