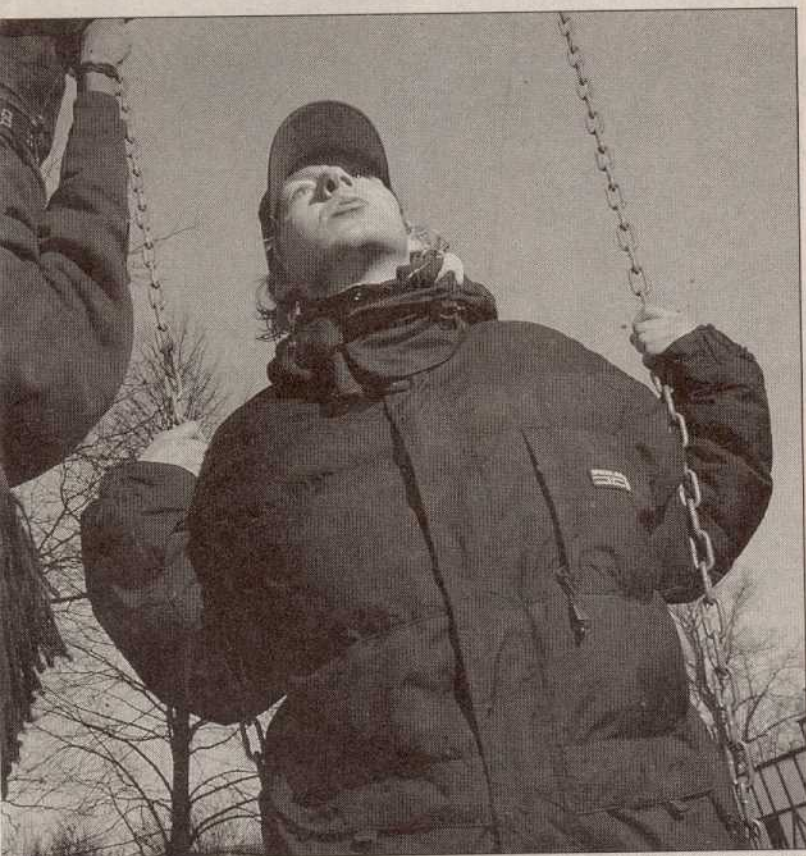


ake Toronto



LOUIE PALU/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

n Members will perform in Toronto tonight at Edge 102's Electric Bif Naked.

when the Rascalz won another Juno the next year, for *Northern Touch*, a collaborative single recorded with Toronto MCs Choclair, Kardinal Offishall and Thrust, the award was not only presented on air, but the amalgamated cross-country crew were also invited to perform on the TV broadcast.

"The Rascalz did an awesome job of introducing Vancouver to the world," says Hanes, adding that Swollen Members are opening the floodgates even further.

"There are only a small number of cats making noise at a significant level," he adds, listing off a number of Vancouver rappers such as Moka Only, J-Ras, Checkmate, Concise and Birds of Prey, that he's been "pumping" in his column. But Hanes believes that Vancouver's strong do-it-yourself mentality is going to keep the scene growing.

Vancouver hip-hop hasn't always been this groovy. Back in the mid-

nineties, when both Mad Child and Prevail were first trying to establish names for themselves, the scene here was smaller, violent and much more territorial.

The two rappers didn't know each other, but had they met back then, Prevail says they would never have given each other the time of day. In 1995, Prevail had been in Vancouver for two years. Raised in Victoria, he had spent his high-school days hanging out with Nelly Furtado and her gang at places like Johnny Z's arcade. When he arrived on the mainland, he gravitated downtown.

Mad Child, on the other hand, was born and raised in the suburbs of North Vancouver, where he worked at the FWUH hip-hop clothing store. Deeply immersed in skateboard and snowboard culture, he had already recorded a song, produced by pro skater Tommy Guarero, for a compilation CD re-

leased by Bomb Records in San Francisco.

Although Prevail is black and Mad Child is white, they both say the lines that divided Vancouver hip-hop in those days had nothing to do with race. The difference, he says, had more to do with attitude.

"We were really young and didn't have a lot of cash," Prevail says of him and his crew. "We were doing our thing on the street corners outside clubs and were jealous of people in the studio."

It would be another two years before they eventually did cross paths. While the Rascalz had set their sights on the big leagues, with a major-label deal, and then headed east to forge ties with their compatriots in Toronto, Mad Child and Prevail did the typical West Coast thing and each headed south to California in 1995.

In San Francisco, Mad Child quickly made a name for himself as one of the best underground rappers in Northern California, eventually hooking up with the famed Hieroglyphics and the Rock Steady Crew, one of hip-hop's most highly respected collectives.

Prevail, in the meantime, floated around San Diego for five months, making contacts at B-Boy Summits and hanging out at bookstores, quenching his passion for the great works of literature (he just finished reading *Hamlet* when we talked, and was about to begin George Orwell's *1984*) that inspire his metaphorical lyrics.

In 1997, after both had returned to Vancouver with attitudes somewhat broadened from their travels, they met at a house party in North Vancouver. When the duo launched into an impromptu battle, the room suddenly went stone-cold silent as everyone sat back and listened to the freestyle jousting that lasted for over an hour. "That was it," says Prevail. "We knew we had a certain chemistry."

Their latest album is full of collaborations with likeminded indie peers — well-known West Coast guests such as the Dilated Peoples, Son Doobie, Jurassic 5's, Chali Tuna and DJ J-Rocc of the Beat Junkies. But it also includes slick radio-friendly hits.