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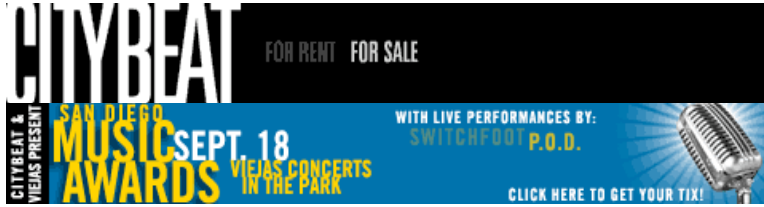


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## MEGA DAP LADIES FIRST

Rapper Miki Vale steps into the limelight

by @Large

"There's not that many women rapping, so when you hear a female voice, it draws more attention to it. People tune into it." Few people would ask a male rapper what it's like to be a male rapper, but rap is still primarily a boy's game—a woman's voice on the mic is still the alluring exception, not the rule. San Diego's Miki Vale realizes that, and she's not about to disregard it as a non-issue. "It's inevitable," she says. "You have to ask."

Women have faced an uphill battle in hip-hop culture, especially in rap music. In the early '80s, female rappers were little more than a curiosity, much like kiddie-rap (Kriss Kross) or the occasional British MC (Dana Dane). But as Lisa Lee rapped in the movie *Beat Street*, "Us girls can boogie, too..."

The next wave of women rappers was mostly in response to the boys. In 1984, UTFO sang the classic seducer's tale "Roxanne Roxanne" and a feisty teenager named Roxanne Shante shouted back with a diss of her own ("Roxanne's Revenge") that made both her and producer Marley Marl famous. When Slick Rick and Doug E. Fresh issued male-o-centric classics like "The

When Slick Rick and Doug E. Fresh issued more of their classics like "The Show" and "La-di-da," the three loud ladies of Salt-N-Pepa responded with "The Showstopper," lampooning "La di da" as dribble and taking the boys to task about their mouths: "Sally from the Valley/ she's my sister/ And that lady you dissed/ that was my mother."

By the late '80s, women's rap became little more than a catfight, as dis records dominated the East Coast and with the help of Easy E, JJ Fadd called out every lady rapper by name from the West. As the '90s dawned, hip-hop moved into its conscious "golden age." Rappers like Sista Soldja could hold their own, and groups like The Fugees and Digable Planets proved that women could have a role in hip-hop that was tasteful, relevant, and supremely dope.

Their role in the game transcended novelty, and their identities were no longer dependent on male rappers. They became their own force.

But now the consciousness has shifted again—south, that is, to the loins. Women's role in hip-hop has been hyper-sexualized, thanks both to male rappers' objectifications and the slutty self-portraits of rappers like Lil Kim.

It's a bit frustrating for a young, empowered MC like Miki Vale: "We're just shown shaking our asses and [being sexy]. That's true, we can do that. But we can do so much more."

And Miki does. She's been rapping as long as she can remember, but it wasn't until she heard MC Lyte's classic "10% Dis" that she fell in love with hip-hop. "I took a tape to my friend's house and played it for her," she recalls. "She said she liked it, but then she started talking. I was like, 'You're not listening to the song!' Hip-hop was my secret love."

It's no longer a secret. Miki recorded tracks under the name Taboo for the debut album by her brother, Dudley Perkins, and she's worked with up-and-coming rapper-producer Oh No. Most recently, she contributed three soulful songs to the compilation by San Diego record label Sleeping Giant (please see "Sound Waves" on Page 34), and is hard at work on her own debut album, which is due next winter.

Look for the Giants Arise compilation from Sleeping Giant Music wherever independent hip-hop is sold, or check the web site at [www.giantsarise.com](http://www.giantsarise.com).

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