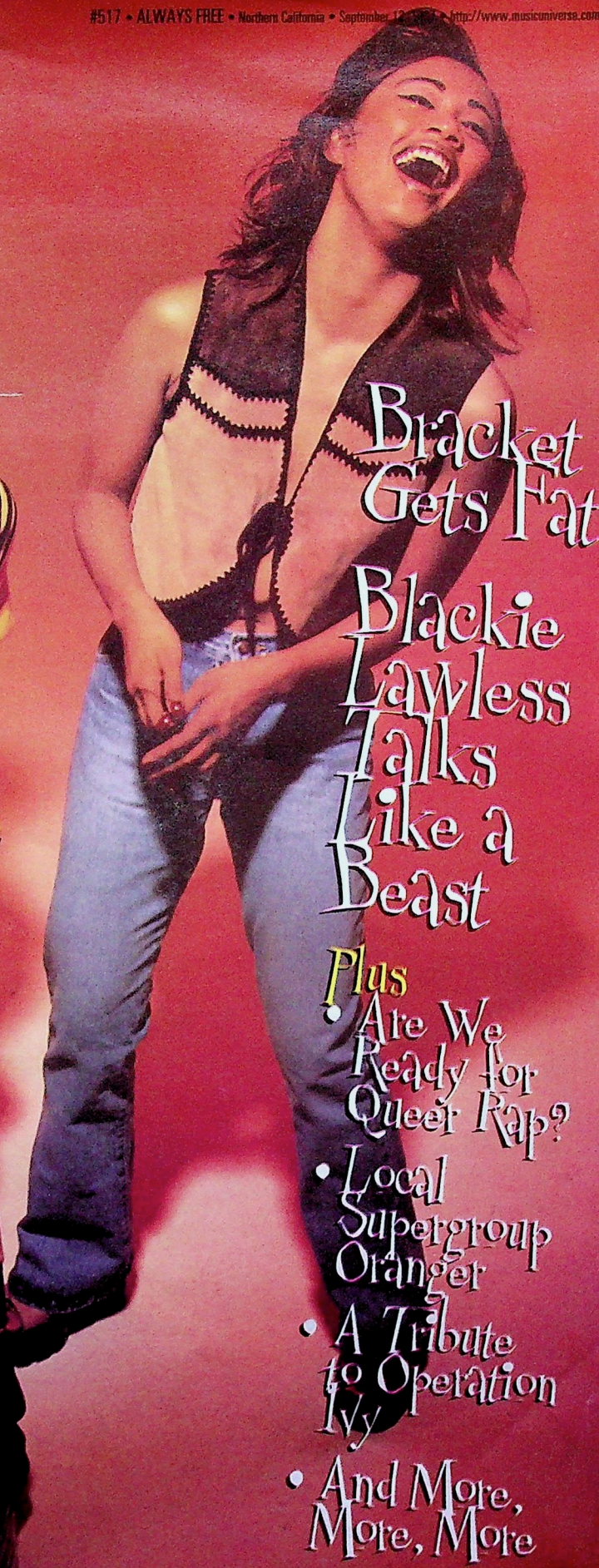


BAM

Filipino Power!

O-Bert
and
Jocelyn
Enriquez
Lead a
Musical
Wave of
Pinoy
and
Pinays



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Blackie
Lawless
Talks
Like a
Beast

Plus

- Are We Ready for Queer Rap?
- Local Supergroup Oranger
- A Tribute to Operation Ivy
- And More, More, More

Filipino Freedom!

by Billy Jam

“W E THE FILIPINO CLICK. WHAT THE FUCK YOU THOUGHT?”

chanted the Bigg Knutt Funk crew to a manic response from the hundreds of Filipinos and Filipinas who had converged on San Jose's Santa Clara County Fairgrounds last month for the first annual Summer Fest '97. This veritable Filipinopalooza illustrated that the Bay Area's thriving Filipino pop music scene has arrived in force.

Hip-hoppers Bigg Knutt Funk were just one of more than a dozen Filipino acts from diverse musical backgrounds to hit the stage that day. Others included dance diva Jocelyn Enriquez; r&b acts If, Femme Fatale and Pinay; alterna-rockers Julie Plug; hip-hop dancers Mindtricks; plus a host of DJs, including Shortkut of the Invisibl Skratch Piklz and Wild 94.9's Rich Laxamana.

Of all the Filipino pop acts to perform, clearly headliner Jocelyn Enriquez was the star of the day. Although Enriquez has had to defend herself in racial identity issues (see interview that follows), she has established herself as the queen of Bay Area Filipino pop.

"Jocelyn is a true role model for Filipinos and her success has been a very positive force within the fast moving Filipino music scene," says Robert Powell, editor of newly launched *pny* magazine, the brand new self-described "21st Century Filipino Magazine" dedicated to covering the burgeoning scene.

pny photographer Oliver Mendoza agrees, saying that Jocelyn Enriquez's success has "opened the door for a lot of us Filipinos. Growing up in the Bay Area I saw a lot of talented Filipinos, whether it was DJing or singing, but when they grew older they kinda felt that they had to grow out of it and go into traditional careers like engineering or nursing—you know, whatever their parents geared them into."

Like many other Bay Area Filipinos, Wild 94.9's DJ Pleez credits hip hop for giving him his start. "It was always hard for Filipinos to find an identity and for some reason hip hop became that identity for many of us," says the DJ who also works in promotions for Classified Records.

Headed by 28-year-old former Apple software tester Kormann Roque, the Burlingame-based Classified Records, which recently landed an attractive affiliate deal with New York's Tommy Boy Records, is Filipino and proud. Classified's roster includes Jocelyn Enriquez, Julie Plug and Pinay, and their 11-member staff is almost exclusively Filipino.

"I look at Classified Records as the first truly indie Asian record company to make it. They're mentors to me," says Oakland DJ/producer/filmmaker Stevie K. K, who is Chinese, recently completed *Invisible Army*, a documentary about Asians in the local music industry. "With supportive entities like Classified, KMEL and CMC, there are more Asians active in the music industry here in the Bay Area than in any other part of country," he says.

Along with Los Angeles and San Diego, the Bay Area has the largest concentration of Filipino Americans in the U.S. "Our whole marketing strategy is to form a foundation with the Filipino community and then build out from there," says Roque, who began his music career back in the mid-'80s as a mobile DJ in Daly City. "Back then there were no Filipino artists except for when Jaya [the freestyle artist who scored the hit "If You Leave Me Now" and currently lives in the Philippines] hit and then everyone was like, 'Wow there's a Filipina charting.' The same kind of thing happened when KMEL's Hosh Guerrelli back in late '80s invited mobile DJs to send in their tapes and Dino Rivera got chosen. He was the first Filipino mix DJ at the station. It was an amazing thing to hear someone like you on the radio!"

Well, that was then...

BAM / SEPTEMBER 12, 1997

Jocelyn Enriquez: The Look of Lovely

by Gwendlynn Meno

IT'S EXACTLY ONE WEEK BEFORE dance music diva Jocelyn Enriquez is scheduled to embark on a promotional tour of her ancestral homeland, the

Philippines. Watching the glamorous chameleon breeze into an Emeryville restaurant this late afternoon in August, you'd never guess the rising star had just experienced the most traumatic of days.

"This morning, as I was getting ready to go to rehearsal, they called me and said our rehearsal space burned down," she says. Hours later she learned that a close relative had been mugged and beaten almost to death right in front of her family's East Bay home. Outwardly, these incidents have failed to take their toll on Enriquez, who first came to prominence last summer with the release of the wildly successful single "Do You Miss Me" from her Classified/Tommy Boy debut, *Jocelyn*.

Perhaps it is the training she received early on that prepared her to deal with such adversity. A showbiz veteran, Enriquez began performing with the San Francisco Girls' Chorus in 1984. She was eight years old. "I didn't lead a normal childhood; I would leave school early, taking public transportation to get to the chorus."

The efforts were well worth it. In 1986, Enriquez, along with the rest of the Girls' Chorus, performed in competitions in Hungary and Japan, which led to an invitation to perform with the San Francisco Opera company. "Imagine a 10-year-old coming home at 1 a.m., having to go to school the next day. My parents were so supportive. They would wait in the car for me to get off from the opera production every night."

Supportive parents appear to be the cornerstone of Enriquez' success. It was her mom and dad who first spied their (then) three-year-old singing away to Anita Ward's 1979 disco hit "Ring My Bell." From that moment on, they encouraged the eldest of their two children to develop her talent and pursue her dream as a performer.

When Enriquez makes her trek to the Philippines, she will be accompanied by her mom, a native of that country. Needless to say, a great deal of excitement sur-



rounds the trip. "For her to go back home and bring me is really exciting for the whole family," explains Enriquez. "I'll be doing a lot of press conferences, television shows and a couple of showcases. The purpose of my going there is to introduce me to the Philippines, so it's going to be something of a homecoming for me."

To date, Jocelyn has been certified gold in that country. While Enriquez was readily accepted by the Filipino community overseas, her experience in the states has been somewhat different. "It took me three years to finally convince the Filipino community that I was Filipino," says Enriquez. "I don't blame them. Enriquez is a very Hispanic last name; and, what we fail to realize as a community is that everyone else that's Filipino, basically have similar last names."

To the outsider looking in, the Filipino community can bare a strong resemblance to a closed society. It's easy to notice the commitment to family and the strong role that church and community play in the life of a Filipino and feel this bond is impenetrable. It's interesting to note that the alienation felt, isn't always limited to non-Filipino's. During the promotion of her first album *Lovely*, Enriquez was labeled a sell-out because it was perceived that she was trying to capitalize on her last name by performing Hispanic gigs.

"I'm hoping all of the rumors have died out by now," she says. "I've always been active in the Filipino community, even before I started singing." It's possible the rumors and accusations have dissipated. During this year's Summerfest (an all-day event best described as the Filipino equivalent of KMEL's Summer Jam) a special tribute was made in honor of Jocelyn Enriquez. Hundreds of young Filipinos turned out for the event, which featured appreciation awards from the Filipino promotion company Papaya, the Philippine Charity Fund and a declaration from the mayor of Milpitas proclaiming August 9, 1997 "Jocelyn Enriquez Day."

After the award ceremony, the audience was treated to a full-on performance by Enriquez and her dancers Michael Bean, Vernon Newtoon, Cory Harrison and Jerry Slaughter. During various points of the performance, Enriquez beckoned "all the Filipino's in the house, make some noise," to which hordes of people responded.

According to Enriquez, "there's a lot of Filipino support. They give me my strength and make me proud of who I am and where my roots are. My parents taught me how to become a Filipino. With me being on the stage, hopefully, they'll also take the time to learn about where their parents are from." ★



Q-Bert: Return of the Invisibl Man

by Billy Jam

OF ALL OF HIP HOP'S battle/scratch DJs, Q-Bert is probably the best known and respected the world over, a level of recognition and respect that the San Francisco DJ has spent the past 12 years steadily building with his pioneering turntable techniques.

A few weeks ago I caught up with Q-

Bert in his home studio, which is located on the lower level of the Mission district home where the DJ grew up. The studio walls are lined with awards and cassettes and video tapes of battles that Q-Bert and his crew, under their various names including the Invisibl Skratch Piklz and the West Coast Rock Steady Crew DJs, have won over the past decade.

Recently Q-Bert has been busy

recording a new ISP album, which will be released in early '98 on Asphodel Records (home to DJ Spooky and the X-Men). On this rainy late-August afternoon he takes a break from one of his many current projects, remixing DJ Shadow's *Endtroducing...*

BAM: Kormann at Classified Records was telling me that you all came up together back in the mid-'80s as DJs around San Francisco and Daly City.

Q-BERT: Yeah, he had a crew called Spintronic and we had a crew called Livestyle Productions. They were already established and we hooked up with them and we were like brother groups for a while. At that time, Apollo was in a Daly City group called Unlimited Sounds and MixMaster Mike was in a group called High Tech. Our crew had people like DJ Cuts, Dreamy D, Toad Man and an emcee called Johnny Crush, who is now a big rap star in the Philippines.

BAM: It seems that there's a lot of Filipinos passionately into hip hop.

Q-BERT: Oh yeah, Filipinos have been into hip hop since day one. Like all the mobile DJ crews were Filipino. Filipinos have always been entertainers. If you go out to Japan or China, all the singers out there are Filipino. I guess entertaining is just in our blood.

BAM: What do you think about battle/scratch DJs finally getting respect?

Q-BERT: I'm sure that there's still a lot of people who don't fully understand the DJ as an artist, but definitely more people are into the DJ these days. When we were over in Europe earlier this summer people were going crazy for the DJ.

BAM: What got you into the whole cutting and scratching aspect of DJ'ing?

Q-BERT: I guess it was the search for the latest scratch. We always loved scratching since we started in '85. The first thing I learned was how to scratch rather than to mix, and that just amazed me. Just manipulating sound with your hand is like a miracle; bringing sound in reverse and forward and chopping it up. It's a whole ridiculous instrument from the planet Earth.

BAM: What artists or records initially inspired you?

Q-BERT: Records like [Malcolm McLaren's] "Buffalo Gals" or [Herbie Hancock's] "Rockit" and MixMaster Mike showing me stuff and, of course, DJs like Cash Money and Jazzy Jeff. Everytime we would hear a new scratch we would want to do that. It would just drive us nuts till we could do it exactly. It's like a thriving thing in your heart, a passion that you have to pursue. You have no choice!

BAM: At what point did it hit you that the turntable was an actual instrument?

Q-BERT: We always knew that the turntable was a musical instrument. Right from the start we knew there was something special about it. You know just the basic root of scratching is a musical instrument; you're figuring out all these time signatures and rhythms and patterns and notes.

BAM: Where will you take turntablism to next?

Q-BERT: There's a lot of musical compositions that we're looking at and thinking about how we can rearrange them and experiment with them. Like what if we play in three/three time or whatever. For us we are hip-hop based but sometimes we go off into other worlds and start doing thrash or turntable country [laughs]. We just try to experiment.

BAM: Have you been approached to do any drum 'n' bass tracks?

Q-BERT: No, but right now I'm in the process of remixing the DJ Shadow album.

BAM: How are you changing it?

Q-BERT: I'm taking all the parts that I like of his music and putting it all together into a mix and then throwing scratches on top.

BAM: Is the current wave of interest in the DJ just a fad?

Q-BERT: As with all things, there's going to be people who'll get into it and check it out and if they don't like it they'll get out. But there's always going to be people who'll stick with it.

BAM: So obviously turntables and vinyl are not about to disappear.

Q-BERT: No way.

BAM: What are the best turntables and mixer to buy?

Invisibl Skratch Piklz: Historic Overview:

1985: Q-Bert was member of Livestyle, MixMaster Mike with High Tech Sounds, and Apollo with Unlimited Sounds. All three were friends and turntable partners who collaborated together under no official name.

1989/90: Apollo and Mix-

Master Mike had a crew called TWS (Together With Style).

1990-92: MixMaster Mike, Apollo and Q-Bert, along with emcees FMD and H2O and dancers KNT (Knuckleneck Tribe), made up the group F.M.2.0., who performed around San Francisco and released a four-song tape in '91.

1992: MixMaster Mike won the New Music Seminar battle in

New York. As a team they won the DMC battle in London. Officially they were the F.M.2.0 DJs and considered themselves part of the Rock Steady Crew world wide family. But after DJ Red Alert introduced them at the battle as "The dream team—the West Coast Rock Steady DJs" the name stuck.

1993: DJ Disk came in to fill in for MixMaster Mike who

relocated temporarily to Sacramento. (Note: Around this time Mike DJ'ed for Del the Funkee Homosapien. Currently he DJs for Saafir.)

1994: Started referring to themselves as the Invisibl Skratch Pickles for the first time. DJ Shortkut, who they discovered at the Buck Wild Classic Battle, joined the group. That year MixMaster Mike and Q-Bert

won the DMC battle as a team.

1994/1995: Apollo, who was Souls of Mischief's DJ for a stretch, started taking extended breaks to collaborate on tour and on record with Brandford Marsalis's Buckshot LeFonq. At this time DJ Quest temporarily filled in for Apollo. Other DJs who temporarily joined the group included Tomkat, 8-Ball and Flare.

Fall 1997: Invisibl Skratch Piklz new spelling and new lineup: Q-Bert, MixMaster Mike, Shortkut, D-Styles, A-Trak (the 15-year-old Canadian turntable wiz kid), manager/"skratch guru" Yogo Frog, as well as sometime members Snailman Steve and Skratch Power Jake. Set up new web site to promote turntablism worldwide.

Q-BERT: I stick with the Technic 1200 turntables and the Vestax 05PRO mixer.
BAM: I notice that you guys don't even use headphones and that a lot of times your eyes are closed; it's as if your hands are moving by themselves.

Q-BERT: Yeah, it's kinda like improvisational. Whatever you get the sound at; you come to this point where you can make something out of any sound. Sometimes you stumble upon new sounds by mistake if the record skips or something.

BAM: What do you think of Sean "Puffy" Combs and the state of so-called hip hop today?

Q-BERT: Actually, I'm the type of guy that doesn't even listen to the radio. I don't really know what's out there. I'm more into jazz and stuff. But as far as that kinda stuff, it's not too intriguing. I like to hear something different.

BAM: Do you think that the DJ, as an integral part of hip hop, will become more integrated and prominent?

Q-BERT: I hope so. If not, we're making our own music and if this world doesn't accept us then we're going to make our own world. ★

Further info: <http://www.skratchpiklz.com>

↓ Pinay

"O" UR NAME means Filipino woman. It's a term used among Filipino Americans; Pinay is a Filipino woman and Pinoy is a Filipino guy," explains Irma De Los Santos of the Filipina quartet Pinay, who, like Premiere, are fast breaking stereotypes of what an r&b act should look like. But Santos is quick to add that "although we are very proud of our heritage, we want to be recognized foremost for our musical ability."

Based on the radio and club success of their catchy uptempo debut single "Is It Real," it would appear that this wish is already being granted. Santos formed the Berkeley-based Pinay four years ago along with Maylene Briones, Angelica Abiog and Jocelyn Enriquez. Jocelyn left within six months to pursue her solo career and was replaced by Lordie Reyes. After honing their skills on the local a capella circuit, Pinay inked a deal with Classified/Tommy Boy and filled out their sound by adding instrumentation. Their debut album, *Inevitable*, will drop in early '98. ★

—BILLY JAM



↑ Bigg Knutt Funk

T HE SIX MEMBER, ALL-Filipino Bigg Knutt Funk, whose hip-hop sound combines the best of both coasts, formed two years ago when all six members attended San Francisco's Mission High School. Along with everyday urban observations, they also sprinkle Filipino knowledge and pride into their music with no-

holds-barred lyrics. Their debut EP will drop before Christmas. ★

Further info: (415) 331-9595 X100

—BILLY JAM



↑ KNT

T HIS OLD-SCHOOL SAN Francisco hip-hop quartet, three of whom are Filipino, are already creating a buzz with their debut single, "Meditation"/"Now You Know" (Ace Beat). Their still-in-production debut album, *Earthquake Raised*, features DJ Apollo, plus a skit about Filipinos in hip hop conducted by KPOO's KK Baby, the Bay Area's longest running Filipino radio personality. ★

Further info: www.bip-hop.com

—BILLY JAM

DJ Apollo

A POLLO, CONSIDERED by many as the original Frisco Filipino b-boy, started out in Daly City (circa '83) with the hip-hop dance group Star City Crew. DJ Apollo came to prominence soon after as a member of Unlimited Sounds. Although he came to fame via the West Coast Rock Steady Crew DJs and the Invisibl Skratch Piklz, he is no longer

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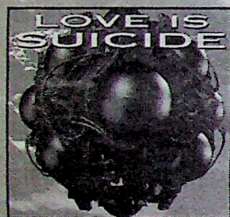
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DJ Apollo

an official member. Currently, he is a member of Branford Marsalis' Buckshot LeFonc, works as a solo artist and collaborates with several acts including KNT. He has also DJ'ed for Souls of Mischief. ★

—BILLY JAM

↓Premiere W

AGING A WAR
against
racism in the
music busi-
ness can be

daunting for the most seasoned performer. However, for San Jose's Premiere, it's simply another day in the studio.

"Since we're the first Filipino r&b singing group, we knew it was going to be difficult in the beginning," says Alisha Floresca. "We were willing to pursue it because we wanted to open doors for other Filipinos, not only to sing r&b but to sing any kind of music that they like without being racially discriminated against." Quite an ambitious task considering the young ladies forging this path are all in their teens.

Produced by local hit-makers Denzil Foster and Thomas McElroy (most noted for their work with En Vogue and Club Nouveau), Premiere's self-titled debut



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album features the type of soulful ballads and infectious dance tunes they were exposed to growing up in the culturally diverse Bay Area, where most Filipino's

their age listen to KMEI radio. But, as these talented vocalists would soon discover, not being black and listening to urban music is altogether different from not being black and performing urban music.

Ironically, their harshest critics are often other Filipinos. "Some people call us black-washed," explains Leslye Maninang. "When we first heard the rumors about us trying to be black and stuff, we would cry. We didn't understand how they can call us that because we're comfortable with what we are and don't try to pretend we're anything else."

Like most people of Philippine decent, Alisha, Gigi and Leslye come from a very close-knit family (Alisha and Gigi are sisters, while Leslye's sister married into the Floresca family) and are very active in the community. "We try to do as many Filipino events as we can," says Gigi. "That's what we really enjoy. We try to show them that we're not going against our culture or anything like that. Our music has no color lines." ★

Further info: Alien Records (510) 635-7496

—GWENDLYNN MENO

↓ Julie Plug

TO CLOSE YOUR EYES and listen to Julie Plug's infectious pop rock songs, you'd swear you were hearing the latest Brit-pop sensation to land on these shores.

In actuality, the female-fronted alternative quartet are all Filipinos from Daly City, who draw their inspiration from such Anglo-pop acts as the Sundays, Blur and Oasis.

The combination of Des de Leon's hauntingly beautiful melodies; the tight backing of the Plug's Anthony Improgo (drums), Jeffrey Sacramento (bass) and Terri Nicholas (guitar); and the band's refreshingly different image could make Julie Plug MTV darlings by this time next year. In March they'll release their debut album *Starmaker* (Classified/Tommy Boy) featuring such sweet pop-rock gems as "What Can I Say," "In Every Corner" and "Everything Behind," plus an inspired and unlikely tribute to Astrud Gilberto. ★

—BILLY JAM



↑ Sweet Trip

FRONTED BY FILIPINA guitarist/vocalist Valerie Reyes, this experimental electro-rock trio, with Viet Le (bass) and Roby

Burgos (programming, guitar and vocals), have just inked a deal with Darla Records for whom they'll shortly release their debut. ★

Further info: (415) 259-7089.

—BILLY JAM



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