



# Columbia citypaper

## THE DUBBER

*"Original Rock Star, baby"*

**DEALER SELLS COKE FROM COP CAR  
DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS CUTBACKS  
INTERACTIVE ART  
BEN FOLDS**

# THE DUBBER

"THE ORIGINAL ROCK STAR, BABY"

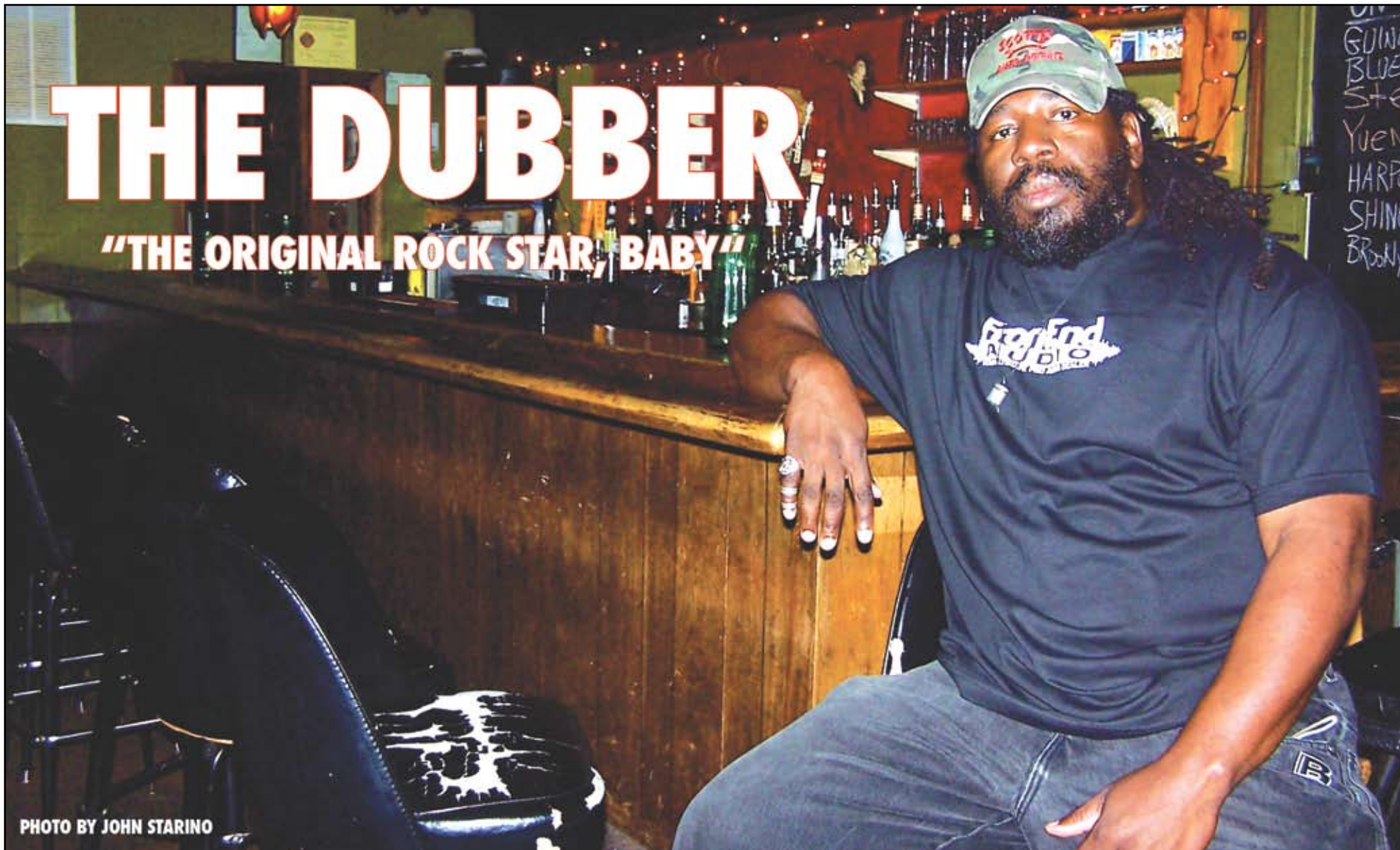


PHOTO BY JOHN STARINO

INTERVIEW BY TOS BEST

*"The word 'dub' means to redo or rework and when I do my music I take bits and pieces of different types of music from different artists and put them together to rework it." -The Dubber*

## HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR SOUND?

Universal-- I see myself as a World artist. And what I mean by that is, when I used to work at Tower Records, I noticed their World section, and when I would go there I would listen to some of the music and what I found was that artists classified as World artists were from outside of the United States, and that their music mostly reflects their cultural, social, and political ideas via their lyrics and the actual music. In America that music was called Folk. And most of the Folk artists talked about what happened in rural America.

I'm from Washington DC, and I've lived in a few cities, and I've decided to give it that urban perspective, and that was not Folk. I see myself as a World Artist because I speak about the cultural and social/political issues that go on in the urban areas of the United States. So, I'm still putting a spin on it and

pushing it outwards.

## WHAT BRINGS YOU TO COLUMBIA?

I came to Columbia because my parents retired here, and they're both from Edgefield, South Carolina. I used to come to South Carolina every single summer. So I know South Carolina pretty well, it's like a second home. I came down to visit Mom in between DC and traveling. It was more efficient to come here than driving miles to be with her.

## HAVE YOU PLAYED WITH ANYBODY LOCALLY?

I've recorded with spoken word artists, Maximum Impact (Max Parthas and Tribal Raine), and also with Zuri Wilson. I wrote music with them and played guitar on their projects.

I've never collaborated with these guys, but I've played more shows with them than anyone else in this city. They're Zack Fowler and the Essentials, which is a pretty good group. They have an album out right now, so check for it.

I'm currently on the Word Warrior tour,

which is a successful US tour with King Amin and Sheem 1, who are also from Columbia, SC, and Maximum Impact as well.

We all raised the stage at John Starino's Phoenix Tongue at The Red Tub.

## DO YOU THINK ART ACHIEVES SOME SORT OF HIGHER PURPOSE OR IS IT JUST ENTERTAINMENT?

Art has changed the course of history more than anything that you can name. More than politics, politicians, or war... with art an artists shows what's going on in the present, what's gone on in the past, and what can happen in the future. Art pretty much sets the course, and that's all facets of art. Yeah, art definitely serve a higher purpose other than just entertainment. But, it's very entertaining.

## WHO'S INFLUENCED THE WORLD SIGNIFICANTLY THROUGH ART?

There's so many artists who have influenced the world. Think of Bob Marley. I mean just this social political aspect, his spirituality, there's no one who doesn't know Bob Marley. He came from the heart, and he believed in what he stood for, what he

sang about. You take someone, like a James Brown, two different artists, but there's no one that doesn't know James Brown. All American music that came after James Brown, that beat, that rhythm, I don't care what kind of music, it's in you. He laid the foundation for that, and that's why the music is funky, that's the rhythm, he laid the rhythm down for you. All those polyrhythmes and things that he brought to the music has aspects of a James Brown. You could also take Jimmy Hendrix- he's the god of guitar. He changed everything; even though you have people who never saw Hendrix, it's in them just by the way they hold the guitar. You see how we do air guitar, that's Jimmy Hendrix, there's no way around it.

## HOW'D IT HAPPEN WITH THE AIR GUITAR?

It's not so much that they're imitating Jimmy Hendrix, it's just that when you saw him play, the way he expressed himself while he played. Everybody who plays the guitar pretty much does it. They mimic Jimmy Hendrix. Even when they're not even thinking about it. When you open your mouth, when you lean your head back, that's Jimmy Hendrix. These people put an impression on your mind that just never leaves. And you've got other artists, you can name any-

one from Elvis to Dylan. There are all kinds of artists that come along like that, just them doing their thing, being themselves musically, it touches people all over the world, and just by touching a person you have changed the course of history, there's a lot of artists that do that.

#### WHAT'S COLUMBIA LIKE COMPARED TO LA AND DC AS FAR AS LIVING HERE?

I really enjoy living in Columbia. I'm pretty much a laid back person, so I come to Columbia and kick back and melt in with the people here, it's not a rat race, and people have treated me well here, so I really dig Columbia. I've lived in LA, you know LA is LA, the Land of Illusion. I'm from DC, DC is DC, the land of politics. I grew up in DC, and I love DC. They're great places to visit now. I was just out in LA, and they showed me nothing but love. I really made some real family out in LA, people I never knew until I got there, but I'm family now, so, as phony as LA can be, there are real people there and they are doing real things, LA's great as well. But I really enjoy Columbia. I fight for Columbia all the time, and I'm hoping in this interview that people will hear my love for Columbia, because I really want to see Columbia be a big art scene. Not as big as New York or LA, but big in it's own right.

#### HOW HAS THE COLUMBIA SCENE COME ALONG SINCE YOU'VE BEEN HERE?

You know? One of my biggest complaints about the Columbia scene, and not really the Columbia scene, but the media of the Columbia scene is, and I hate to say this, but every time I look in any Columbia rag or magazine, they're always talking about the end of something. It's like they always get it too late. Like when something's over they'll go out and they'll do an interview about it being over. I've seen that so much. And I'm like "you're late, the reason why it's over is because you didn't support it in the beginning." That's the impression I get, and like I've said, what I hope to get through this article is that people will hear the love I have for the scene here, but you have to acknowledge what's really going on when it starts, and when it's fresh. If you wait around trying to see it bubble, it's not going to bubble, it's going to die. It's your job to let everyone know what's going on. If you don't let everybody know what's going on, it's going to be your job to help bury it. Once you say "you know, that thing was really cool..." it's too late.

#### YOU'VE TOURED PRETTY MUCH EVERY MAJOR CITY IN THE US. WHAT SETS THE CITIES APART?

Just the culture of the city. When you go into a city, there're only two things that are different about the city. When you first drive

into a city it's the skyline. All the skylines are slightly different. I could look at a skyline and know exactly where I'm at.

Other than that, it's the culture, and I say this without any color barriers, but it's in the hood. The people who live in a city for real. When you go into those neighborhoods you get to see what the city's all about. If you go where the skyscrapers are, up amongst the skyscrapers they're all the same. You've got the Starbucks and the Applebee's, you know it's all corporate. All cities look alike downtown, but when you get out on the city limits, that's when you start to see the real city.

So that's pretty much it, just the culture of the city itself. Each city has it's own little

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flavor. Some cities for me are better than others, because some cities are more musical, some cities aren't as musical, but I see the differences everywhere I go.

#### SO WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE NOT TOURING AND YOU'RE NOT RECORDING?

My favorite thing to do, especially in South Carolina... I love to just get in the car, and ride around listening to music. Not just Columbia, but South Carolina has some of the most beautiful freeways and highways driving from Spartanburg to Charleston, from Sumter through Aiken County. Especially through Aiken County, it's just beautiful. If you had the right music you could do it all day, at night, summer and spring days. That's my favorite thing to do, just riding around listening to music.

#### HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE DUB TO SOMEBODY WHO MAY BE UNFAMILIAR?

There's a couple of different genres of dub music right now, but dub music originated in Jamaica. You had producers who would record... say a Bob Marley song. But what they would do while they were recording the song, they'd get the tune finished and go back, and would add echo, reverb, and delay to certain instruments, at certain times in the vocal line and just sub it out. They would just rework the music. So basically that whole title The Dubber- I'm reworking music. But they'd do it in a way where the music has more of an ambience vibe about it. Now you have people who do it with electronic music. They have nothing to do with Reggae at all, they just do it with any kind of music and it's called Dub as well. But the original Dub comes from the old Jamaican yardie DJs remixing record.

#### HOW DO YOU CHANGE PERCEPTIONS? OTHER PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS? WHAT KIND OF PERCEPTIONS DO PEOPLE HOLD THAT YOU RESIST?

When I'm walking in the street to a gig, and they don't know who I am, I could tell by their vibe and their energy what they feel about me as I'm walking into the door. And a lot of it is negative, you know, "this big black guy with dreads walking into the door." Some people are afraid, some people think there's going to be trouble. Sometimes I wear a baseball cap, so they think 'this guy's a rapper.'

You can feel what they're thinking about you, at least I can. Then, when I go up on

stage to perform, everything they thought about me was totally wrong, and then as I'm walking out the club or the bar, certain individuals will come and talk to me, and by the way they talk to me I can tell they had a totally different impression of me from what I really am. And that's how I change perspectives. What I learned to do, I treat everybody as a human first. I come from the ghetto, the hood of DC so I grew up around black people, really all black people.

DC was like 90 something percent black, so that was a very unique experience because when I saw a good person, a bad person, a doctor, a lawyer, a bum, I only saw black people. So when I met other people of other cultures, other races, there was nothing like 'okay white people are like this,' because I only knew black people. Up until my adult life I knew only black people by first name until I was 21 years old. That gave me a unique perspective on life, so I hadn't gotten to know anybody outside of being black. So I looked at them as a human, and just let them show me what they're about. I didn't have the prejudice going then. Now maybe if I grew up in South Carolina or something it would be a little different, but because of my upbringing I never viewed people differently. Whenever I see people I always look at them as a human first. Now we are living in the world so there are bad things that people deal with, but they have to expose that to me. I'm not going to give that to them, I'm not going to go 'that person's like that.' I will be like "hey, how're you doin'?" As time goes they'll show me what they're all about.

#### YOU WANT TO TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR NEW ALBUM THAT'S COMING OUT?

The new album is going to be totally different from the last album. The last album was mostly acoustic instrumentation. The new album is a stew of everything: I'm

playing electric, I'm playing acoustic, new engineer and co-producer, the musical content is different because my first album *In the Temple of...* was mostly me talking about me, and what I was going through, and what I experienced. This new album is a little bit of that but it's more about what's going on in the world.

I'm just giving my spiritual, and I guess social/political commentary on what's going on in the world right now. And right now we're witnessing a serious historical time. A lot of things are about to change, and depending on what type of person you are, how well prepared you are, spiritually, all this other preparation people are doing, trying to save money and all that, none of that stuff's going to matter. It really never has. It's just going to be revealed to us this time around. All the color of people, the religions, money, sexual orientation... I don't care what they have put forth in to divide us as a people of America, we're going to really see that none of that shit matters this time around.

And some people are going to be prepared for it, and some people aren't. It's going to be rough. It's going to be some strange days. But once we get through the other side of that it's going to be a lot of hope. And unfortunately, it's kinda like a necessary evil right now. We have allowed this country, and this country has allowed this world, 'cause we are the governors of this whole world, we are the world power... we've allowed things to just get too out of hand, and it's because of greed.

So we're going to see all this stuff revealed, and that's pretty much what I'm tapping into with this next album. I don't really get into all the worldly part of it. I just get into the basics man, get your soul together. We've got to really know who we are as an individual. And we have to prepare ourselves, and to deal with the stuff, and we're going to be okay, but if we don't do that, there's going to be some problems. So that's how I see it, that's pretty much what this album's going to be about.

I've let people hear some rough mixes when I was in LA. The album has been going over really well. The response I've been wanting to get from the album I've gotten. I'm really happy and proud of this next project. And I just say it's going to be different. It's going to be a concept album. The last album was just an album with songs. I'm going to go on a world or international level. This is my secondary goal with this album, to go on an international level. I want to travel abroad. I'm ready to go outside of the States. This last tour will pretty much fulfill my whole United States obligation to the people here. After this album comes out, I'm ready to go to Tokyo, Paris, Madrid, London, Singapore... I'm ready to go there, I'm ready to take you to that next level. Egypt... wherever the people want me to come that's where I'm going to go with this next album. I'm ready to go global.

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