

A Beastie bedtime story...

HOW 3 WHITEBOYZ IN THE HOOD HELPED ME RECLAIM MY YOUTH

by Rosie McCobb

October, 1986: My best friend Lauren and I are cruising down the highway to McDonald's, which is eight minutes away from our high school, during study period. She grabs a tape from the floor of her dad's Ford Fairmount.

"You're gonna die when you hear this," she says, with an evil grin spreading across her face. She holds it away from me, then turns the volume way up. A few seconds later a whiny voice booms out over a heavy metal guitar. Later, I will recognize this song to be "Rhymin' and Stealin'."

"What the hell is this?" I ask, as voices chorus "Ali Baba and the forty thieves!"

"I got it by accident when I ordered those ten free tapes from Columbia House," she says, handing me the case. It is Licensed to Ill by the Beastie Boys.

"Huh," I say as we pull into the driveway. November, 1986: Lauren and I are in her Dad's love machine again, with a couple of younger boys from school, tooling around the local mall parkinglot on a Friday night, looking for any unlocked cars with those yellow "Baby On Board" signs.

"Over there!" I point to an old Camaro. Lauren maneuvers up next to the car and I jump out to retrieve an "Italian Stallion On Board" sign. When I get back in, the goofy xylophone and electronic bongos from "Brass Monkey" are rockin' the system. As we circle around past K-Mart, Chris, one of the youths, who at this time is militantly in support of music that only has greatly aesthetic positive purposes, makes a "I'm gonna puke" face and leans over the green vinyl seat.

"What the fuck is this shit?"

"The Beastie Boys!" Lauren and I chime, in unison, and then start to sing "Brass monkey, that funky monkey, brass monkey, junky, that funky monkey!"

"I cannot believe you like this," he says, grabbing the tape case. "Fight for Your Right to Party? You don't even drink! 'Girls'? Aren't you offended?"

Lauren and I ponder this for a second, then mimic King Ad Rock whining "girls to do the dishes, to clean up my room, to do the laundry and in the bathroom..."

"No."

"Well, you should be. This is really stupid."

"Exactly," I say, and turn it up.

A TIME FOR LIVIN'

March, 1992: I receive a copy of the as-yet unreleased Beastie Boys tape, *Check Your Head*, in the mail. I listen to it immediately; it's weird, kind of... heavy. There's even a couple of hardcore songs. I like it, but am a bit surprised at the seriousness of it. They seem so much older.

A few days later, I get a phone call. Their PR people want to know if I want to do an interview.

"Yeah, definitely," I say, excited at the prospect of finding out things first hand from a band I've always been a fan of. "Which one

THE GETTING POPULAR THING—THAT ALWAYS FREAKED US. THE SELLING OUT THING, THAT'S GOING FOR IT.

of them will be calling?"

"Well, actually, I figured since they're going to be doing that 'FNX thing in Boston, you can just interview all three of them," she says. "In person?"

"Yeah, why, is that cool?"

"Um, yeah," I say, and immediately start to shit in my pants. They're going to be dicks. They're not going to take me seriously 'cause I'm a girl. Woman. Girl? Female. I'd better wear the sloppiest clothes I own.

April 15, 1992, 3:30PM: My friend Jill and I show up on Landsdown Street around what is supposed to be the end of the Beastie Boys' sound check. It's unseasonably warm and sunny.

"Whatever you do, don't do that thing you always do when you meet new people," Jill says.

"What?" I ask.

"Not speak. Just be, like, cool, whatever."

I nod. When we get closer to Avalon, we see the crowd. "What is up with this?" Jill asks. I go over to the door, find out that we weren't the only ones who were told to show up at



this time.

"Everyone give me your name," a woman with a computerized organizer demands. The minions scrounge in front of me, get assigned times in the next few minutes. I'm starting to get irked. Calamities I am not fond of.

"Who are you?" she finally asks me. I tell her, she punches me in.

"Okay, is five-thirty okay?"

"I guess," I say. "Where?"

"Meet us at the Howard Johnson's motel, and ask for us at the desk."

I walk away from the crowd to where Jill sits with her camera.

"So?"

"We're fucking meeting them at the hotel," I say, a combination of awe and fear. "The HoJo's in the Fenway."

"No way," she says. "No fucking way."

6:30PM: They're an hour late and now we're sitting on the curb outside of HoJo's waiting for everyone to get their shit together. Now we're supposedly doing the interview during dinner.

"Is Cambridge okay for food?" Cathy, the road manager, asks us.

"Yeah, whatever," I answer, not exactly dying of hunger. Finally a couple of cabs pull up and Jill and I, along with two other kids from some BU paper, get in as King Ad Rock (Adam Horovitz), MCA (Adam Yauch) and Mike D get ushered into the owner of a local record company's BMW.

"Oooh, I'm so impressed," Jill says.

"What the fuck is this shit?"

WHAT'S THE BLACK COMMUNITY GOT TO DO WITH IT?

7:30PM: Now we're in the Taang! record store in Cambridge, standing around, waiting again. We still haven't really been introduced, nor have we introduced ourselves to any of the band members. As Mike D and MCA comb through the hardcore seven-inches, Ad Rock, with a ski hat pulled down over his eyebrows, mumbles, "I'm hungry, let's go."

"It must kind of suck being dragged around like this all the time," I say.

"I don't mind it usually, but I haven't eaten all day."

We walk upstairs and he follows.

"Isn't there some deli around here named Elsie's?" he asks. "Yeah, we should go there. That place is cool. Elsie's."

7:45: We walk into the Border Cafe in Harvard Square with a party of fifteen.

"This place is too noisy," Ad Rock says. "It's too crowded."

"Yeah, these guys aren't going to be able to do an interview here, are you?" Mike D elbows me. I nod in agreement, but doubt anything will be done about it.

8:00: Sitting next to Mike D in a beat up vinyl booth at this empty shitass Chinese

restaurant (right across from the Border Cafe) I have already forgotten that these are a bunch of guys who lots of people I know worship, and whom I was worried about interviewing. Everyone is arguing about whether or not there's meat in the dishes (Mike D and MCA are vegetarians, Ad Rock has ordered beef and broccoli) and since a) Ad Rock is sitting across from Jill talking about some kid they both know from Gloucester, MA, and b) MCA is pretty laid back, not even a semblance of an official interview with all three Beastie Boys ever actually takes place.

"That HoJo's you guys are staying at is pretty classy," I say.

Mike D: "Dude, the HoJo's is hype. It's nicer than the place we stayed at in England."

"Do you guys have a view of the dumpster, or, like, the sewer?" Jill queries.

Mike D: "I guess you guys really got acquainted with the HoJo's. I don't know why you're dissing the HoJo's 'cause you get a free one of those belt things to put all your shit in when you stay there, plus the guy at the front desk is cool."

This other girl who is at our table, and who is much more aggressive about doing the interview, starts asking questions, so I put my tape player next to her and sit back and enjoy my chow mein.

Q: So what made you go from like, hardcore to rap, or to like, working in the studio?

Mike D: We can't all be Matthew Sweet, man.

MCA: I've worked in studios as an assistant, and I tried to go on playing as a musician. Like, I can play good hardcore bass and stuff.

Q: Do you think you don't get respect as a legitimate rap act 'cause you're not black?

MCA: We are black, like Young Black Teenagers.

Q: That's true.

Jill: I was kind of wondering that too though...

Mike D: You were wondering about the Young Black Teenagers?

Jill: No, 'cause you know, you guys and 3rd Bass will never be accepted by the black community.

MCA: What's the black community?

Jill: Well, for instance, I went to this thing where they had African-American sororities and fraternities at Syracuse, and I was thinking, they'd never play 3rd Bass or the Beastie Boys, even if it, like, fit.

Mike D: They play "Paul Revere" all the time. They might not accept us as people, but they definitely accept the record...

I finally get up the gumption to ask a real question: Wasn't it weird having white trash kids be into you back then?

Mike D: Yeah, I still don't know how that happened. See, that aspect always kind of freaked us, and you know how you have that

feeling that something's yours, then it gets taken away from you, but it's like, other people are all of a sudden into it? It was just so weird.

Mike looks at MCA. "I mean think how big it got compared to when we were playing at like, A7 and there started to be big Dead Kennedys shows. Who was the big guy who always had a broken arm?"

MCA: The guy with the broken arm.

Mike D: Yeah, well when he started to hang, that's when it started to get bigger.

IN BED WITH THE VOICES OF OUR GENERATION

The waitress arrives with a tray full of fortune cookies. Mike opens his and grabs my tape recorder, reading into it. "This is my for-

tune: a chance meeting with someone from the past is in store. But that's true, 'cause we ran into [SSD's] Springa and [WBCN's] Shred and stuff."

Ad Rock: You're supposed to add "in bed" after all of those.

I attempt to get back on the interview thing by asking what the Beasties' perception of "selling out" is.

Mike D: The getting popular thing-- it's just alienating. The selling out thing, that's going for it. Like my friend John Barrywhite says, "I liked Stiff Little Fingers, until they went for it."

Jill: With someone like Henry Rollins, no matter what he does, he'll never sell out.

Mike D: Yeah, Rollins totally deserves to get big, 'cause first of all, he got totally fucked over on his first two records, which is whack, plus he's worked so fucking hard.

The way I look at it, the Rollins Band should be like Metallica, 'cause Metallica are over. Metallica are fucking Led Zeppelin in 1982.

Everyone talks about how Metallica are hard workers. Fuck that.

Your faithful Boston Rock representative: Do you think growing up, being into hardcore, has set you apart from mainstream society?

Mike D: Well, it's how we met, going out to see bands, it was always about discovering new kinds of music that weren't particularly mainstream. And when hardcore and then rap first came out, we were really into it and it wasn't a particularly widespread kind

of music. There is a certain kind of passion that you end up developing for that music, which is definitely different from buying a record that millions of other people have.

MCA: Yeah, that's where we all know each other from. We were really into that kind of music.

BR: Since the new record sort of sounds as if your sound has matured along with your own selves, do you think you represent the general feeling of people our age, of our generation?

Mike D: I think we represent our own feelings, sometimes we can actually manage to express that, it's cool, but...

MCA: Sometimes people find it, if they're into the same shit I guess.

BR: What fad do you think is the biggest waste?

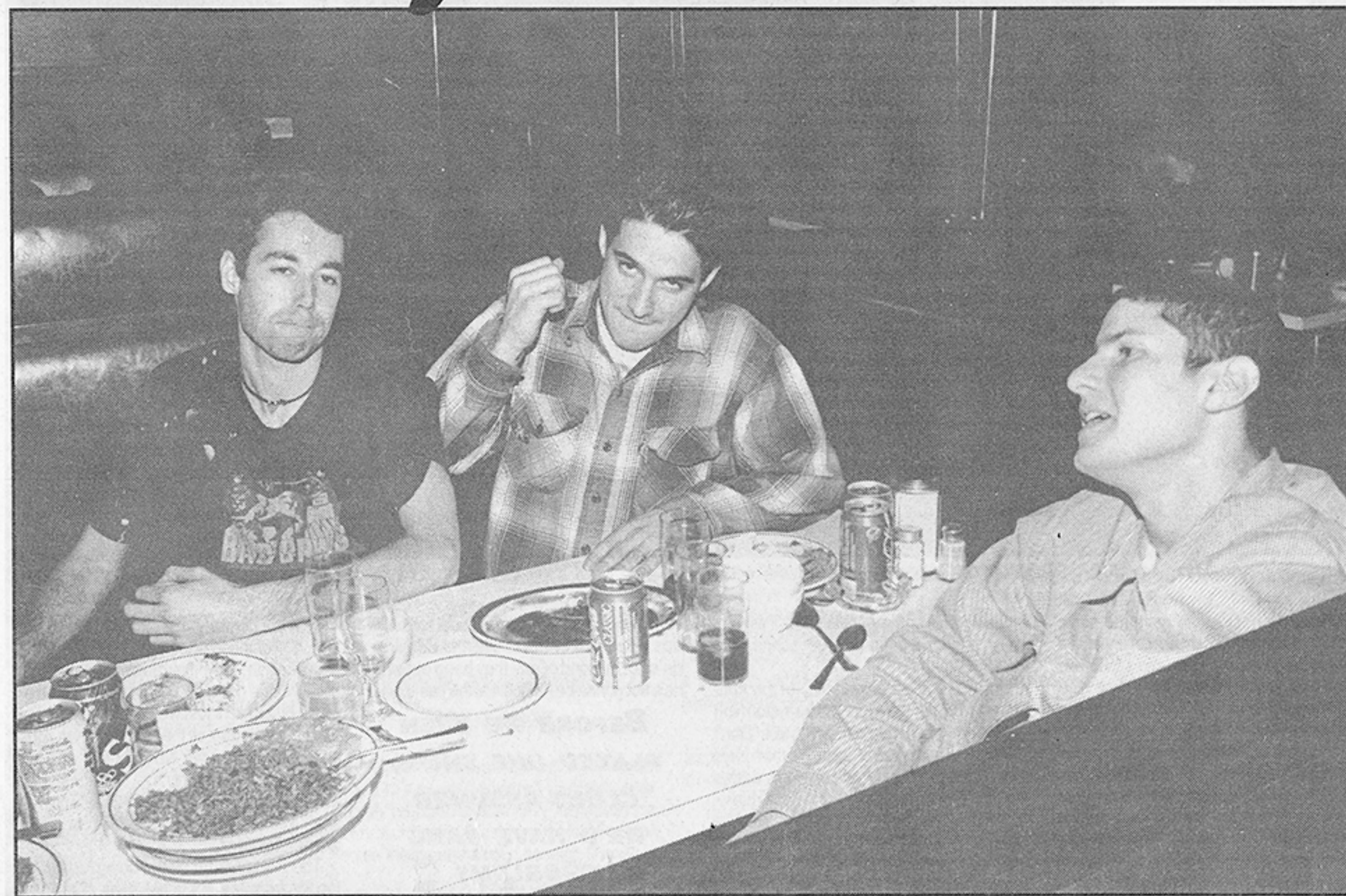
Mike D (without hesitation): Wearing pants backwards.

BR: What's your fan mail like these days?

Mike D: Actually, I'm glad you brought that up, 'cause we have this PO Box thing now, which is new to us, and we're really excited about it. So everywhere we go, I ask people to send shit to the PO Box. See, the PO Box is the shit, 'cause you wouldn't want to give everybody your home address, but you can give anybody your PO Box.

BR: Are you getting pretty cool stuff?

Mike D: Mostly, but like five years ago we were getting people from Germany who were just asking for an autograph. I didn't and still don't answer those. Those people are just straight up getting dissed. But now, with



BEASTIE BOYS (L-R) MCA (bass), AD ROCK (gtr), AND MIKE D (drums) CHOW DOWN: Hey, where's the broccoli I ordered?

the PO Box and the Paul's Boutique line, Paul forwards us all the really cool messages, plus with the Grand Royale thing, we're getting the label to print the address, and I hired this kid to run it, but I fired him already.

Jill: You fired him? You could hire Rosie and me.

Mike D: I know, but the PO Box would be a far commute for you guys. 'Cause, you'd have to go there twice a week, and I just don't think it's feasible. But anyways, I just think it's so cool if there's a whole society of people who communicate from PO Box to PO Box, it's totally, like, primitive, in a way...

BARTERING AND BUSINESS

As I start to get in on the conversation regarding Ad Rock's standing-up-in-the-shower sex scene with Amy Locane in the film *Lost Angels*, where she accuses him of being a virgin ("It was really weird, 'cause she was the one who was only, like, 15. And her Mom was on the set, 'cause, I guess she'd

never been with a boy before") Mike D grabs my questions and starts doing the interview himself.

Mike D: Is having to pay money for samples becoming a class issue? I think I said something like that, kind of off-the-cuff when I was talking. But what's exciting about sampling is that as it gets cheaper and more readily available, there's like potential, a huge whole other generation of kids that are going to be way more computer literate than we are, and who knows what they could do. Right now, people are just really greedy about clearing samples so it inhibits people from being creative.

BR: How much was, say, that Bob Dylan sample on "Pass the Mic"?

Mike D: Seven hundred bucks, but he asked for \$2000. I thought it was kind of fly that he asked for \$2000, and I bartered Bob Dylan down. That's my proudest sampling deal.

BR: How do you feel about a band who

is consciously politically correct?

Mike D: You mean like Michael Stipe? Or Sting? I'd say the main thing with the PC people is, it seems like you have to have a receding hairline. They've both got one, and luckily, we're safe for now, we don't have receding hairlines, so we're not PC, but who knows, ten years from now, if one of us does get one, then forget it. Every gig will be a rain forest benefit.

BR: If you were going to be PC, what issue would you be concerned with?

Mike D: I dunno, the music I've been into has always dealt with more social issues, or like, humanitarian concerns. I'm so politically discouraged that to focus on anything political would just be so lame.

BR: What do you think of bands and/or people slagging other bands and/or people?

Mike D: I think it's all right to write an honestly negative thing. I just get mad when people act non-critical, like if you do an interview with someone and they write lots of

little snide comments afterwards—that's underhanded. If you really have something negative to say, it should be confrontational. Just be like, "You are whack." Like Marky Mark did to PM Dawn.

BR: What's up with the lyrics on Check Your Head?

Mike D: I'm glad you brought that up, because only the vinyl version of the album,

Bob Dylan wanted \$2000 for the "Pass the Mic" sample, but Mike D bartered him down to \$700.

which is a double, has the lyrics printed. But for you people out there who got the other inferior formats, cassette and CD, you can write away to Grand Royale, PO Box 26689, Los Angeles, CA. We're gonna send them out to people who send us self-addressed, stamped envelopes.

Mike, always the business man, turns to MCA. "Are we going to put art work on the lyric sheets?"

"I dunno, we could just xerox them, or we could fax it to people, have them send their fax numbers," MCA suggests.

"No, 'cause then we're going to lose money. We're already going to lose money on the deal, 'cause people will forget to send a SASE, and we're gonna feel bad, so we'll send it anyway. Maybe if they want to fax it collect, that might work."

"Just have them call your house, D," MCA leans towards the tape recorder, "Mike's home number is 664-..."

"Very funny," Mike answers. "You know, we still have to figure out who's doing the tour with us still. We've got to find a band."

At this point in the evening, the Beastie Boys start talking shop. An immediate decision has to be made in regards to print

up to the upleenth phoccal of the day and when he returns, Jill and my friend Ryan are arranging what has now become a band, not a bunch of schlemmels eating bad Chinese food, around the table for photos. As they languidly pose in front of greasy rice plates, Mike says "Yeah, I'm no Matthew Sweet, man."

THE ART OF BEING A GROUPIE

9:30PM: We all arrive back at the HoJo's in cabs. As soon as we get out, a small crowd of teenage jocks starts screaming. "Oh my God, the Beastie Boys!" They immediately crowd around, and MCA, Mike D and Ad Rock all comply with their requests for autographs.

"No way! We, like, break mirrors to your songs!" one says. I'm not kidding.

"Mike, can we use your bathroom?" I ask as he signs a kid's baseball hat.

He nods, then hands me a key.

Jill and I look at each other, and it suddenly hits us. As soon as we're out of ear-shot, we burst.

"I cannot believe this!" I say, fitting the key into the lock of Room 142.

"God, I feel like a total groupie!" Jill adds.

11:30PM: Jill, Ryan and I are sprawled out on one of the double beds in MCA's hotel room. Organist Money Mark, drummer "AWOL" Amory, road engineer/friend Mario

Caldato are also crowded into the room. And Ricky Powell, as in "your girl got kicked by Ricky Powell," passes around a bag of barbecue potato chips. MCA rewinds the video we've all been watching of new and old Beasties' material and changes the channel to catch the end of "Saturday Night Fever."

Ad Rock wanders around, asking everyone if they have any rolling papers. And Mike D continues to make phone calls. Eventually there is talk about leaving for the show.

We three tag-alongs are a little on the concerned side, because rumor has it that the club is filled to capacity.

"Don't worry about it," MCA says assuredly, slipping on his Pumas. "Just go with us, we'll get you in."

12AM: We all walk up to the front door of Axis. The bouncer gives everyone a "who the hell are you" look. This is the Beastie Boys," Mario says.

"And who are all these people?" the bouncer eyes Jill and I. Ryan blends in with the band and crew.

"They're our girlfriends. It's cool, we all travel together." The door is open, and in a train-like chain, Mario counts heads as we all pass through.

1AM: The Beastie Boys run onto the stage at Avalon. People well into their twenties, including females, are up front, screaming along to every word with the band.

2AM: A mini-scuffle of sorts breaks out as the power is shut off before the band finishes their set. As everyone crowds up the stairs, bitching, Ad Rock says "Yeah, but that was dope."

BIGGER THAN WHOM?

April 28, 1992: I get in the express lane at the grocery store. I look at the magazine rack, hoping to find an Enquirer to flip through while I wait, when I see Spin. On the front cover is the Beastie Boys.

"Weird," I think to myself as a couple of booby-haired college girls grab at it and start squealing. "All kinds of people still get giddy over them." ♦

BEASTIE BOYS PHOTOS BY RYAN MURPHY

EXCEPT BOOM BOX PHOTO BY ARI MARCOPOULOS

