



HARD KNOCK LIFE (REMEMBER DEM DAYS?)

BEANIE SIGEL

Roosevelt Franklin (a.k.a. Azabache)

Most people get it twisted. Rap is really just about who can talk the most shit. Representing the mean streets of South Philly, Beanie Sigel is like the George Foreman of this. With rhymes to knock cats straight off they feet, his raw verbosity overpowers any opponent. He made his name battling and from his indomitable freestyle, but few know he rapped alongside Black Thought (of the Roots) in the same group back in the day as shorties. Another ghetto child running wild, Mr. Sigel stayed out on the streets. He left home as a baby teen, dealing and stealing in the concrete jungle, seeing jail too young, too often. Ironically, his moms was a correctional officer. Rhyming may have saved her son's life.

Recognized as a shining star in the Rocafella Dynasty, perhaps second only to Jay-Z in terms of raw skill and potential, his witty hardcore lyrics have crowned him ghetto prince seemingly overnight. Expectations are high for his second album, *The Reason*. I trooped up to Def Jam's offices in Hell's Kitchen to find out what's the verdict. After linking with Beanie and showing him a copy of the mag, guess what he wanted to talk about? Graf. He got open when he saw the file and articles. Philly graf played an active part in the early development of NYC's movement. Writers like CORNBREAD and TOPCAT introduced a style to the Big Apple called "Broadway Elegant" which took lettering to next level. We rapped for a minute about the writing on the wall in the city of Brotherly Love.

BEANIE: *That's what I started with, writin' "BEANIE MAC". I used to write with a group called Da 5 What made me take it serious was BOBBY SAB. He's one of the most legendary writers in Philly. He'd write LOVER and ERUPT. I used to just copy his name on a paper, LOVER; his style I used to just write all day I used to see it everywhere. On my way to school, I'd walk and see it on the walls, LOVER, BOBBY SAB...*

YRB: *Were you a piecer or a bomber?*

BEANIE: *I did everything. I was bombing, I was piecing, freehand; I used to do all kinds of stuff. I used to write on buildings, in high spots. I was a climber. I'll climb but I couldn't hang over nothing. I'm 265, player.*

I was a street bomber. I used to hit the routes. I come through the whole bus route, the whole train route. Instead of writin' on a train, I know that train (would) take (a certain) route. I'll write where you jump down on the train tracks and do the whole wall of the train line. It wasn't like you was waiting for the train and when it go by, you get that quick flash. When you step on the train and you riding, looking out the window, you'll see all the tags all down the tunnel. There's a lotta tunnel work in Philly.

We had got to rapping about Bode and the Cheech wizard, the projects, all type of shit. I couldn't just dip out without at least axin' what the deal with the follow up to his well received debut, *The Truth*.

BEANIE: *It's just another chapter in the book, another scene in the movie. Beanie Sigel: The Reason. There's always a reason behind the truth. When you heard the first album, that was the first thing I did in terms of rapping. I was new to the game. I always knew how to rap, but that wasn't nuttin' that I would do. Sit around and write a rhyme? I can't recall just sitting down and writing raps. I was a freestyler, a battler. I knew how to rhyme. I wouldn't do it, but if we all high, we all weeded up sitting around, I'll spit.*

If somebody else was around who knew how to rap and was into it, I was the type of dude who'd be like, "Oh, he's taking this real serious, like he's really trying to be a rapper". I'd shut him down. I'd kill him, be like, "Get outta here with that rap shit". Burnt anybody, at house parties, if people came through rapping, when the mic slip, I'd be like "Gimme thaaaaaaa!" and kill the whole house party. That's what I was doing. Looking for talent shows and all that, it wasn't like that for me.

When I did The Truth, I wrote half of it on paper. (The other half) I wouldn't say it was freestyle cuz when you freestyle, it's spontaneous, right off the top all the way through. It was like I was writing but without the pen. I had what I wanted to say. It's in my head before I put it in the paper. I had a thought and would keep that. Just how I would read it off a paper, I would read it in my head, saying it again, adding on a thought, and keep repeating. I can't explain it, it's just a miracle. That's what I do in the booth everytime. I do miracles. I don't know where it come from to tell you the truth.

