



What is BIOHH?

What exactly is BIOHH? I wondered after seeing the logo displayed at local Hip-Hop shows and functions. Is it an artist I thought? Maybe it is some type of organization?

After asking a few questions, I was eventually slipped the Web site address of BIOHH (www.blameitonhiphop.com). There I learned to pronounce BIOHH as simply B-O and that the acronym stood for "Blame It On Hip-Hop." Naturally the journalist in me wanted to know more and thankfully Marcus Manning, the founder of BIOHH, tracked me down and was knocking at my cyber door.

HIP-HOP. B-BOYS. BREAKERS. D.J.'S. GRAF WRITERS. MC'S. BEAT MAKERS. B-GIRLS. **VERB** by Kandis Knight

I was excited to learn that the Twin Cities finally has its own Hip-Hop apparel line in "Blame It On Hip Hop." Yes, Minneapolis is beginning to become a true Mini-Apple! Sure, we may never compete with the number of Hip-Hop-inspired clothing companies in the Big Apple but it usually seems like once a city gets a legitimate Hip-Hop clothing line it's not long before their music is on the map for real. That trend alone is reason enough for everyone to show support for BIOHH, not to mention that the company donates a percentage of its profits to The Minneapolis Public Schools.

So back to the story. Marcus Manning and Michael Livingston grew up together in St. Paul listening to Hip-Hop and being molded by its powerful messages. The two always knew they would one day become entrepreneurs so last summer they made it official by lunging into the Twin Cities Hip-Hop scene full throttle with their first product, a line of hooded sweatshirts that said "BIOHH" across the chest.

Manning and Livingston added three additional business professionals to their team, Richard "DJ Spank" Strong, Executive President of Marketing and Information Technology; Johari Moten,

Director of Creative Services and Promotions; and James Cheatham, Manager of Marketing. With their crew set, BIOHH is now poised to take the Twin Cities Hip-Hop community to yet another level.

So how did it all begin you may wonder? How does an idea to start a Hip-Hop clothing line progress from idea, to concept, to actual product line? "I just remember waking up one morning looking for a cool shirt and I said, 'I can make my own and blame it on Hip-Hop,'" said Manning. "I began looking at how things have changed in Minnesota because of Hip-Hop. Before kids just wore Levi's pinned up or something crazy like that. After Hip-Hop everyone is wearing more urban influenced clothing, take a look around. I talked to a friend who had a clothing line and he told me it was most cost effective to have 25 shirts designed and I agreed. Then we had them made and I went to Mike's house and we started conceptualizing designs and it went from there," said Manning.

Don't get confused. BIOHH is more than just a clothing line. It has a deeper purpose, rooted in the same principles as Hip-Hop originally was: unity and community. "The clothing line is a tool or a vehicle for us to bring our message across. Hip-Hop is a culture we all grew up in and for different reasons it brought all of us together. The capitalist society has diluted the true essence of Hip-Hop and favors [solely spotlighting] emceeing, forgetting about the other elements that make Hip-Hop what it is, and now there's more focus on negative lyrics versus the positive," said Livingston. "We want to bring the true meaning of Hip-Hop back into focus."

"Our tag line is clothing with a purpose. That purpose is to change the negative perception that some have of Hip-Hop. We're purely promoting the positive elements of the art form. We're also paying dues to the people that laid the foundation as well as the people that are helping to elevate the tradition," said Manning.

As far as business objectives, BIOHH's plans for its local impact are diverse and much needed in this



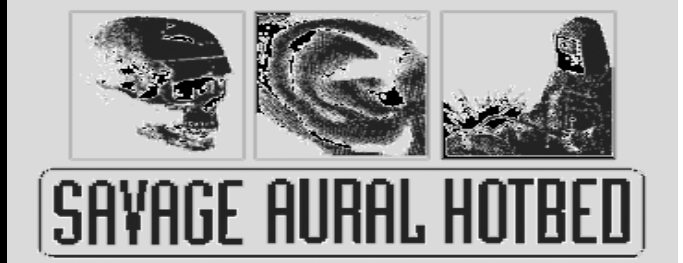
One of the Blame It On Hip-Hop shirt designs.

city. "I see us being a major provider of articles of clothing here in the city and interacting with local schools and teaching the children more about what Hip-Hop is and how it started. We also want to work with local emcees and Hip-Hop organizations to do events. We're also interested in doing some voter registration programs and helping to educate the community about entrepreneurship," said Manning.

"The primary way to get our clothing is through our Web site or hotline. We want to build the loyalty of the local community and begin working with local stores to get the items distributed. Eventually we want to sell our products internationally," said Manning.

For more information, please call 1-866-99-BLAME or log on to www.blameitonhiphop.com

For questions, comments, interviews or to submit local Hip-Hop news e-mail Kandis@mn.rr.com.



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