

# A Positive Future Led By Raw Element

The emergence of hip-hop in the Yukon is nothing to fear. The kids have not taken over the streets of Whitehorse in an orgiastic drive-by nightmare.

You will have to turn to CNN or Fox to see these portrayals.

Here in the Great White North there is a ripple in the pond. A protean force is rising and will, I believe, redefine the way the Outside world hears the Yukon.

Before I get too far, I'd like to make a few things clear. My ear for rap and hip-hop is unfocused. I've heard a pastiche of the genre over the years and, apart from a scant few albums, not many have struck me as particularly memorable.

This is a middle-aged white guy talking here: mea culpa.

The new CD from The Raw Element Collective has landed on store shelves and, from the hearts and minds of youth, comes truth and hope for justice.

"Knowledge so solid, insight in spite of all the hate, to do what we think is right."

Raw Element brings to this album six primary movers and shakers whose crossover talents culminate in 16 tracks of crystal clear, hybrid hip-hop. The tracks are slices of poetry and song smothered in a production that is truly inspired.

The medium is the message and the album *Matter* has a message of positive and critical observations that never lapse into the maudlin or naïve.

The sound is joie de vive and esprit de corps wrapped into one.

This use of the word "positive" may sound hackneyed but, truth be told, this generation of musi-



## DISCourse

with Bill Polonsky



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cians has taken on the negativity that infuses day-to-day life and transformed it into constructive rhyme and rhythm, beat and soul.

"Once upon a time our spirits knew how to fly, but that knowledge seems to have been lost to this time."

The themes of collective responsibility pervade the lyrics. Raw Element's lyrics transcend deep media bombardment and synthesize simple truths.

Believing in what's real, affirmations of self-knowledge and confident action, the lyrics present a future where imagination and positive outcome are a credo for life: not bad.

There may be hope for the future with thoughts like this circulating in society; it doesn't get better than this.

I've got a soft spot for inspired sound and this album has smacked into my head and has stuck. Unlike the lyrics, the overall sound of the album is a rich media bombardment.

The album flows from heavy reggae downbeats and snatches of

Latin and gypsy melody, samples, multitrack raps, scratches and ambient soundscapes.

These musicians and producers have realized a positive outlet for their collective voice.

The syntax of hip-hop and the reality of living in the North prove out a refreshing theme in this collection. Being Canadian and living North of 60 has proven once again that the garage is mightier than the sword.

Matter is not a project pieced together by neophytes. This is a professional work that deserves a serious ear.

Raw Element's Matter is available at Triple J's Music.

If you would like to see your work reviewed in this column contact me at [strangethingsdone@hotmail.com](mailto:strangethingsdone@hotmail.com).

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