

# LOCAL NOISE

## Layla

17/04/05, Sydenham Community Centre.  
Layla, Tony Mitchell, Nick Keys.

---

### Summary:

“Well, to tell you the truth, I don’t really listen to it [her album *Heretik*] at all, because it’s sort of old for me. Most of those tracks are a few years old, and have been sitting there half-finished for a long time. So I thought, I’ll finish them, get it all out there, and clean my slate and start on fresh stuff. But I didn’t listen to it for months, and then I picked it up not so long ago, and I spun out at how much I swear in it. I was like, ‘Layla you guttermouth! Geez, is it really necessary!’ But that’s how I thought and how I talked. At the time, I was angry, and that’s how it came out.”

This 2005 discussion with Perth-based FemCee Layla took place at a community hip-hop event in Sydenham, where she was as part of a national tour on the back of her recently released album, *Heretik*. In a very frank and honest way, Layla talks about her life, the role of hip-hop in it, her influences and her struggles, her experiences and putting that down on record. The talk also covers issues of female role models in society, the sexualisation of children and also the wider scope of social injustice, which she saw from the inside during her time as a social worker.

### About:

This text is licensed under a Creative Commons Attributed-Sharealike-Noncommercial license. For details on the terms of this license, please see <http://www.creativecommons.org/nc-sa-a2.0/>

Local Noise is an ARC-funded research project from the University of Technology, Sydney. Its focus is on Australian hip-hop, and the localisation of hip-hop in different cultural, societal and educational contexts.

**L:** Layla

**TM:** Tony Mitchell

**NK:** Nick Keys

**TM:** The first track of yours I heard was 'Maverick', which was the on the *Straight From the Art* compilation, and that was a signature tune for you, in many ways, yes?

**L:** Really? Yeah, well it had a lot of hidden meanings; there were lots of bits and pieces in there. When people say 'what's the track about?' I can't pinpoint it, there's so many different areas about it for me.

**TM:** When you say hidden meanings, do you mean deliberately hidden, or just unconscious?

**L:** Ah, no, just a lot of things. I mean, sometimes I will write lines that have personal meaning to me that others might not get – if it's a personal experience or memory. But that's writing, so it has meaning to me.

**TM:** Right, because you have a track called 'In Between the Lines', which is sort of saying the same thing. You've got to read between the lines to get the full sense of what you're saying.

**L:** Yeah, it's pretty self-reflective. That was done a couple of years back and it was a time that was sort of – I don't know, everyone goes through these periods of self-doubt. I think that 'In Between the Lines' is sort of like that. And Naomi, or Porsah Laine, who sang the chorus, she took the track and analysed it herself and then wrote the chorus, as how she saw it.

**TM:** And I was just reading another interview with you and you said that she is working on her own album, is that right?

**L:** Yeah. Her partner is a full-on trance producer. So she's done a lot of stuff with trancey beats, and they are incredible tracks, they are very deep, she talks about a lot of really spun out sort of issues, even the moment when you leave your body, and she talks about rape. Quite a lot of dark stuff, as well as some other stuff. And they're good tracks, I've only heard a couple. Sometimes I feel they are not mixed full-on, but her voice is so incredible, but the vocals need to be a little louder and the beats took over a bit.

**TM:** And she's someone you've had a long relationship with?

**L:** Well Daz, Dazatah, his entire extended family is all musos. Like, his mum and her seven brothers and sisters were a band called the Smith Family Band for years and years and years. And so that's why Daz has such 'magic ears', as I call him. But June, my mother-in-law, well pretty much, taught Naomi how to sing since she was about seven, so she's grown up as Daz's cousin and our mate.

**TM:** I did a brief interview with Downsyde at the Gaelic Club about two years ago, and it was really noisy and The Herd were playing at the time...

**L:** Oh yep, I remember that show.

**TM:** And we did an interview on video, and it never got it to play back.

**L:** Yeah, it's incredible, Downsyde have got her [Naomi] on their last two albums and Drapht has her on his solo album.

**TM:** So, it sounds like the Syllabolix crew is very tight?

- L:** Yeah, we are, in a slack way, if you know what I mean. It's no excuse that we live at different ends of the city, we're all good mates. But we keep saying, 'We've got to get an SBX compilation out', and that's when we sort of slacken off. Everyone wants to do it, but everyone is doing their own thing, and so we need to go 'Right, we're going to do it'. But it's not slack if it's someone's album though, like mine, I ring up Clandestine and Hunter and everyone and say 'Jump on this track'. We get it together whenever we do albums.
- TM:** Right. Is there a kind of – I suppose it's a very clichéd question – but is there a kind of solidarity brought by the isolation of being in Perth?
- L:** Yeah, I think so. There's a few crews coming up, but yeah, we are isolated, I mean we are the most isolated city in the world, actually. And maybe sometimes that sort of makes us tight. Like the Perth scene itself doesn't have a huge amount of beef, I mean, there are a few dickhead crews – 'Yeah yeah, I'm a hardcore gangsta' – but we just laugh at them, 'Yeah, go home' sort of thing. But as far as people coming and supporting, it's really good like that.
- TM:** I remember a couple of the guys from Downsyde saying that had kind of come up through this jazz pub, I forget the name of it?
- L:** The Hyde Park Hotel – 'Hydies' – that's where we all sort of met, it was a Monday night, and everyone had their first go at things, jumped up and everything.
- TM:** But it was actually a jazz venue?
- L:** Yeah, they do a lot. Hydies do a lot of everything, sort of one night jazz, one night punk sort of thing. But primarily with the jazz, but yeah, it's good.
- TM:** Right. And you're now signed to Obese, and there seems to be a quite strong relationship between Perth and Melbourne through Obese?
- L:** Well now, Pegz knows we've got the real deal – no! But the last three albums he's put out are Downsyde and me, and he's just signed Drapht. So he must like what we're doing. But yeah, they are good. Bianca [from Obese] is incredible, she books all my shows and all the team is great.
- TM:** Did you come up through battling?
- L:** No, not really.
- TM:** Oh, because there is this hard edge...
- L:** Yeah, I think that was more inner battling, more struggles that I had to get off my chest. More of 'I have to prove', and I was quite angry with issues in my life and random things. But I think it was more a battle inside me than one right out there going, 'I won't get down on my knees for you!' as the line they always say to bring out the old 'Layla' line. They say 'Eric Clapton' and I say 'Yeah, whatever'.
- TM:** What were your inspirations in terms of people who provided directions and role models for you when you were coming up?
- L:** Well, growing up I sort of listened to a lot of hip-hop, but I never thought inwardly 'Oh, I'm going to be an MC'. But after I fell into it, for ages, I was spinning out, it was weird, I never thought I would be doing this at all. And yeah, I don't know, it sort of just happened, I was writing stuff and it just merged with the MCing. I had a lot of support from all the SBX boys the more and more I met them all, and we formed around that time. And yeah, it was great, people were so supportive, they said 'Just keep doing it.'

**TM:** But there were no particular artists who influenced you?

**J:** Um... I was always so broke, I never had the money to buy anything. But I did listen to things here and there, um... I don't know, I can't remember that far back, geez, it's not that long ago, that's really bad. But, I think once I did meet more people it got going for me, I mean, we brought over the Hoods for *A Matter of Time* and supported them. And that was massive, 800 people in Perth! It was a jammed show, and I think when I look, all my boys were really the most inspirational thing around me, just being able to have the opportunity to listen to fresh new beats, dope rhymes and all this fresh talent – so it was hot. Also, having a studio at our house, it was a great opportunity at the time.

**TM:** Right, so you got in more off the local scene really?

**L:** Well, yeah. But there's a lot of stories, like I lived in London for six months last year, and that scene is incredible, it was really inspiring, all the sort of Low Life crew, and Foreign Beggars like Task Force, Maestro, Ty, Biggy – like, heaps of dudes. So I've always streamed through the UK stuff and also lots of American stuff. But I suppose growing up, when I was like 12,13, it was real gangster stuff, N.W.A and that sort of stuff. And then different bits and pieces came through. I've listened to a lot of sort of random stuff.

**TM:** OK, any foreign language stuff?

**L:** Some Dark Circle stuff. But I never really got my hands on a lot of it. I suppose the thing with listening to foreign stuff is that you can listen to the flow, the delivery, the production – but as far as lyrical content and wordplay, you can't. My grandmother's French, and I learnt French for nine years but I can't remember it, but I'd love to know it now. It makes me hungry to learn it, especially when I listen to foreign stuff it's like 'Oh, I just need to know what they are saying!' They could be going 'Yo, yo, your mother's a bitch', or they could be spitting some incredible wordplay.

**TM:** Some of it is incredible wordplay.

**L:** Oh, it is. But yeah, I find there is that one element that stops me going the whole way.

**TM:** Right, because there is a bit of Spanish influence in Downsyde isn't there?

**L:** Well, Dazza's got sort of one-twentieth Spanish in him, but I think that's more the whole funk thing that Dazza listens to, the beats he likes. I mean, 'El Questro', that was produced by Fidel, but I think it's more just liking that sounds rather than...

**TM:** ...Identifying with that sound or a Hispanic background.

**L:** Yeah.

**TM:** Right. The track you must get asked about all the time is 'The Fuss about Sluts'.

**L:** Oh, 'The Fuss'! Yes, it had to be said, as harsh as it was.

**TM:** What was the impetus for it?

**L:** I was just over seeing so many female artists in the music industry just prancing around in nothing pretty much, and loving it. The thing I was really concerned about was role models for young girls. My cousin's daughters, and all our young girls, are looking at this, and seeing the people that they look up to 'cause they're into the music, and thinking that that's how you're supposed to be. When you're growing up as a girl, you really look up to those sort of people, when music becomes a strong part of your life and these people become your idols.

**TM:** So, you're talking about people like Britney Spears?

**L:** Yeah. I suppose I think back to when I saw Dazza's cousins do a dance for us at Christmas, and they were eight at the time, and it was so erotic! It was like full-on booty shaking, and it was just like 'Oh shit'. And so it stemmed from there, but in 'The Fuss' I also talk about the whole subject of miming as well, those times when it becomes so obvious they are just faking it. You know, the whole adrenaline of doing live shows is missed out with the whole fake element. Also, the whole thing of chicks coming into it because the look great in hardly any clothes, and then just really not having a very good voice, but these days you can just digitally enhance things, you know.

**NK:** Yeah, you can just compress the vocals so anyone sounds good.

**L:** Yeah, so that's why they mime, because they can't actually pull it off the way it sounds on record. Yeah, 'The Fuss' also was about writing – or not writing – your own stuff. I guess because I write my own stuff and express myself that way, that whole sort of cheesiness just doesn't rub off on me so well. My friend from Melbourne was at a gig where I did 'The Fuss' and this chick next to her started pulling up her top, like fully covering herself. I was like 'Oh, no I don't mean you'. It's really more that whole thing of selling your music not on talent, but on booty.

**TM:** Not trading sexuality, basically.

**L:** Well that's it, and sex sells. Everyone knows it.

**TM:** Are there other FemCees on the Australian scene that have been important to you, people like Josie, or Trey, Maya?

**L:** Yeah, I mean we're all friends. I got interviewed a couple of weeks ago, it was about women in hip-hop, for *Urban Hits* or something, and they asked 'Who is there now for young women to look up to as influences and role models?' And when I thought about it in my own experience, there were random female MCs which I thought were good growing up, but as I looked it at, I got influenced by everyone, the whole scene. That's why when people ask me if I want to do a workshop and teach young girls how to rhyme I say, 'Well, first off, I'm still teaching myself how to rhyme', so I back off a bit like that. But secondly, if I am going to talk about rhyming, I just want everyone, because I sort of don't really focus on the whole gender thing, because I got bits of pieces from everywhere and everyone. But there are people, like MC Que, Mary from Melbourne, her mix tape in 95: she is like the Oz veteran for chickies you know. She gave it to me a few years ago and I was like 'Wow!' She was rocking a full normal accent and everything, she's great.

**TM:** Absolutely great album [*Heretik*] by the way, I think it's terrific, one of the best in Australian hip-hop so far.

**L:** You reckon?

**TM:** Yeah, absolutely.

**L:** Well, to tell you the truth, I don't really listen to it at all, because it's sort of old for me. Most of those tracks are a few years old, and have been sitting there half-finished for a long time. So I thought, I finish them, get it all out there, and clean my slate and start on fresh stuff. But I didn't listen to it for months, and then I picked it up not so long ago, and I spun out at how much I swear in it. I was like, 'Layla you guttermouth! Geez, is it really necessary!' But that's how I thought and how I talked. At the time, I was angry, and that's how it came out. But I'm not expecting it to get a hell of a lot of airplay, but, you know, it's me, it's a chapter of my life put down. People can like it or lump it, I don't really care, because this is only a taste of what I've got.

- NK:** I think it's important, 'cause like you say; it represents how you do talk and how people do interact with each other.
- L:** And certain issues at certain points of my life, and all that stuff is in my head and I had to get it out, and if that's how it's going to come out, then that's how it's going to come out, sort of thing.
- TM:** I know one or two people I've talked to have noted that you seem to have what they called a 'masculine' style. One MC who I won't name said that you're like a man in a woman's body!
- L:** Come on, spill the beans, who was it! Nah, it's cool.
- NK:** Simplex says that you drink all the blokes under the table.
- L:** Simmo! I used to, but I've got health problems now, so I can't drink that much any more. But, I guess I've never been the girliest of girls, if I can put it that way.
- TM:** But I think that's what so refreshing about it in lots of ways. There's a really kind of ocker drive there, it's very full-on.
- L:** It's just Layla.
- TM:** And presumably that's not going to change?
- L:** No. Sometimes I look back at real old, raw recordings and I think I did sound a lot more low and growling, but I think that's the whole progression when you're starting out and finding a voice – not even putting on a voice – just as far as rhyming and tone go. I don't know, back then it was about finding your natural voice and experimenting. So some of the older stuff is very 'Oh, I don't know' – I guess I was more manly back then!
- TM:** What was some of the older stuff?
- L:** A lot of those tracks are old. One of the oldest would be 'Fatal Pressures', and 'Analyse', that was one of the first. I mean, most stuff was written a good few years ago, like 'Strike Three'.
- NK:** Is 'Maverick' an older one?
- L:** Well, as far as these tracks go it's one of the newer ones actually. That's what I mean in 'Driving Miss Layzy', I'm lazy and it took me a lot of time to sort of round shit off and put it out. So that's why it's nice to have, but I sort of feel I'm over it.
- TM:** You've moved on?
- L:** Yeah.
- TM:** Do you still perform the tracks?
- L:** Yeah, well that's the thing. I'm doing the national tour where I'm doing the album launch, and I've obviously got to do tracks off the album, but inside of me I'm itching to get the new stuff out. But that's alright, I'm slowly incorporating the new stuff into my live set.
- TM:** So this album would be like a culmination of four years?
- L:** Yeah, from when I started. But there would be sort of eight months where I wouldn't do anything, write or record. I got really slack at one point.
- TM:** Do you think that you are representing Perth when you travel?
- L:** I suppose we are. I think it's more just representing yourself, really. I sort of feel very SBX, with the

crew, we release together, and we've got a good thing going there. There's lots of diversity: we've got people from Downsyde to Clandestine and within that, there's diversity, some funky stuff, some more dark stuff like 'Dark Days Hot Nights'. It's probably one of my most favourite Downsyde tracks of all time. But if you go and break that up, and listen to Dazza's solos, Optamus's solos, they are just completely different, on totally different levels. So, I reckon we've got a lot of variety there – same with Drapht, his new album is coming out, which is incredible.

**TM:** Do you have other links to the other music scenes in Perth, or is the hip-hop scene pretty self-contained?

**L:** Yeah. I mean we do know other musos around and stuff. But I think honestly, it's really only the hip-hop scene, as well as some dub, like Cheeky from Downsyde is also in The Sunshine Brothers, and they do more dub, reggae-type stuff.

**TM:** Are you from a particular area of Perth that you identify with?

**L:** Nah, it's too small I think for that sort of thing. I don't go on about 'Westside!' or that kind of thing. I suppose when we talk about west, we talk about Perth. Perth is our sort of suburb.

**TM:** I was particularly intrigued by one track, the one about the outback, and the sample about the buckaroo and all that. What's that about?

**L:** OK, this is a long story. And really, I could have written a lot more about this track. What happened was, me and two of my best friends went to this country town, which was hours and hours from Perth. This friend of ours, his parents sort of owned the hotel and we were in for a shock. We started at the pub and then these guys were like 'Oh, come to this party'. And it was a tiny wheat-belt town, quite inbred I think, and they said 'Come to this party', it was this 18th, so we thought we'd be able to get back no worries. We ended up going out there, and it was like, really in the middle of nowhere, it was hours out of town, and they drove us out there. It was just full-on, it was just... it was just like another world. All this stuff happened, and they were just weird. As a friendly thing they would just pour stuff all over each other, and they'd be ripping open new packets of booze and throwing them around, really wild shit. I can't capture what the whole night was like, all these crazy hicks. No, it was full-on, I can't explain what it was like. And we got stranded there all night, and we couldn't get back and all this other shit happened, and when we finally got back and got out of this town, it was like 'Oh my god!' It was an experience, I don't think many people get that track, they think 'Oh yeah, she was in the country, whatever', but for the three people I went with, they are the only people who can really relate to that track. It didn't get portrayed how it actually was in that track, but it was pretty intense.

**TM:** So it was pretty hair-raising experience.

**L:** Yeah, they were like 'You stole my akubra!' and going on about their hats, and we were like 'Man, I didn't steal your 'kubra!' And all these weird people – 'cause we were sitting in this car waiting for someone to sober up to drive home – and the couples were having it off out the back.

**TM:** I think the track certainly conveys something of that, something kind of other worldly and weird. And 'Driving Miss Lazy', that's an interesting one, that's just about being lazy?

**L:** Just about never getting off my arse, getting too much ganja and all the rest.

**TM:** Right, OK. A lot of hip-hop artists like The Herd out there [*The Herd are in another room playing live*] are very politically engaged, and do a lot of tracks where they make a real statement. Do you feel the need to do that at all?

**L:** I feel that, like, say with ‘Hushed Up’ and ‘Strike Three’. I studied community work for a number of years, and then I went into sort of voluntary [work], and did all this work experience in tiny places, places like the size of these two rooms, if that. And these were community centres where we had like 600 clients, 90% Aboriginal. There are a lot of non-government agencies that help, but a lot of places go ‘Oh no, we don’t deal with that issues’, where they refer you or palm you off to someone else. And that sort of goes down all the way to mental illness and drug problems where it’s like ‘Oh, you’ve got a drug problem, no, no, we don’t deal with that’. So there’s a lot of that, but working at this place really opened my eyes. We were just broad in our scope, a lot of emergency food relief – people who had their electricity and gas cut off would come to us. And it was mad, it was so busy, it was crazy. We dealt with a lot of stuff, and I really saw an insight into a lot of government agencies, they do good you know, but I also saw some really vulgar stuff, even racism still evident there. I did have a good insight into that. I would spend seven hours on the phone to Telstra, and they were just dicks. So with ‘Hushed Up’, that came from seeing all the margins in society. It was a good experience ‘cause it made you realise ‘Wow, I do have it all right. I can go home and eat’, and all that stuff.

**TM:** Yeah, because there is a lot of anger with your tracks, and it’s not always political anger, you’re angry about other things as well.

**L:** I must say that I have chilled out a bit over the past year or two. But growing up as a teen, I was heated... heated passion. But yeah, I think it was a lot of drunken writing as well, a lot of the album I wrote when I was pissed. But then there is other stuff, ‘U.nmotivated N.umbrained I.mbecile’ is talking about how I had mum pressuring me to go to uni – I mean I dropped out of school, then I went to TAFE and did art design and then got all communal for a few years. I mean my mum is great, she was like ‘Uni, uni, are you going to go to uni? You should have a degree under your belt before you have kids’, and also society is a lot like that. I noticed at the end of school there was a very strong statement being made, saying ‘If you don’t do TE [tertiary education] then you won’t get anywhere in life’. I suppose that’s just pressure of high school and how much they really want you to go to uni. So I felt a lot of pressure there, and mum was sort of like, ‘What are you going to do?’ and at the beginning of last year I was going to start a social work degree, but I sort of felt that I didn’t know if I wanted to do it. I didn’t know whether I wanted to start a degree that gets me \$20 000 in debt and then realise that this isn’t what I want to do. And I also thought, if I do want to keep going with the music, and people want to bring me over for shows and that, then I don’t want to have to say ‘Nah, I’ve got uni, I can’t’. So I didn’t want to jeopardise either, and I’m only 22, I can go to uni anytime, which I plan to when I find my passion. So with that track I just needed to get that stuff off my chest, people might think ‘Oh, she’s rhyming about uni!’ but I never got there, and it was just playing on my mind.

**TM:** So this is like a life choice for you now then?

**L:** At the moment, yeah. I went travelling last year, and I’m just going to take it as it comes. Next year I’d like to do the music industry course in technical production. But yeah, we’ll see how it goes.

**TM:** When you were in London, were you hanging out with any particular crews?

**L:** I laid low for a while. I was working a lot – 50 hours a week in a pub. I did go to shows and meet up with a few people. But London is a massive scene, and I wasn’t going to go in and say ‘Oh g’day, I’m an MC from Australia’, they’d be like ‘Yeah honey, so what?’ And Josie [Styles] was always saying ‘Give this guy a call, here’s the number’, but I just didn’t feel comfortable ringing up and going ‘Can you come and meet me?’ sort of thing. It’s not really me. But I did go to a lot of shows, Skinny Man’s launch, Young Guns, Evil Eds, like, I really got out there to as many shows as I could when I wasn’t working. The Kung Fus as well. It really helped when Josie came over and stayed, also Bias

came over and stayed at the same time. I met up with Disorder, and Maestro I'd met in Australia beforehand, but Josie had all her contacts, she's really on the ball and on to it, so we sort of just hung out with heaps of dudes.

**TM:** Because there a lot of similarities in many ways between the UK scene and the Australian scene. Like they are still both struggling for recognition...

**L:** Yeah, well that's it.

**TM:** What's your view on American accents?

**L:** We were just having this debate before. Personally I feel if you're not American, and you've got this put on voice, then I don't know... Hip-hop is all about expression and you, you're pretty much putting your soul down on paper, and if you get up there and are being someone you're not... We were having a discussion with Juice before, and he was sort of saying that it all stemmed from America before, and even the terms you use like 'mad', 'dope', 'ill', 'whatever', they are American. And he was saying, some people with a twang who have the better skills are getting shunned because they've got this twang, which is quite an interesting point to bring up. But personally, this is our voice, there's nothing wrong with our accent. A lot of people might find it harder to get used to it because it's different – but whatever, if that's you, then just be you. Come out with the way you talk, you know.

**TM:** I mean, the immediately noticeable thing about your album is that you've got a very broad Australian accent...

**L:** Do I have more than anyone else?

**TM:** ...Which I think is absolutely great.

**L:** Yeah, I'm not writing to crack the world. If people pick up on it around the world then whatever, but...

**NK:** I was just wanting to pick up on the point of anger. You've got lots of anger on the album, but it's not only you from the Perth scene, Matty B's solo album has got a lot to do with troubled youth, he's got lines like about the youth in WA being in a state of decay, and I'm just wondering if there are a lot of kids struggling in growing up in Perth? Is there a Perth thing to it?

**L:** Um... I don't know if they'd be really anymore than other cities. Like, everywhere has got drug problems, everywhere has homeless problems, everywhere has got family problems. Maybe it is just a SBX thing – not that we try and talk about that – but just that we express what's happened to us. Or maybe we have got that identification as a crew, 'cause I had a question, someone saying 'A lot of SBX talk about political issues, is that a sort of conscious thing?' I was sort of like 'I don't think so... we just express ourselves'. So, I don't know, maybe because we grew up writing and we've been around that, you know, a few of my friends started taking heroin – seeing junkies and that. But I'm sure other people around Oz and the world talk about that kind of stuff as well.

**TM:** Have you been involved in any of the other elements, like breaking or writing?

**L:** No! I've made a few beats and that, but then my computer died in the arse and I never got it set up again. And I always did a lot of art, but not really any writing.

**TM:** Who did the design for the cover?

**L:** That is my brother, my older brother.

**TM:** Right, it's really good. Within the SBX crew, there must have been breakers and writers, because it

sounds like a pretty big crew?

- L:** Yeah, and then we had extended ties like Concrete Elite and Systematic crew and other breaking and graff crews. We are all very tight, as friends you know.
- TM:** Another thing is that – I’m looking here at the Gerling review, and she notes that you sample a lot from other Aussie hip-hop artists, which is really interesting because not many people do that.
- L:** Well, I said in that, we [Oz hip-hop] say a lot of good things. And I’ve had a great experience touring, not just now, but doing shows in Melbourne and Adelaide, and meeting so many people, meeting Certified Wires in Adelaide and then a crew in every state. It’s amazing, I’ve made wicked friends through hip-hop and I respect their music and their words so much that we’d prefer to sample them. It also might build on that whole identification of Aussie hip-hop if we’re using a lot of groups’ stuff.
- TM:** Like you’ve got Mass MC, Hilltop Hoods, Hospice Crew, Bias B, Lyrical Commission.
- L:** Yeah, a lot of people, Deadly as well.
- TM:** And you’ve also got a huge amount of guests on the album.
- L:** Yeah, I’ve got a few.
- TM:** Like The Hospice.
- L:** The Hospice were over in Perth so I got them to drop by, along with another friend Knowledge. And the rest are mainly SBX boys.
- TM:** Right. So it’s very much attaching itself to the rest of Aussie hip-hop?
- L:** I suppose, yeah.
- TM:** You mentioned before because there is so much swearing that it is not going to get a lot of airplay.
- L:** I didn’t write it for airplay.
- TM:** Has it not got a lot of airplay?
- L:** I think it has got a bit.
- TM:** It certainly has got some on triple j.
- L:** Yeah, triple j, and other random places. I wouldn’t expect it to get it played on Nova, I even say that in a lyric. Even though I had an interview with Nova and I was like ‘Can you guys even play this?’
- NK:** ‘Do you even listen to it?’
- L:** Yeah, I know. But that’s fine. It’s just about getting stuff out of me, getting it off my chest. I find when I write, I suppose I still swear a lot when talking – and in my head more than anything – but when I write now, I find that I have so much more to describe, and the way I want to describe it. I guess it’s just the progression of writing, but I don’t feel the need to swear, and there is almost no room to swear now – there is as an occasional emphasis, but I find tone and the way you say stuff, the way you pronounce stuff can be just as harsh and hard-hitting than actual swearing.
- TM:** Absolutely.
- L:** So I guess I have sort of changed, but the album is really just reflecting back. I mean, my parents think that it is fantastic, I wouldn’t want it got anywhere near my nana...

**NK:** It says that in the liner notes.

**L:** Yeah. Once my cousin came to a show and she said to me after ‘Don’t you ever let Nana hear that!’ My nana said a funny thing years ago when I was listening to hip-hop as a kid growing up, ‘That rap-tap music will give ‘er brain damage’. I love it, it’s great!

**TM:** But it’s funny that it’s OK for men to swear all they want, but for a woman to swear..

**L:** Really? Surely not in this day and age.

**TM:** Well, I’m not sure. I mean we did an interview with Lazy Grey, and listening to his stuff, he really does swear a lot.

**L:** Hunter.

**NK:** Yeah. Hunter and Dazastah’s solo album is very funny.

**L:** Yeah, track two. He says it [‘fuck’] 27 times in one track. But I love him, if you knew him you’d know it was Hunter down to a tee. It’s great.

**NK:** Yeah, you can tell it’s tongue in cheek all the way.

**L:** That’s just Hunts for you. But there are times you know when it just has to be in there, you need to say ‘Fuck!’ I rarely do it now when I write, you can’t, when you’re writing and rhyming and trying to fit in some wordplay, there are only so many things that rhyme with ‘fuck’, so it just kills the pattern after a while. So you put in another word to fit it better.

**TM:** Do you do much freestyling?

**L:** Not as much as I should. It’s mainly written stuff. I think I was just always so stoned, I’d just sit in the back and go, ‘Nah, I’ll just sit here and watch you guys.’

**TM:** But within the SBX crew is there a tradition of cyphering?

**L:** Yeah, years ago. At parties and stuff, when we were all drunk, they’d just go hard at it. As I’m sure it is in a lot of places. It’s sort of how you start.

**TM:** Well someone said, ‘It’s professional development’.

**L:** That’s cool.

**TM:** But it’s also a social thing isn’t it? It’s about hanging out with the crew.

**L:** I kick myself a bit sometimes. I just want to tune my brain into it more.

**NK:** Well, it’s an important part of hip-hop isn’t it? Like, it’s like you lay train tracks out in front of your mind and just roll with it. ‘Cause when you’re talking you are always one step ahead of yourself, but when you’re freestyling..

**L:** It just comes out. Yeah, some random bad stuff comes out of my mouth when I’m freestyling. I got myself in trouble, man. I just starting bringing out all this shit that I really shouldn’t be saying.

**TM:** Actually, there is a really hilarious line in the review here – I’m sure you know it already, but I thought it was great – ‘She could make a nursery rhyme sounds dangerous’.

**L:** Oh yeah!

**TM:** Are there any particular producers that you’d like to work with in the future? Or are you happy with

Dazastah?

- L:** There are. I mean Dazza is incredible, he can make anything really. You just say ‘Make me and emotive string, or sad beat’, and Daz can make it. But there are a lot of producers around Oz, and also Ghost from UK. I might be doing a track with Foreign Beggars. But there are a lot of producers around Oz that I’d like to hook up with at some point.
- TM:** There’s quite a lot of orchestral stuff on there, particularly at the beginning. Was that a particular choice of yours?
- L:** Um... probably just my ears, just what I liked. I heard it and went ‘Ooh’, and then wrote to that. Anything that brings something up inside you, or makes you think of something, a topic, or whatever. That’s why I reckon some of the best rhymers are also producers, because they make a beat, and as they are making the beat they have this entire picture in their head of a place, or a scenario, and that’s why Daz is incredible.
- NK:** That’s really interesting what you’re saying about visualising a place in your head, or a train of thought as you’re writing a beat.
- L:** I know that’s what happens with Daz. The other day he wrote a beat and then he said, ‘We’ve got to write about werewolfs, or anatomy’, and when you hear it, it’s very like that. And ‘Sugar Trails’, it’s quite a simple track, but when Daz made it we were like, ‘Oh, it’s like ants marching’, and we got this picture in our heads and so we wrote about ants. My rhyme was very simple but it was fun, and ever since then I get ants in my room, like straight after we finished the track I found ants all through my room. It was weird because they’d never been there before, and I was just like ‘I can’t kill ants anymore’. I really feel a connection with ants now for some reason.
- TM:** For some reason I thought that had something to do with the movie *Ants*?
- L:** Well we sampled from it, but originally it had nothing to do with them. That’s another track that we sort of wrote and sat on for two years.
- NK:** That’s interesting because I was wondering about that track. ‘Cause it sits in between ‘Maverick’, ‘The Fuss’, ‘Multiple Choice’ and ‘Hushed Up’, which are all very strong tracks, quite serious and then in the middle is this track. It seemed strange, but now you say that, it makes a lot more sense, an image stimulated by the music.
- L:** It’s great fun doing that live with Daz actually.
- TM:** So where to from here, projects and so forth?
- L:** I think just steadily get stuff out. I’m doing a few collabs at the moment, like Drapht’s album, and this track with Maestro, and I’m also doing a solo for Jason’s album. But after that I’ve got to refrain from saying yes to all these collabs and really start to focus on me. I want to get a 12-inch out before October, I’ve got a few extremely passionate tracks, some of the most passionate tracks I’ve written – a track called ‘Who killed all the pork chops?’ Which is a track – not just about vegetarianism – but animal liberation, and the way they are bred and all that stuff. It’s very harsh, but without swearing. But the problem is that there’s nine massive verses, so it would be like a nine-minute track, so I’ve got to work out how to break it down.