



mendoza music line

music

The joke is on us

New hip-hop label to join the likes of Polyvinyl, Parasol

SETH FEIN • CONTRIBUTING WRITER

So, as it is a New Year—2005—The Year of our Lord (I've always wanted to write that), I feel the overwhelming need to reiterate something that I have expressed in my columns before.

I, Seth Bryant Fein, am not, under any circumstances, in any way, shape or form, a "hip-hop head". Nosireebob! I am not!

I will, however, state for the record that my girlfriend most certainly is. In addition to simply loving the genre, she has taken classes on it, been active in UC Hip-Hop (founded by Harsh), and has turned me on to much more of it than I expected to like when we first got involved. And as a result, I feel as though I must eventually succumb and buy a pair of matching Cross Colors pants and hoodie, with the African colors all over it—one that states—"Ya Dig?"

Wait, that was in middle school.

But moving on, something in town has cropped up and for me, it is worth noting. Let me tell you how it went down, yo.

There we were, driving home from a movie some days after Christmas. My lady friend and I had not spent any "quality time" together in a while as we had been preoccupied by Jesus and presents over the last couple days. It really hadn't put us in the mood, what with all the heavy cheese and guilt, at least on my end. We took I-74 to the Lincoln exit and drove toward my house close to campus. We were laughing and having a good time when all of a sudden, out of nowhere, pops up this huge billboard on the corner of Lincoln and University. It states: HIP HOP ROTTS YOUR BRAIN.

Under it, a sponsorship company called: COALITION OF RESPONSIBLE ATTENTIVE PARENTS was easily seen by both of us.

Needless to say, we held up traffic for a second taking it all in. A car horn honked and we proceeded to my home without saying a word.

It reminded me of a time when I was a senior in high school. My best teacher, Mr. Stoia, had assigned us a number of terrific novels to read over the course of the semester. Turned out that one of our friend's mom had taken offense to more than a couple of the books we were reading like *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Beloved*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, among others. She started an organization and sent out letters to all the parents and took it up with the school board, where she was promptly laughed out of the place after she chose to use the Bible as justification for her tirade. We all got a chuckle, and even her daugh-

ter, who was not ... ahem ... a liberal, was embarrassed beyond belief.

These billboards left the same nasty taste in my mouth.

Sure, hip hop isn't always fun and games or arts and crafts time. Plenty of ghetto boys have rapped about killing and pimpin' and gangbanging' and bling bling bling to the shizzle mcDizzle around the corner from the fizzle. Right?

But that, my friends, does NOT encompass hip hop.

From what I understand, hip hop has no color or stake in any one community; it's a non-violent way to use words and music to express love and hate, life and death, thoughts about society and anything else that poetry can extend to. And that is what it really is. It's poetry, plain and simple. Hip hop doesn't rot your brain. Ignorance does. And most of the people who are "anti-hip hop" and find it offensive (and believe me, there are MANY) are guilty of being just that: IGNORANT!

We drove home and went to sleep. We were not in the mood to spend any "quality time" together. Whereas I once hated conservatives for screwing over impoverished people and racially profiling the world, I now hated them for another thing. They were messing with my private life.

But alas, the joke was on us.

Go back to who sponsored the billboard and look at what the acronym spells out.

The next day, the forums on Openingbands.com blew up with talk about the billboards. Turns out, they were paid for by a new hip-hop label in town to get our attention. Nice job, my friends, I wrote a column about you.

Up a Notch Records, about whom I don't know that much, about will be breaking into the C-U scene very soon on Jan. 28 at Nargile. You can be sure that I will be there, if only to meet the people that had the courage to pull off a stunt like this and then, show people that they are for real.

Maybe there is hope for me yet as a bonafide head.

Fo' shizzle.

Wait, that was 2003, yes?

Seth Fein is from Urbana. He wants to know: Is Snoop Dogg still considered cool? Tell him at seth-fein@readbuzz.com.