



The Coup

# PUCK DA FOLICE! a.k.a. PEACE, UNITY, LOVE AND HAVING FUN

What this thing of ours has turned into is something akin to demonic possession. Hip Hop actually started out as a way to help stop the violence and deal with the horrific social conditions in the ghettos of NYC. Back then in the early 70's, Afrika Bambaataa, considered the architect of the culture's guiding principals and philosophy, was a lieutenant in the city's most notorious street gang, the Black Spades. The landscape looked more like the doomsday movie *Escape From New York* than the real estate mecca it is today.

The city was facing bankruptcy. Services and resources were at an all time low. The dwindling manufacturing base had been leaving the area for years along with scores of other people. Landlords were burning their own buildings for the insurance money to avoid paying back property taxes. Crime was rampant. Narcotics were ever present like a specter hanging over the community. Young Black and Latino men filled up the overcrowding prison system like All-American kids do college. Shit was fucked up.

When Bambaataa started the Zulu Nation, kids from rival gangs were going to war over stupid shit, getting locked up, crippled or dead in the process. The women were tired of the bullshit cuz their men weren't around for them or to handle their responsibilities. Built off concepts like justice, racial harmony and the oneness of God, the Zulu Nation advocated fighting being replaced with

battling, either through mc'ing, dj'ing, b-boying or graf. Arguments would be better settled through artistic creativity rather than bloodshed. Let the best skills win.

During rap music's golden age of the late 80s-early 90s, artists like KRS-1, Public Enemy, Poor Righteous Teachers and Jungle Bros. personified this revolutionary aesthetic working towards a goal of positive elevation for the community. Something happened. A shift took place where that style of conscious rap, once considered the norm, became "alternative" and was replaced by the gangster boogie. Between them and the current raptivism of Common, Black Star and Lauryn Hill, there were only a few who held it down: Jeru, Digable Planets, Organized Konfusion, Tribe Called Quest, De La, and these cats, the Coup.

To overthrow the system is the mission impossible. The shitstem, Babylon, these representatives of tricknology; it's you vs. the Matrix and the Coup is like a poplocking Moses in the belly of the beast. Their music speaks to the ghetto working class on topics ranging from police brutality and black nationalism to corporate politics. Government corruption is a regular target and communism offered as a possible solution. The enemy is the ruling class and capitalism the kryptonite killing us all slowly. It's all about unifying hostile factions in the community against a common oppressor. The Coup come through like glue.



Story: Roosevelt Franklin (Voice of the Ghetto) / Photography: Ian Sami Hajar

Composed of DJ Pam the Funkstress and the supremely mellow emcee Boots, they've released 3 critically acclaimed albums over the past 8 years: *Kill Your Landlord*, *Genocide* and *Juice, Steal This Album*. Never properly pushed or promoted, they still have yet to get their props.

Boots, son of a lawyer for the Black Panther Party, is the primary producer, arranger and songwriter. He carries on the Bay Area tradition of the funk dating all the way back to Sly and the Family Stone. Lyrically, his tone and clever poeticals are reminiscent of a young Gil Scott-Heron, esp. in terms of subject matter and viewpoint. It's life as seen through the eyes of a ghetto intellectual. Well known in grass roots activist circles, he's helped organize local protests for years with crews like the Mau Mau Rhythm Collective, then the Young Comrades. Marching and working against racism, shitty schools and the unlawful execution of Mumia Abu Jamal inspires lyrical clarity.

On top of running her own catering business, DJ Pam is one of the more well known female artists in the game. She's soon set to release a compilation album featuring other top notch sistahs whose recognition's long overdue. A regular on the Bay Area club circuit, it's her influence that's taken the Coup's new album into the funkier regions, past the groove zone into the ass shaking dimension where the bumpasaurus play. Most of the new songs feel like something djs-

would want to flex at a function or include on mixtapes.

An obvious play on words, the title of the new album, *Party Music*, references politrix and what this thing of ours was about to begin with. The first single "5 Million Ways to Kill a CEO", with it's Parliament type funkestra, is rocking college radio. Their sons dead prez cameo on "Get Up". Especially touching are the joints he did for his daughter and wife respectively, "Wear Clean Draws" and "Heaven Tonite." Tracks like "Everythang" and "Ghetto Manifesto" continue to break it down on what the problem is and why we still got to suffer through this madness.

The album's tight. This isn't the regular case of 3 good songs then the rest just filler. It's also the time for a piece like this to drop. Their audience has coalesced over the past few years with the success of the Mos and Kwelis, etc. etc. The Coup have put their work in, now it's time to harvest. As you reap, so shall you sow. That's the wisdom in helping your brother. Roosevelt Franklin is the 13<sup>th</sup> disciple of Black Jesus Christ, that's how I know.