

BUCK 65: GAME TIGHT

words by fritz the cat || photos by photo booth

Buck 65. In my opinion, any attempt to find a more prolific, talented, creative, or criminally slept-on rap artist in Canada would be futile. Halifax producer/dj/mc formerly known as Stinkin' Rich has been b-boying since '82; putting pen to pad as of '85; cutting vinyl from '87; and hosting his respected CKDU radio show "The Treatment" since '89. To date, the man has released over 15 cassettes and 12"es with a variety of labels. 1999 saw him hook up with the infamous Anticon anticrew, and continue his critically acclaimed collaborative work with Sixtoo as the Sebutones. Solo, he's also prepared a multi-course musical meal consisting of numerous singles and albums, all to be released who-knows-when by who-knows-who. I rode my BMX bike down to a local baseball field to have a quick chat with Buck during batting practice.

f: So you're a baseball player.

B: I'm a different kind of player. When I was 16, I was scouted by the Yankees to play professionally. If I was asked to pick the greater love, hip-hop or baseball, it's probably still baseball; it's in my veins. Inevitably, baseball creeps its way into my music and I reference it a lot. On *Vertex* there's three songs that are kind of like a three-part story about a game back in '92.

f: A game that you were in?

B: Yup, that I was the hero of. I hit a homerun to win the game, which is the typical baseball fanatic's fantasy. I would have been completely hopeless in high school if it wasn't for sports. I was a nerd, but luckily I had a bit of athletic prowess.

f: What happen to the Yankees?

B: The guy who scouted me took a heart attack. I was just finishing high school and ended up getting a job and going to university. At the same time, music started blowing up for me a little bit. I still try to play baseball as much as I can and I refuse to let go of that dream even though I'm getting too old. Who knows? I could be like Garth Brooks and establish myself as a recording star and then, when I'm 40, get a crack at it.

f: Garth Brooks is playing baseball?

B: Last year, he went to spring training for one of the major league teams. He ended up not being good enough, but they gave him a shot. If someone gave me a shot, I'd be good enough.

f: So you want to pull a Master P and retire from rap?

B: I don't understand that. How could you ever get to the point where it's like 'Okay, I've done enough, I'm gonna stop now'?

f: Some people's reasons for doing it are different than what yours might be.

B: Yeah, I think that that's the case with a lot of people making records. This may be sacrilegious, but sometimes I think hip-hop means more to me than it does to Kool Herc or Grandmaster Flash. They're the founding fathers of it, but when I see what they're doing today, I think they're accepting and supportive of things in hip-hop that are really terrible. I was watching *Rap City*, and Kool Herc was in a video shucking and jiving for a wack song, and it disheartened me. The people who are revered as the gods of this music have forgotten about the foundation that they built. I don't understand how that happened, but it makes me wonder why I've hung on to all of the things that I stand for when no one else seems to care. When you trace the history back, the first step towards creating hip-hop was the use of breakbeats. Herc, Flash and Bambaataa would take two copies of a break, and continue that break, and that's the foundation of hip-hop. The fact that that practice has been completely abandoned, to me, is almost the equivalent of abandoning the word of Jesus as the foundation of Christianity. My albums have a foundation of breaks. I'll never use breaks that have already been rocked - originality is an important thing to me. I also have this Canadian pride thing, so almost all the breaks I use are Canadian. And, I will never do a song without employing the turntable aspect. I reserve a lot of respect for people who even just make that effort. Like Pete Rock, he was never a great emcee, but the fact that he's doing all those things just puts him on another level. If you had a hip-hop class system, your average emcee out there would be a serf, but someone like Pete Rock would be a Lord.

f: What would you be?

B: [laughs] I'd be a King. It sounds corny; I've never really thought about it before now, but that's what I would strive for.

f: You've got another element of hip-hop down. Ego. [laughing]

B: Yup, that's right [also laughing]. But seriously, I think striving to be a King, in that analogy, is what all of us should do. Basically, that just means achieving some sort of perfection in the art form. Why shouldn't we all strive for that? ☺

Buck 65's *Vertex* is out now on *Four Ways To Rock*. Check fourwaystorock.com and buck65.com for info.

