

# THE RHYTHM AND THE RHYME

## Q & A WITH LOCAL RAP ARTIST CLASSIFIED

*With his raw lyrics and tenacious drive, Classified has cultivated a two-decade-long career as one of Canada's top rap artists. It's an enviable run that he is "greatful" for, as the title of his latest album reflects. Local Connections chats with him on keeping it real, collaborating with Snoop Dogg and what inspires him.*

### HOW DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE EVOLVED AS AN ARTIST AFTER BEING IN THE BUSINESS FOR SO LONG?

When I first came in at 15/16 trying to rap, I had no idea what I was really doing. I started getting into the scene and I started a few groups. I was always the guy that was really into it, but wasn't that good. I just really enjoyed it as a hobby, so I stayed with it and kept going. Slowly I got better at making the beats and better at writing. I got more comfortable talking about certain things. It was a slow building process that helped me learn the game, and at the same time I worked on my skills to

get where I am now. It feels good to make something that I can be 100 per cent proud of.

### GREATFUL TOOK YOU A LONG TIME TO COMPLETE. WHY DID THIS ALBUM TAKE YOU LONGER THAN THE OTHERS?

With this one, I was alone a lot more. Usually when I am working on records, I have my brother or a couple of friends throwing ideas at me. With this one, I found myself alone in the studio a lot more. You dwell on your personal life more; you start to think about stuff. It made me think "I want to write a song about this."



I never had a big group of friends around influencing me, making me think "I don't want to do this song with all these people around." But when you're alone, you feel more comfortable to write about personal relationships or a song about your kids. I was able to really focus on what I was trying to do.

### HALIFAX HAS SUCH A GREAT MUSIC CULTURE AND AMAZING ROOTS IN THE HIP-HOP SCENE. WHY DO YOU THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE HOW STRONG THE MUSIC SCENE OUT HERE IS?

Even as strong as the scene out here is right now, with great artists making music in their home studios, it's harder to get the music out there. I remember 10 or 15 years ago, there were a lot more shows here, a lot more outlets for artists to go to. I find now there are not a lot of shows compared to what used to be. At one time there were two or three hip-hop shows a week. I think the scene here pays attention to it, people in Halifax know what's going on, but outside that scene people don't really know what's going on. We need an outlet for people to actually really hear it and get a sense of the music.

### ACCLAIMED RAP ARTIST SNOOP DOGG IS ON YOUR NEW ALBUMS SINGLE "NO PRESSURE". I READ SOMEWHERE THAT HE IS ONE OF YOUR HEROES.

We recorded the song when he was out here last summer filming with the Trailer Park Boys in Truro. He was down here for about a week. We had been talking a few months before that, and when I found out he was here it was like, man, he is only 20 minutes down the road. I grew up a 90s kid, and when Doggystyle came out, that was one of my big records. Snoop was my Rolling Stones, or my Beatles or Huey Lewis, as my parents would say. He was THAT guy. When we hung out in the Truro hotel room for the song, he was exactly the same way he seems: chill, laidback and no bulls\*\*t.

### WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE NEW ALBUM'S TITLE, GREATFUL?

I look back at what I have been able to do, and I have been very fortunate. I worked hard for it. You have to be grateful for the things that come to you, especially nowadays with people looking for work and having to leave the province to do this and that.

### YOU HAVE OPENED FOR LUDICRIS, THE BLACK EYED PEAS AND MANY MORE BIG ACTS. WHO WOULD YOU LOVE TO WORK WITH?

A lot of 90s rappers. I would like to do something with the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Paul McCartney—lots of stuff you would not expect. I like doing left-field stuff. ■

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