

## THE VISIONAIRES



I to r: KeyKool, LMNO, Zen, DJ Rhettmaticc, 2Mex

2Mex, Keykool, Dannu, Lord Zen, LMNO and DJ Rhettmaticc always knew of each other as independent shapers of the Los Angeles underground. Each shares the limelight on various projects and crew associations like OMD, Writer Block and Beat Junkies. They are a versatile group. I imagine the six break off and reassemble like a something in Japanese anime—Dannu and Lord Zen (Writer's Block); KeyKool & Rhettmaticc; 2Mex and Xololanxingo (OMD, a.k.a. Of Mexican Decent); and finally LMNO, who since 1991 has released a solid string of projects through three record companies. Ultimately, they are as powerful as individuals as they are in group form.

In 1995 KeyKool and Rhettmaticc released their album *The Kozmonauts*, which featured some of whom were to reconnect to become *The Visionaries*. Their first release together, "Visionaries Stop Actin Scary," finalized their formula. They now seem to be on the level where eye communication—mere glances—speak volumes. There is a certain air of unselfishness within the crew and it's the understanding of each other that makes them a unique and talented family, through various team-ups or standing alone as individuals. That may seem like a formula that you've witnessed before—and I can hear you dismissing their connection—but the *Visionaries* truly have an appeal adorned by a glow that many legends own. You could treat them like underdogs, but if you give them a minute they'll steal your hearts.

**WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND AN ARTIST LIKE EMINEM?** **RHETT** We've got roots. Not that Eminem doesn't, I mean, he's done his thing in the underground battle circuit, but basically he blew up after hookin' up with Dre. We've got two established albums and numerous singles as solos. Weather people do or don't like our stuff, that's cool—we'd still be doing what matters to us. If I had a regular 9 to 5 I'd still be buying records, making music, and checking out shows 'cause this is what makes me happy.

**EVER FELT YOU'VE HAD A PERFECT SHOW?** **RHETT** We're harsh critics, especially of our own work. Even if people like them, we'll critique our shows. **LMNO** I'll let you know when a perfect show happens but (Rhett) is always like "Hey it's a seven!" **KEY** Yeah, but it seems like the ones where there are adverse situations—like when security locked Zen and LMNO out of a show—we pull together like a fist.

**THE VISIONARIES IS FAMILY NOW?** **KEY** It is now. **2MEX** We all knew each other in different ways. **LMNO** We all stand together as one but we all bring different attributes—but we all know our parts. **KEY** Like a b-ball team, you can't have 5 centers

**LMNO, YOU EXPRESS YOUR FAITH IN YOUR HIP HOP. DO YOU HOPE TO OPEN CLOSED EYES?** **LMNO** I don't think it's "LMNO talks about God"—that would be vanity. I'm irrelevant to the equation. LMNO is "Leave My Name Out." I rap about Christianity because that's what saved me. No matter if this industry thrives off "Sex, Drugs, and Rock & Roll," I think that it needs more

*continued on next page*

### CLASSIC MATERIAL VOLUME ONE THE WORLD FAMOUS BEAT JUNKIES BEAT JUNKIE SOUND



The Beat Junkies are only one of a handful of crews that can say they've actually come out with material that others would agree to be considered "classic."

How do you get a Beat Junkies sound? Combine one part battle DJ scratching skills, one part drummer-like beat-juggling, one part club-style blending and mixing, and a double shot of visual turntable attitude. There you go—instant audible intoxication. The 19 tracks are pulled from various solo projects, mixtapes, and compilations including *The Unbound Project*, and *Soundbombing 2*. What ever the project, world-class turntablism and production can only point to timelessness. It's interesting that the oldest tracks (by Babu, Melo-D and D-Styles) are as groundbreakingly complex now as they were when they were released cassette-only back in 1995.

Beatjunkies.com

### IT'S THE L!! LEXICON SPY TECH RECORDS



You can hear the passion a person has for their music through their voice. Big Oak and Nick Fury have the lyrical style that gets them well beyond the levels

of the average MC, but it's the stares, kicks and samples of soon-to-be-super-producer DJ Cheapshot (of Styles of Beyond) that takes "It's The L!!" from a headphone hit to a club and college radio banger. The title cut, "It's The L," is already a regular on mixshows on both commercial and college radio. Cheapshot teams up with Thes One and Vin Scully on three of the 13 tracks while Styles Of Beyond comrades Ryu, and Takbir guest rhyme on a couple tracks. Cheapshot is not new-bootie to the microphone (check him out on his album *Space Invaders*) so it's no surprise he'd get his ups on the mic. His Lexicon influenced P-Diddy style on "Last Night My DJ Stole My Girl." It's actually dope.

Spytechrecords.com

# REQUIRED AUDIO

TEXT & PHOTOS JOEL MARRASIGAN

## THE VISIONAIRES (CONT)

of a spiritual base, whether it's Christ or Buddha. I've done things for churches, but I've come to realize that I'm talking to those that already know—"preaching to the choir"—I respect places of worship but I like talking to those that don't know.

**WHO IS STEALING L.A.'S STYLES?** **LMNO** They know who they are! **KEY** Stupid. **2MEX** The L.A. scene, because of Project Blowed—and for example, the DJ culture out of Cerritos, dancing culture out of Hollywood, the gangster culture out of South Central—all helped shape L.A. hip hop. But you gotta understand that kids are rapping at 15 now. You can't blame them. Unless they know the history they might not even know what happened five years ago. We're all sharing the same box of words, concepts and ideas. But you can definitely hear influences. Like for me, I grew up listening to the Cure and They Might Be Giants. Cats today might just listen to Power 106.

**DO YOU BATTLE?** **LMNO** It's more like "Why should I worry about battling you?" **KEY** We don't go around picking fights but if you wanna test... **RHETT** Don't get us wrong, we're B-Boys. If you need a battle, we'll battle. We'll finish it one way or another. **2MEX** There are MCs out there to just get their battle on. They'll walk up to you and say they like all your stuff, give you their props. Then the next thing you know they're in a cypher dissing you. We're more

into the music. We respect music. We wanna make bomb-ass records that will be around in 10 years.

**DO YOU REALIZE THAT YOU ARE SHAPERS OF THE FUTURE OF HIP HOP?** **ZEN** Yeah, that's why I'm doing this. I caught hip hop when it was in the streets. It had its place at that time—where they wanted to take this [bumping fists together] to where it's actual music, it's got ingenuity and an engine and it's running. **RHETT** This is a culture. We're another viewpoint for hip hop and we think that it's our job, as it was for the ones that came before us, to teach the history and the culture to the kids. **2MEX** We could have been working at the docks, or hustling, or whatever, but we're blessed that hip hop was the thing God gave us to help pass on.

*I sat and talked with them for a while at the Up Above Records office in Carson, Calif., and found out that these cats are not the "back-off-kid-n-gimme-five-feet" type. It's not often that you'll get the opportunity to meet some of this culture's history in the making. Shake a hand when you get a chance. They are truly a group of humble individuals that, in the tradition and scope of hip hop history, know and desire to pass along their personal knowledge of hip hop and its music.*

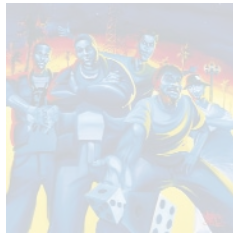
Beatjunkies.com

Concentrated-ent.com

## TEMPTATIONS

### FREESTYLE FELLOWSHIP

#### PROJECT BLOWED / NUGRUV



Do you feel sudden warmth? A feeling that hip hop will soon be saved? Me too. Los Angeles—home plate to the Fellowship (Aceyalone,

P.E.A.C.E, Self Jupiter and Micah 9)—got their first taste of these pioneers in 1991 with a cassette-only album: *To Whom It May Concern*. The album burned pathways in the underground, forcing others to reconsider their rap styles. Since then each have released solo projects, replaced open mic spot The Goodlife with hip hop workshop Project Blowed, and broke ground in '93 on follow-up album *Inner City Griots*. *Temptations*, the unbelievably addicting 15-track third release, show the crew's growth, maturity and intelligence—both lyrically and musically. Featured artists include RBX and freestyle heavyweight Supernatural. MCs run for your styles! As Acey said, "Who sold you your rap kit? You need a refund."

b-boykingdom.com

## BEATS, BREAKS, & BATTLES VOL. 1

### DJ RED ALERT

#### LOUD RECORDS



I have to come to the realization that some of you may be too young to remember some of the battle rhymes of the 80s. To me it's been a short twenty

years but you 20-year-olds were just newborns and didn't even hear the OG hip hop stuff til damn near the mid-90s. If your mommy and daddy hooked up earlier you would have been witness to the battles that created today's legends. This was the era where UTFO, the Roxannes, KRS ONE, MC Shan, Kool Moe Dee, Doug E. Fresh and MC Ricky D (Slick Rick), Salt N Pepa, Antoinette, and MC Lyte each put their targets in sight, then unleashed their dis. Back then KRS ONE and LL Cool J earned the most stripes—LL's still chalking them up.

Loudrecords.com

## SLUM VILLAGE @ BREAKSUITE



### VERTIGO, LOS ANGELES

Slum Village hit the stage at Breaksuite, a Friday weekly, in an impromptu performance rocking an excited and surprised crowd of 300. SV is promoting their upcoming follow-up album, *Trinity*, which should be hitting streets now.

www.EventsCompany.com

