



SHOOTING UP THE PROJECTS

DAVID ALAN HARVEY CAPTURES GLOBAL HIP-HOP

"I would describe it as a journey," says Magnum photographer David Alan Harvey of his series *Living Proof* (powerHouse, October 2007), a visual exploration of the global world of hip-hop. He began exploring the projects in the South Bronx, home of legendary electro-funk DJ and hip-hop pioneer Afrika Bambaataa. Here, he met Uptown and Ruckus, two local hip-hop artists, and starting snapping pictures of the two everywhere from strip clubs to their families' homes. "In a way, *they* really took the pictures. There was that magic time when I was working with these guys in the hood and we made a little part of photographic history. I think it kind of helped that I wasn't young and hip and cool," says Harvey, who wryly describes himself as a 62-year-old white guy. "I didn't have an agenda."

As his interest grew in what he calls a "cultural revolution," he began flying out to investigate the global mutations of hip-hop around the world, from South Korea to Thailand, Israel and Palestine. The journey eventually drew him to West Africa in a search for local griots ("storytellers"), the true forefathers of hip-hop, who for centuries have kept heritage and history alive through a rich oral tradition, combining words and music.

Though all these international facets feature prominently in the series (along with shots of stars like Ice Cube, Snoop Dogg and Nelly), there's a marked focus on boys in the hood. These are the gritty images that reveal what stirred Harvey's fascination from the beginning: the everyday stories of life and survival in the projects. "It's not easy for these guys," he says. "What happens to them—they end up in jail, they end up dead, or they end up rich and famous." LORI FREDRICKSON



ELVY

Anybody interested in the Belgium songwriter Elvy can simply go to his website (www.elvy.be) and download his three full-length albums for free. For the last four years, the 25-year-old Elvy (aka Lionel Vanhaute) has developed his craft on the Internet, releasing his work without distribution, label or even a physical format. "I don't even keep a master version of my songs," Vanhaute says. "Once it's recorded, it's directly converted into mp3 format." Belgium's two linguistic communities are French and Flemish. While Elvy is in the former, most of his lyrics are actually in English, and his sound comes not from Belgium's electronic or trip-hop scene but from the great 70s songwriters like Neil Young and Van Morrison. "I can't judge piracy, because it gave me the opportunity to get a huge musical knowledge," he says. "I couldn't have afforded all the albums I've listened to. That fortune as listener is my misfortune as musician." With pump organs and warped string synths, this is something you imagine spinning on wax through a dusty gramophone, but like so much of the newest, most exciting music out there, the only way to hear this sound is digitally. "Whether we want it or not, I think the physical form is dead or will die," he says. "I am missing it a lot." ROSS SIMONINI