

# KONFLIKT IN THE KINO

Issue 17

WHEN PICTURES AND SOUND COLLIDE THERE ARE FATALITIES

## TO GO TO HELLNBACK

Meet Canadian First Nations hip-hop artist, Hellnback of TEAM REZOFFICIAL

Right now, Canadian urban music is going through a strange time. A lot of the product is coming off as glam or superficial, or worse: boring. One late evening around 2 am, I came across the track "Keep On Movin'" by Canadian First Nations hip-hop group REZOFFICIAL. I was exposed to the beginning of Cree rap in its early stages back in the mid '90s, but REZOFFICIAL's track was fantastic. After peepin' their first CD "Foundation", I was impressed by both their production values and the message. Ready for my bold statement? REZOFFICIAL's "The Foundation" is, with this decade more than half over, the only worthwhile Canadian hip-hop album with a real message. It might be one of the most surprising secrets in Canadian urban music today. HELLNBACK is part of the TEAM REZOFFICIAL and also penned the fantastic "Keep On Movin'". He spoke with KONFLIKT IN THE KINO about himself, Rezofficial, and how it will "keep on movin'".

**KONFLIKT IN THE KINO (DION CONFLICT):** What's your day been like so far?

**HELLNBACK:** It's been good thus far...

**KITK:** So, it's all about the roots guy, so tell us how REZ OFFICIAL started.

**HELLNBACK:** Rezofficial started with my man Jmak and Lakes - they were the first 2 members. Then STOMP joined forces with JMAK to form REZOFFICIAL and STOMP was working with BIG DRO on his first offering while I was still a member of WARPARTY and when I left WP, I just moved my shit to Rezofficial cause I knew all of these guys from the jump and worked with each one in some way or another. Me and STOMP been friends and work homies since I started rapping. See me and DRO and TOMISLAV and SLIM and LAKES are all solo artists by nature but as a crew we make up TEAM REZOFFICIAL and STOMP and JMAK are Rezofficial Music - they are the producers. DRO was the second emcee to join Them, SLIM, then me and when I moved off then rez (Hobbema, AB) to Winnipeg I was introduced to my man TOMISLAV whom I have known for at least 2 years before moving to 'Peg. He is the last emcee to join the crew, and since then we have been pushing for the same goal. We are all focused on that next level, so it just seemed to click and make sense to start doing it as a collective.

**KITK:** What got you interested in going from hip hop fan to an artist?

**HELLNBACK:** The Swagger and love of the music. I started out listening to Fatboys and KRS-1 - all the old school gunktahs - and I said "if they can do that why can't I?" then I started freestyling, and after that it was over. I was hooked. I tend to give props to my older brother 'cause he was the one who introduced me to hip-hop. Thanks, Bryan!

**KITK:** You bust rhymz really fast, is this



HELLNBACK

something you work on (the speed)?

**HELLNBACK:** It just kinda comes with coming up, plus what style cats got. I'm not just a fast rapper. I'm an artist first and foremost - rapping fast is just one thing I can do. My whole style is just whatever. You're always going to get something out of what I do, cause I'm not stuck to just one form of flow.

**KITK:** Let's talk about Rezofficial's first CD release (or the one most easily accessible to the public), FOUNDATION...

**HELLNBACK:** SHT was fire and we made half of it at the lair (STOMP'S crib) and half at Studio 11 in Winnipeg. Shout out to Scott.

**KITK:** Does FOUNDATION have an overall message, or is it more of a collective

laying down the foundation.

**HELLNBACK:** It more or less was just a collection of music we wanted to do. We had no other input or influence in what we did. We just made music we'd like to bump - you know make ourselves happy. That was the goal to be happy with the product. We never brag about our shit - we feel that if we like it then others will catch on. We never went for any kind of commercial appeal or underground fan base - we just made music and let that speak for us.

**KITK:** KEEP ON MOVIN' is in my opinion, an unknown classic as far as Canadian hip hop goes. Was that a message to First Nations peoples, or were you trying to shout out to those outside of that to capture a "reflection"?

**HELLNBACK:** To be honest, not too many people know this but when I made "Keep on Movin'" I was thinking of my Kokom (grandma) - she passed away the day I made that track. I woke up in the morning and got the call that my kokom Passed, and me and her were and are very close. I loved her like any grandson should love their grandma and I did not cry 'til I got in the studio. My man JMAK sent me the beat and I sat down and wrote that song in just under half hour - jumped in the booth and did what I had to do. Music is a good form of therapy to me. It helped me cope with what I was dealt. Then after the song was done, I just kinda brushed off the shoulder and in a sense kept on movin'. We had no idea that it was going to be such a loved track, and I thank the fans of real hip-hop for that, 'cause that track was a testament to what can be made out of nothing but raw emotions and feelings. The words just came to me - the beat spoke to me - it was meant for my Kokom. I'm glad it reached the native public as much as it did cause this song actually had substance and a message, which was no matter what you are going through, whether it's jail or loss of family or loss of culture or racism, just "KEEP ON MOVIN'" and your focus will see you thru it.

**KITK:** Is it tricky to do projects together as TEAM REZOFFICIAL, considering you're all spread out around North America?

**HELLNBACK:** When things have to be done we all find a way to make it happen. I mean we live and die this hip-hop - we make it work.

Continued on page 2

# SCRATCHEZ FROM THE D-MAN

Finally after a year, I got to get out the new KITK! It's been an interesting year after the demise of the original forum which spawned KONFLIKT IN THE KINO, Festival Cinemas. I still miss it horribly, but now we get to launch in my 2nd home, Finland.

Speaking of that, what you are reading and what you are seeing has really been possible due to many hands that have helped me entertain you on the screen, in your home, and in your hands. Little did I ever imagine back when I presented my first screening in the back of the Rivoli club in Toronto that it would one day need the help of people in 4 different countries (Canada, Russia, Finland and the United States) to all come together. I am truly blessed and thank all the guilty parties involved for helping me with this, now global, project.

This issue is really hip-hop! But it's filled with artists that I respect and are just all around, good people. Please enjoy and be sure to check out my new website at [www.dionconflict.com](http://www.dionconflict.com) and send an e-mail to my address below to be added to the fun where ever you might be in the globe. One love.

## Hellnback Delivers the Rez Rap

*Continued from page 1*

**KITK: How was Arbor Records with the release of FOUNDATION? This is a little different then their usual dossier of artists.**

**HELLNBACK:** Well, me and Stomp have had a relationship with Arbor for many years, as both founding members of the native crew WARPARTY. We were signed to Arbor for our very first album, so to work with them on the foundation just seemed right. And you're also right - they do have different artists on their roster but in a sense we have been there with 'em since the start of the "native hip-hop" movement. We kinda coined the term "Native hip-hop".

**KITK: When you're all together, do you usually do live shows, and if so, where?**

**HELLNBACK:** When we all together we usually try record as much as possible, on both group projects and solo projects. But the main members now are basically BIG DREZUS, TOMISLAV and myself. due to the fact LAKES and SLIM live in the states and we can't always have 'em with us...

**KITK: What do you HATE about the hip-hop medium at the moment?**

**HELLNBACK:** Lack of actually making good music with a heart beat. As I have grown I have seen the trends come and go, but real music will always stick to your ribs and help you out when you really need it and can't turn to anybody ..like Al Green music.

**KITK: I was talkin' with one of your boys, and he was saying that there was plans to release the new album online, but not as a pressed CD. Does that mean there won't be another CD that people could buy in stores, the old fashioned way?**

**HELLNBACK:** Naw. That was for our mixtapes and STOMP and JMAK's instrumental album. Be on the look out for "The World And Everything In It" on ARBOR/EMI/REZOFFICIAL MUSIC. We have videos lined up for that and the first single. PAPER MUSIC spinning on MuchMusic now.

**KITK: What did you think about last night before you fell asleep?**

**HELLNBACK:** Man I'm high - LOL! I had my man DRO on my mind...FREE BIG DREZUS!!! Sorry I had to put that in there....DON'T WORRY DRIZZ WE RIDING FOR YOU!!

**KITK: The thing I find with some in the hip-hop community is that many are oblivious as to how the medium is being used outside of the parameters of glam and fashion. Have you gotten much feedback outside of the First Nations community?**

**HELLNBACK:** The love is huge and growing - again, I thank the team's focus and drive for causing that. I see a ton of cats grinding but they ain't serious. We are ready to make that jump, but at the same time that's not our main focus. If we make good music good things will happen...again, good music speaks for itself but the love and respect level is rising.

**KITK: Final thoughts?**

**HELLNBACK:** I wanna shout out to the team STOMP JMAK DREZUS (we got you) TOMISLAV SLIM LAKES. All of our significant others for always being strong for us and our kids - my son D'Angelo, Daysin and new baby girl Jayla. My other fam STRESSED STREET (Joey Stylez, I see you - thanks for believing in me) and the double S soldiers...FREE MO'PAPES - FREE BIG DREZUS - The future is nearing and we all have a say in it. It's time to make things happen! One love to my Omeasoo family, Swampy family, Brown Family, Samson Family and shouts to my mother for being my mom and dad at the same time. My little sister Kaitlyn and older brother Bryan for introducing me to this thing called hip-hop. and all the people reading this thanks for the support.

*For more info, check out [www.rezofficial.com](http://www.rezofficial.com).*



### KONFLIKT IN THE KINO

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To be added to the CONFLICT ARCHIVES e-mail list or to comment/yammer about KITK, or to send me bad Finnish CD's (I need Illi's!), bootlegs of the Canadian TV show "Just Like Mom" or anything else, contact us at:

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This issue is dedicated to the late Tammy Faye Messner (1942-2007).

## 3 QUESTIONS

### The Many Faces of Steven - Baltimore actor George Stover

If ever there was a film that made me really want to be a film-maker, it would have to be *NIGHTBEAST*. Shot in the Baltimore area, director Don Dohler took what he learned in his previous Sci-Fi features and applied them to this opus. *NIGHTBEAST* is this basic story: Monster from outer spaces crashes into earth, kills people, the town sheriff has to find a way to stop it. For a low budget movie, it has some great (for its time) special effects, a fantastic musical score, and lots of fun jitters. I have seen it so many times I knew the names of all the characters and the actors who played them – one of whom was George Stover. George Stover has not only acted in the work of Cinemagic pioneer Don Dohler's work (where he usually seems to be named Steven), but also with John Waters and Fred Olen-Ray. Usually, George is cast as the nice guy who seems to "get it", or a man of the cloth (as in "Dracula's Widow" or "Female Trouble"). An avid collector like myself, I ran into him when I picked up a 35mm trailer for an ultra-obscure feature I have called "In Trouble With Eve". Forever baby-faced, George Stover took some of his valuable time to step up to the microphone to answer ... *THE THREE QUESTIONS!*

#### KONFLIKT IN THE KINO (DION CONFLICT) – QUESTION #1:

George, in all of your cinematic performances, none compare to the greatness of dying by suffocation in Jean Hill's huge ass cheeks in John Waters' "DESPERATE LIVING". How did you get the gig and explain the shooting of that particular scene.

**GEORGE STOVER:** Having previously appeared in John Waters' *FEMALE TROUBLE*, I was already known to John and his casting assistant, Pat Moran. So when it came time for preproduction of *DESPERATE LIVING* to begin, they called me in to audition. I auditioned "cold" with Mink Stole when I first got the sides, and then I came back a week later to audition with Mink again after I had learned the lines. Some time later, I got the call that I had won the role of



Photo courtesy: George Stover

George Stover administers last rites to Divine in John Waters' "Female Trouble".

Bosley Gravel. We rehearsed the dialogue and action in the scene several times before shooting, with one exception. We never actually rehearsed that part of the scene in which Jean Hill sits down on my face. And that sequence was shot last (I always assumed that if Jean somehow killed me, then John wouldn't be too inconvenienced, because he already had all of my other scenes in the can!!!). Luckily, Jean braced herself on part of the furniture, so the downward pressure of her weight was not too bad. What hurt the most was her side to side motion, which made my head move side to side as well. That was kind of painful on my neck. But I think we got it all in one take, so the pain didn't last too long.

#### KITK / QUESTION #2:

You were in many films by the late Don Dohler who was a huge influence on me. I've seen both "Nightbeast" and "The Alien Factor" truckloads of times. Can you share a nice memory of Don for our readers?

**GEORGE STOVER:** I was the only person who appeared in all eleven of Don's feature films, and I never saw him flare up and get angry with anyone on set. And there were many opportunities when he would have been justified in doing so. And no matter what obstacles he faced—such as bad weather, extraneous noise, cold temperatures, faulty equipment, actors showing up late or not at all—he always remained optimistic and never seemed to let these problems get him down. I will miss him very much.

#### KITK / QUESTION #3:

Fred Olen Ray is one of my favourite film makers, and you played Dr. Eric Cramer in his "Attack of the 50 foot Centerfold". It reminded me that you've actually played a lot of doctors in films! So my question is, if you could give a face transplant to someone famous in Hollywood right now, who would it be, and why?

**GEORGE STOVER:** I can't think of anyone to whom I'd like to give a face transplant. I'm sure that most famous people already have the faces they deserve. And if they are willing to undergo cosmetic surgery, then they can have even younger looking faces.

*Don and I chatted on the phone about his work many years before his passing and he always told me George was a super nice guy. He was right! For more info about George Stover's acting dossier, visit the imdb.*

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# KOSOVA ALL-STARS

## Memli of Pristina's Ritmi i Rrugës on Albo hip hop n' the word on the "Rruges"

If any Eastern European countries were to embrace hip-hop with the vigour that North America has, those countries would be Albania and Kosova (I recognize Kosova as an independent state, one of the few things George W Bush and I agree on). While back in the mid Nineties only a handful of Albanian hip hop acts existed; now they seem to be spouting with the same velocity as a Chia Pet in a matter of days. By far the meatiest slab of beats and rhyme on the grill comes from Ritmi i Rrugës. Each of their three albums shows a definite progression with solid fast rhyme and b's that take chances with styles and their approach. "Përjetësisht" (their 3rd offering) is by far one of top five best Albanian albums, ever. Memli is the one half of Ritmi (the other being talented Arbër Reçi) who I gotta say is just an all around good guy. Back from vacation and returning to Pristina, he took some time out to talk to me about Ritmi, Kosova hip hop, and downloading. BTW, "Kosova All-Stars" is the name of a track off of "Përjetësisht".

**KONFLIKT IN THE KINO (DION CONFLICT): Tung! Si ja kaloni?**

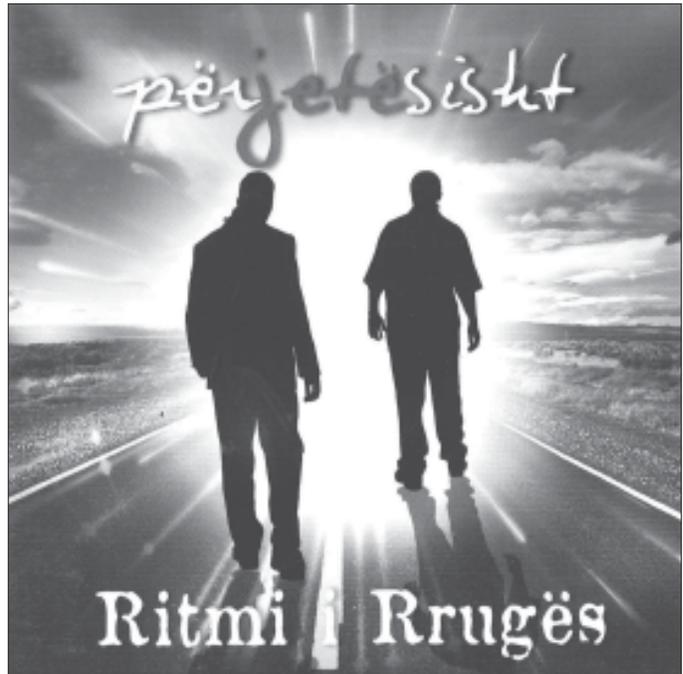
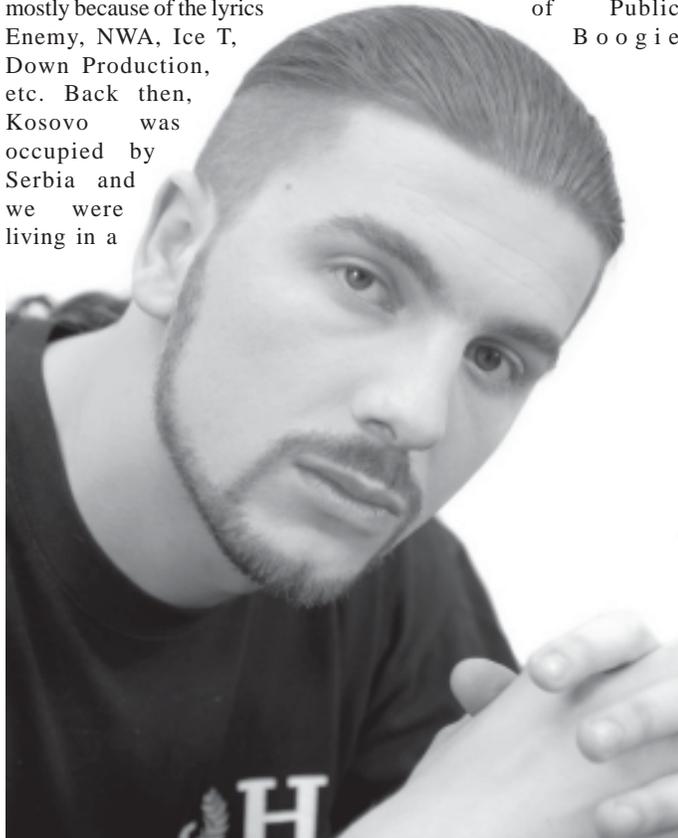
**Memli:** Shumë mirë Dion. Things are going great!

**KITK:** Where does Ritmi i Rrugës get its name from? I know in Shqip that "Rruges" is a street...

**Memli:** It was my idea to name the band. It means "The Rhythm of the Street" and it was meant to depict the true nature of our music, both musically and lyrically.

**KITK:** How did you get involved with hip hop?

**Memli:** By the time when Gangsta Rap was big and when G-Funk was making a mark, rap music found its way to Kosovo, mostly through bootleg tapes, illegally produced in the region, and through satellite TV channels and specific shows like 'Yo! MTV Raps'. That's how I discovered rap and got to get acquainted with it. Since my understanding of the English language was quite good even then, I really got into it, mostly because of the lyrics of Public Enemy, NWA, Ice T, Down Production, etc. Back then, Kosovo was occupied by Serbia and we were living in a



very oppressive environment with virtually no rights, so the political/social aspects of hip hop of that time influenced me a lot. In that, I drew some parallels between the hardships of life in Kosovo and the hardships that these bands were talking about and I realized that hip hop was an exceptional tool to express my feelings and opinions.

**KITK:** Once you decided to pursue the performance element and go out and do it, was it tricky to get the elements to make your own music, such as beats, equipment, etc.?

**Memli:** Everything was hard to do in Kosovo back then. We originally started composing and performing with live instruments and then moved to professional studio recording, once Enis Presheva Jr. returned from Austria, where he was studying music. After I heard some of his initial work, I went to meet him and he's been our producer ever since.

**KITK:** My first introduction to your music was the classic track "Bota është e jona". Did you want to talk about that and the album it comes from?

**Memli:** "Bota është e jona" is a song that was made in a more positive atmosphere, after the war ended in Kosovo and it's a nice party song. It was a very successful chart-topper from our first album, which was named after this song, but I think there are other songs there better than that one, and they've been very successful, too. It was our first album and it sold in great numbers. It included the best songs we made between 1996-2000 and still today, many people like that album a lot.

**KITK:** Did you want to tell us a bit of how you got your first recordings out to the public in Kosova?

**Memli:** Oh man, it was the real underground days of Kosovo hip hop. We recorded this song "Tana t'Zezat" in 1995, and it was the first professionally recorded original rap track in Albanian language. Previously, there's been rap music, but there were no studio recordings. We'd basically make a dozen of audio tapes with the song and hand them out to local DJ's in the main bars and clubs in Pristina. People noticed it very soon, but still had no clue as to who was rapping for a few weeks. Then, we basically became locally known in Pristina and then step by step moved up the success ladder.

**KITK:** "Obsession" was a great CD by Ritmi as well. Can you explain the title?

**Memli:** The second album was named after a song there which talks about the men's obsession with women. Actually, I opted for a different title, but ultimately it was decided by our manager and executive producer of the album. It turns out I was right, because "Ushitari i Rrugës" became a far greater hit than "Obsession"

**KITK:** How did you meet Arbër Reçi, the other half of Ritmi?

**Memli:** Me and Arbër go way back and music is just one of the things that connects us. We originally got to know each other at the elementary school, where we attended the same class.

**KITK:** You've also sung with some others. My favorite is when u were bustin some rhymeZ on the Albo R&B sensation Blero's track "Kthehu ti". How did that project happen?

**Memli:** Yeah, I've actually did a lot of collaborations with different singers here. The song you've mentioned was recorded in both Albanian and English and became a really huge hit all over the place and even as far as Turkey. Blero was an aspiring singer in 2003 and in one of our concerts in Sweden he contacted me and told me about his music and asked me to do a song with him. We talked a few times after that and I really wanted to give him a hand, because he convinced me that he was serious about music and he really deserved a chance. I went back to Sweden to do the song and the video and it instantly became a smash hit. It's one of my favorite collaborations ever.

**KITK:** When I heard Ritmi's 3rd album, "Përjetësisht", I was blown away on how excellent it is. My Shqip is SPOTTY at best, but the flow and the attempt to break out of the typical hip-hop mode is to be commended. But enough of my gushing about how much I love the album, why not tell the readers a little something about it.

**Memli:** It was our third album and I believe we grew even more mature musically, as compared to previous releases. Throughout our career, we strived to be original and different, so "Përjetësisht" is a continuation of this objective. The album and especially the title track received great reviews from the professionals and from the audience and I'm really happy about that.

**KITK:** The title track also spawned one of the best Albanian music videos ever. Can you tell about the awards that the "Përjetësisht" video won, and a little about the track itself to our English audience?

**Memli:** I'm glad you liked it, because I really love it and it's a very personal song for me. The video was broadcasted a lot and ended up winning the major video awards in both Kosovo and Albania. The song gives a story of a person killed by Serbian forces during the war here and his coming back as a spirit to talk to his mother and give his messages of love, sacrifice, and remembrance. It was a very emotional track and I think it struck every Albanian all over the world.

**KITK:** Did you ever have a Rubik's Cube growing up? Did you solve it?

**Memli:** Actually I didn't own one, but I solved it as a kid in a couple of hours.

**KITK:** In many areas of the globe, people are saying the Urban Music Scene is dying or just producing a lot of "muti". How do you find Kosova's music hip-hop/Urban music scene going, or better yet, the direction?



**Memli:** The hip hop scene here has grown like a monster. Everyone that listens to rap wants to make records and it's not that simple. There's a lot of production, but there's not many names doing great and making good money. However, there's a lot of 'fresh blood' and the youngsters are refreshing the scene with innovative ideas and original skills. I like what I'm hearing and I'm glad to see that hip hop has a secure future in Kosovo, Albania and elsewhere.

**KITK:** One of our friends has talked about the piracy with music and DVD's in Kosova. As an artist how do you feel about piracy? Meeting Shpat Kasapi in NYC, we discussed that there now is no way that I can even try buying Albanian CD's as there's no distribution here, which forces some people to download. Your thoughts?

**Memli:** Piracy and bootlegging used to be a bigger problem until a couple of years ago, but the main problem right now is internet, since you can download any album for free on the same day they're released. There are thousands of web sites with Albanian music on the net and there's no way to control them, so the sales have been hurt quite a lot. So, my point is, even where there's distribution, people tend to opt for the free ride. Since this is a comparatively small market, we're in a situation where the music industry

may suffer a serious crisis in publishing and distribution.

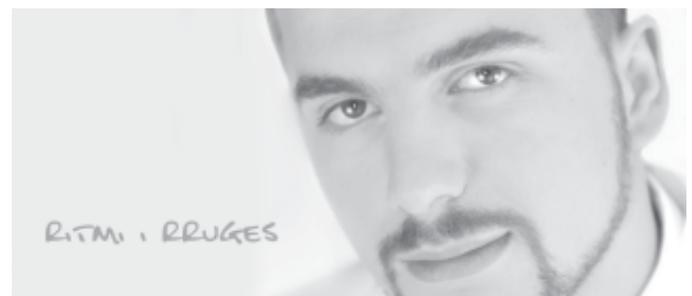
**KITK:** What does the future hold for Ritmi? Any final thoughts?

**Memli:** We've been taking a pause for the last couple of years and have been doing other things, but we've been working on our music quietly on the side. We've recorded some new tracks and this year we'll release a new album, which I think is coming up very well. You'll get to hear it once it comes out, so let's see what you and others think of it.

**KITK:** Gezuar Memli!

**Memli:** Cheers man. It's been a pleasure to give this interview and word up to all your readers.

*The main distributors of Albanian CDs in North America have closed up shop. This also doesn't really leave a way to pick up legal copies of Ritmi CDs. In addition to finding great artwork, be sure to visit my website at [www.dionconflict.com](http://www.dionconflict.com) to find out where and when you can get legitimate Ritmi product. In the meantime, Albanian music fans like me must sit and wait.*



**APULANTA – “Viisaukset Ei Asu Meissä”**  
*Levy yhtiö*

APULANTA has been around since I started getting into Finnish music and “Kolme” is in my top 10 favourite Finnish albums of all time. However, “Viisaukset Ei Asu Meissä” just starts off with the band going through the motions and at one point the title track feels like Timo Rautiainen & Trio Niskalaukaus. There are acceptable but none too inspiring tracks on the first half of the album, but then “Trauma” with its grinding and two beat drums offer some hope. “Trauma” is great, and a handful of others are as well, but playing the whole album over and over (as I’ve done with so many other Apulanta albums) isn’t going to be happening. (“Nimensä Alle” contains a horrible guitar solo). Still, I’m sure Apulanta will release something the next time which will rock (it seems like one album is great, then the next one is just so-so). I’ll not lose hope for these boys of Lahti!



**Cepëra – “Дискомания”**  
*King Ring - Russia*

**Cepëra** (Seryoga) brings his 2nd generation Russian background to hip hop on this offering, which provides some traditional Russian beats along with a glazed up gangster feel. “Воэне Дома Тbero (feat. Бьянки)” is a standout ballad-based track while “Sport’ивные Уастушки” with its flamenco beats has played on my Ipod shuffle forever. Seryoga can’t sing, but he does what he does on this offering, and while not the strongest Russian hip-hop contender, it’s still enjoyable. And hey, he would be the best from Belarus! He was supposed to play a gig in Brooklyn, NY in April.



**CHALICE – “SüsteemSüsteem”**  
*Umblu*

Estonia’s fantastic concept hip-hop artist CHALICE (real name: Jarek Kasar) releases some of my favorite Estonian hip hop albums, which continue to be excellent. There’s some clowning around at the beginning with a track such as “Hitimeistrid” with its tinker bell beats, but Chalice takes us all around his hip hop gambit, later winding down in tracks like “Siuh koos Mäxiga”. I played this one over and over e-mailing friends back at home while using a borrowed laptop in Porvoo. There’s a new album out which I have no problem going to Estonia JUST to pick up. Elagu Eesti!



**LIROY – “L Nino, Volume 1”**  
*Sony - Poland*

Scyzoryk! The godfather of Polish hip-hop returns with this offering. After some beat boxing, he bounces into what he does best while borrowing samples from his classic material. LIROY got me into foreign hip-hop and while this album plays OK, boss doesn’t really use some of his trademark skills such as his start-stop approach. It’s not as fantastic as his debut “Alboom” or even “Bafangoo”. It’s time he whips some ass to throw the other boiz in Polish hip hop BACK in their place. But sadly, it’s not with this offering.



**TUNA – “S’ka Më Diktaturë”**  
*Palma Gjilan GmbH*

Albanian songstress TUNA (yes, you heard right – that’s her name) proves that she can compete with the Christina Aguilera of the world

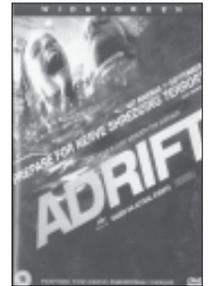
with her second album. While her first one (which was self-titled) is comprised of about 80% worth of fantastic tracks, this one would be 50%. “Psikologet” opens the album with Tuna’s trademark pipes and range while ambulance horns add to the beat. The title track also ranks as a classic by the Kosova native.



While Tuna sings every bloody range in the book, “S’ka Më Diktaturë” ends with the bland background based cut “Kuajt të Eger” which should have been on the reject pile (Tuna’s albums always have the last 2 tracks always being sorta crappy - what’s up with that?). All in all, though, there’s nothing fishy about Tuna. As usual, she comes out roses.

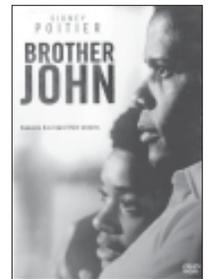
**ADRIFT (2006)**  
**Stars:** Susan May Pratt, Richard Speight Jr.  
**Director:** Hans Horn

Friends gather to sail on a luxury cruise boat. Parked in the middle of the ocean, most jump off for some swimming - except for Amy (Susan May Pratt) who has a childhood phobia of water and stays aboard to tend to her baby. The jerk who owns the boat grabs her and jumps in, only to find out there’s no ladder to get back onto the boat. While the situation grows bleak as the people tread water outside the ship, a baby monitor plays a baby crying. It bombed in Europe where it played in some places for about 10 seconds, but I thought it built atmosphere and desperation. It’s one of my favorite films of 2006, which maybe for that year isn’t saying much but hey. In North America, it’s marketed as “Open Water 2” and was only released on DVD.



**BROTHER JOHN (1971)**  
**Stars:** Sidney Poitier, Will Geer, Beverly Todd  
**Director:** James Goldstone

The Oscar winning actor (but still under-appreciated) Sidney Poitier plays “Brother John” - a man who everyone in town sees only when tragedy occurs in his family. After his sister passes away, of course John appears and a doctor (Will Geer) and his police officer son try to find out what happened in a racially divided Alabama town. Only in the Seventies could you make a film like this which elicits so many questions and not enough answers. Personally, it feels like it borrows a little from Passolini’s “Teorema” with the nomad that touches everyone, but stays away from the question if Brother John could be God or the Devil. When the story doesn’t work, the vivid characterizations make it better than it should be.



**THE CLEVER CLEVER BROTHERS**  
**“TAILGATIN” (2003)**  
**Starring:** Lee Gerovitz, Steve Casserino  
**Director:** Unknown

Here’s a first for KITK. A review of a cooking DVD. Lee Gerovitz and Steve Casserino are two professional chefs who did segments of “Tailgatin” to run during commercial breaks of football games. The DVD offers some mouth watering recipes to enjoy during those famous American tailgate parties. Called the “Abbott and Costello” by some in meal preparation broadcasting, they offer some waga-waga type humor while showing how you can make some tasty grub for the portable grill. The BBQ sauce with pecans sounds pretty good to me. If you like cooking shows



that are quick, have that UHF filler feel, and a menu that's not too exotic, this should score a touchdown!.

### **THE FINAL DAYS OF PLANET EARTH (2006)**

**Starring:** Daryl Hannah, Gil Bellows, Campbell Scott

**Director:** Robert Lieberman

An exterminator and an archeologist discover that humans are being sucked out of the basement of city hall by giant locusts in human form. Darryl Hannah is their queen. This mini series aired in two parts and is in this format for the DVD. It takes some time for the whole thing to get off the ground and the finale feels like termites ate through the last page of the script. However, the music and credits are excellent. There are also references to Belgrade, Serbia being bombed and a used car salesman tells some other people fighting the creative crickets that "You can buy guns at the convenience store in America!" Another "end of the world" flick shot in Canada (this time in Vancouver).

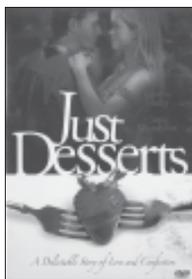


### **JUST DESSERTS (2004)**

**Stars:** Lauren Holly, Costa Mandylor, Brenda Vaccaro

**Director:** Kevin Connor

No, this isn't a biopic about the Toronto dessert place known for the Vivi Leimonis shooting. Instead, it's a story about Marco Poloni (Mandylor) whose Italian family bakery in the Bronx is getting a little cash strapped. He teams up with a snooty "fine dining" chef (Holly) to enter a contest for a Food Network channel's type bake-off to win \$250,000. In the process, love is baking in their lovin' ovens! Over acting haunts this "by the book" Hallmark production that is like eating plain angel cake without berries and whipped cream. You're eating something, but missing something. Just Desserts is "just there". Look for TV chef Wolfgang Puck (as himself) and Brenda Vaccaro (waiting for the cheque to be cut) looking sadly like her next project should be a Jenny Craig diet commercial.



### **LET ME DIE A WOMAN! (1978)**

**Starring:** Dr. Leo Wollman, Leslie

**Director:** Doris Wishman

A pretty woman wakes up for work and talks about getting ready for the day. After putting on lipstick and brushing her Dorothy Hamill hair, she turns to the camera and says "Last year, I was a man" while the credits scream "Let Me Die a Woman!" This documentary has intelligent interviews with a man-to-woman named Leslie (who you could NEVER tell had once been a woman), then some horribly staged and laughable scenes (one includes *Deep Throat's* star Harry Reems). Dr. Wollman reads off cue cards and has a meeting with the saddest bunch of transnians who look like they hit a garage sale on a dead end street for their clothes. If you want to know what it looks like getting your little winky cut off, director Doris Wishman gladly shows you! This fine film opened in Canada (now that makes me proud!) and books were sold at the candy counter to coincide with the film. Transsexual Leslie talks about her shoes a lot during the audio commentary.



### **LITTLE GHOST (1997)**

**Starring:** Krystina Wayburn, Jim Fitzpatrick, Sally Kirkland

**Director:** Linda Shayne

It's Casper by the people of Full Moon Entertainment AND it was shot in Romania! A supermodel (Wayburn) takes her son, slimeball manager and psychic medium to Romania to open "Europe's Best Spa". Her son (played by Jameson Baltes) makes contact with a tween ghost haunting the villa. Imagine the joy your children will have seeing a tomato fight outside Bucharest! The giggles from a ghost and a little boy rollerblading in a castle! The adults (besides Kirkland) give predictable, stereotypical performances while the kids are cute. Little Ghost is worth taking a "Boo" at for those with an interest in the Romanian family film market, or for those with a penchant in "Casper" rip-offs. It cost me \$1 for my DVD copy.



### **MARTHA INC. (2004)**

**Starring:** Cybil Shepherd, Tim Matheson, Joanna Cassidy

**Director:** Jason Ensler

Cybil Shepherd plays domestic diva Martha Stewart in this made for TV movie, recently dumped to DVD. The film follows Martha's rise and subsequent fall, ending around the time she was being investigated for insider trading (thus being followed by "Martha Behind Bars". Cybil does an OK job playing the heretic home-maker, but since the Eighties, she's just gotten lazy in how she approaches roles and taking on a character (it shows). Recently on a trip to K-Mart in West Seneca, NY, I purchased Martha Stewart "Zen Garden" candles. A couple of weeks later, I found this DVD at a Goodwill 50% off sale. Her candles are better.



### **MINA JÄ MORRISON (Finland, 2001)**

**Starring:** Irina Björklund, Samuli Edelmann

**Director:** Lenka Hellstedt

Marketed sometimes as LEVOTTOMAT 2 and based on a novel by Kata Kärkkäinen, "Me and Morrison" (English translation) relishes the practice of worshipping assholes. A flighty girl (Irina Björklund who plays the priest in Levottomat) picks up a pot smoking Jim Morrison fan in a Helsinki bar. Little does she know he's a small time heroin pusher creating a scam on a booze cruise to Estonia. Irina Björklund does what she can with this so-so script, but on closer observation, it's the very young Roope Karisto (who plays Joonas) who steals the show as the son of the small time drug dealer/doors fan. The theatrical trailer for this film was VERY deceiving, basically cutting every shot to show Irina with her boob bouncing to cash in on the magic of LEVOTTOMAT. It's not that kind of film.



### **THE PRIDE OF JESSE HALLAM (1981)**

**Stars:** Johnny Cash, Brenda Vaccaro

**Director:** Gary Nelson

Johnny Cash can't read! Well, he can't in this TV movie where he plays an illiterate coal miner who moves to Ohio. A produce depot manager talks him into learning to read with his son. The late Johnny Cash gives a great performance as Jesse Hallam, one he could have pulled off without reading the script (sorry!), but the film is a little TOO by the TV movie book. Brenda Vaccaro gives her typical "cut the cheque" performance (thanks for that term D'Shon!) which is just kind of there. And speaking of Brenda Vaccaro...

**SHUT UP AND SING (2006)**

**Stars:** The Dixie Chicks

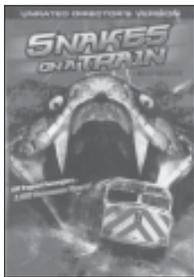
**Director:** Barbara Koppel / Cecelia Peck

I wasn't really a fan of their music, but after viewing the film, I was a fan of THEM! This documentary begins when the Dixie Chicks were the darlings of country music. But their stature was crushed like a Dixie Cup after Natalie Maines' statement during a UK concert about how she was ashamed George W. Bush was from the state of Texas (just before his invasion of Iraq). How they were able to grab all this footage as it unfolded was beyond me. It's pretty unbelievable that out of the entire galaxy of celebrities, only one woman had the balls to say what basically we were all thinking. This follows their spiral downward, and how they pulled their career together to head back. The interviews could have been meatier, but you can overlook this and see their reactions to their public castration – it all unfolds to portray real depth in the Chicks. Their smarmy British manager says after the first wave of public outcry at Maines' comment "Wouldn't it be great if they started burning your records?"

**SNAKES ON A TRAIN (2006)**

**Stars:** Alby Castro, Julia Ruiz, Amelia Jackson-Gray

**Director:** The Mallachi Brothers



A "Mayan Curse" causes an illegal Mexican couple attempting to get to the U.S. border to throw up snakes – and she does - while they chant and throw them in jars. After they are smuggled onto a train, guess what? The snakes get loose. For a straight-to-video quickie (it seemed to come out BEFORE Snakes On A Plane hit DVD shelves), it's fun if you overlook its boring moments and goofy premise. Shot basically with a digital camera, it looks great and the snakes are slimy. Production wise, it could have been called "Mice On A Train" because the abandoned railway train that they shot on was supposedly filled with mice, much to the cast and crew's discomfort.

**THREE NUTS IN SEARCH OF A BOLT (1964)**

**Starring:** Mamie Van Doren, Tommy Noonan

**Director:** Tommy Noonan

Sassy stripper Saxy (bubbly Mamie Van Doren) lives with a used car salesman and a male model. Unable to afford to hire a psychiatrist, they instead hire an unemployed actor to play out and act out each of their personalities. Shot in black and white, Mamie takes a bath in

beer, which, remarkably, is in color. Mamie bathes in beers and you'll enjoy the film more after you have a couple yourselves. It gets high points for originality in the plot department (who could think of such a thing?) and finishes with the line "It sure don't taste like tomato juice!" after Mamie does a strip routine! I showed my personal film print of this to some friends from Ohio while cottaging and drinking. It seemed pretty damn funny, and one bought a copy off Ebay afterwards to figure out the tomato juice reference. The DVD also has a pretty interesting interview with Mamie Van Doren (a 50's era Marilyn Monroe clone), which is worth the price alone. There's even been a rumour they want to remake this!



**TROIS 3: THE ESCORT (2004)**

**Starring:** Brian White, Patrice Fisher, Isaiah Washington

**Director:** Sylvain White

Great, it's "Red Shoe Diaries" for the BET crowd! Trent (White) owes money to a mobster (Washington) due to a hip-hop concert no-show. After going to a bar for a couple drinks, he meets mysterious club owner Kyria (sexy Patrice Fisher) who starts pimping him out to pay off his mob debts. Shot in Atlanta, the cinematography and acting are all very good. Director Sylvain White (who later directed STOMP THE YARD) can set up scenes without playing the material over the top. The film starts out great, but the last quarter falls apart like a bad Velvet Jones novel. Zalman King should have been brought in for a rewrite. The actors all seemed like they were ready to get naked, but barely do. What was the problem?

**UFO AND PARANORMAL PHENOMENA: ENCOUNTERS OF THE FIFTH KIND PART 1 (Finland 1995)**

**Director:** Juhan Af Grann

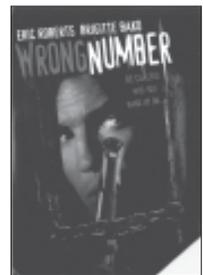


When I told some friends in Finland I had encountered this documentary DVD at a dollar store, they returned with chuckles. Several Finns tell of their psychic alliances with UFOs while someone at a Russian UFO institute tells his story of seeing a UFO three times while sitting besides a crude stuffed alien. I feel sorry for the granny and her sister in Nivala who saw some "strange red lights" outside their window. I want to give them a hug and tell them they will be OK, and to take the antibiotics their doctor prescribed. Another Finn shows paintings of kids being eaten by snakes which have to do with "repressed thought hypnosis." This runs on Canadian TV once in a while, and now the DVD sells for close to \$60! Some fine programming that ran on MTV3. Take a bow, MTV3!

**WRONG NUMBER (2002)**

**Starring:** Eric Roberts, Brigitte Bako

**Director:** Richard Middleton



A scummy dot com pioneer (Eric Roberts, who does only a couple days work) narrates from the grave as he investigates who might have knocked him off as they pull his body from a river. One of the detectives is that guy who did the annoying FIDO cellular phone commercials in Canada. Roberts can do this kind of role in his sleep but Brigitte Bako (who plays wife Dana Dermott) makes the dancing baby seem like a Shakespearian thespian. The film should be titled "Wrong Script" as it plays like a bad CSI episode. There are no interesting qualities of any of the characters or actors that can pull it off. However, the ending does have a twist.

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