

WE FEEL LIKE KINGS - I'LL TELL YOU STRAIGHT UP.

ting together for rhyme-writing sessions, ciphers, and battles. Originally known as the Bushwick Bomb Squad, the crew got too thick and people who didn't even rhyme started misusing the name, so a few core members bounced to form the Arsonists. "D-Stroy had met up with me through the Rocksteady crew. We was rhyming in a cipher, then he brought me down to meet up with the crew. That vibe was incredible. I'd never gotten a chance to vibe with brothers who saw hip-hop so exactly like I did." The group, now consisting of MCs Q-Unique, Freestyle, D-Stroy, Swel, Kinetic, Jise, Krash and DJ Spin-One started doing demos, and one of their songs ended up in the hands of Bobbito Garcia (of the Stretch Armstrong show in NY).

"[Bobbito] called me and was like 'Yo, what are you gonna do with "The Session"?' I I said we were thinking about pressing, and he was like 'You know what, don't even do that, let me press it.'

"Prior to that he'd given us the Butter Award (Bobbito's annual awards in *Rappages*)

cess lies in their stage show, fully choreographed with b-boy routines, matching t-shirts, and the whole nine. "We go all out. It's show business, part of it is entertaining. It's not just rhyming and rhyming and rhyming; it's visual. If people come to see you, give 'em something to look at, give 'em something for the money that they're paying."

But these days the cycle is definitely coming around again, with all four corners of hip-hop making strong comebacks, and the true school grassroots community coming out of the woodwork and working for change. Q and his crew are at the forefront of the new era. "We feel like kings - I'll tell you straight up. You feel like kings, like parents, like pioneers because you paved the way. I don't even want to sound like that, but we share a part in paving the way for the independent groups that're coming up now. It feels good, it's a big achievement to be remembered and to have fans that appreciate. It'd be great if this whole "underground" or "independent" movement, or whatever you want to call it, would just come together

"We got a few plans here and there," states Q, "but people will be seeing an album soon. A lot of people are waiting. What's fortunate about being independent is the fact that we have total creative control, so we're taking our time, we're not being forced on anybody. We want to give our fans, as well as the people just getting to know us, phat, phat material."

In an era where "rap album" means 2 or 3 radio songs, 2 or 3 dope tracks, and a whole gang of filler, the Arsonists are aware of the type of shit they have to drop for the true-school heads. "It's very rare that you can get an album that you can put on and not have to fast-forward over a cut. I could probably count on two hands the albums I can listen through. That's what we're trying to avoid. We want a person to enjoy every single cut - like *Criminal Minded* or Nas' first album. That's an achievement, if someone can feel your whole album."

The three key singles:
The Session/Halloween
(Fondle 'Em)
Venom/Seed (Searchlight)
Blaze/Gembo's Theme/Flashback
(Fondle 'Em)

