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Ogemdi Nwabuo of the San Diego Chargers.

It takes just a minute to look around and see that there are still more credits forthcoming for Mr. Johnson. Crawford High School Student Walter Parker, age 14 talked freely about his days at the Old School Boxing Gym. His favorite is boxing, Mui Thai 7 and Jiu Jitsu. He says it helps him to get in shape and he loves learning how to use his knowledge, tactics, different strategies and positions to overcome his opponent. He plans to compete in Jiu Jitsu in the near future.

While the idea of competition is a goal yet to be achieved, Walter is already reaping benefits even today at the Old School Boxing Gym. He just loves to be there simply because of the environment. It is relaxing and refreshing for him and helps him to get along with other people. It keeps him keep occupied. He definitely recommends that younger kids get involved in this sport. They even have a class for children as young as preschoolers called the "Little Contenders and Little Champs." They meet twice a week.

The Old School Boxing Center offers classes in Boxing, Kick Boxing, Jiu Jitsu, Muay Thai and Yoga. They are located at 5975 El Cajon Blvd. San Diego, CA 92115. So if you re interested in getting more information about The Old School Boxing Center, give Mr. Johnson a call at (619) 287-2646.

- Dorothea Bryant

# Hip-Hop Music in San Diego

*An interview with local band The Concrete Project*

By Darshana Rogers

Far away from the glitz and glamour of central Downtown San Diego, in the rear left corner of an auto shop lies the square shaped rehearsal studio of one of the main veins of the San Diego Hip-Hop community. The Concrete Project, although perhaps not named for this reason, is like a strong concrete foundation for the rest of the local Hip-Hop community. Although named The Concrete Project, those who have heard the band undoubtedly describe their music as a relief from the concrete-like monotony that often covers the music scene.

I have been invited by TCP to their rehearsal grounds for an interview. I feel honored and curious to visit the location where they develop their memorable sound. Formed just three years ago, The Concrete Project is now undoubtedly one of the best Hip-Hop bands in San Diego. Yet when I step through the doors of their unlikely rehearsal studio I am struck more by the welcoming feel of the environment than by any signs of stardom. Various instruments lie safely against walls and in corners, and the band members sit comfortably and companionably with each other. I muse to myself that perhaps the genuine vibe that I am picking up on stems from the fact that The Concrete Project is one of the few bands that emerged in recent years without the help of Craigslist. While many great musicians do form successful partnerships this way, nothing can replace or mimic the comfortable organic sound brought forth by people who genuinely like and respect one another.

Another aspect that makes TCP so unique is that they actually prefer to write their own music. Unlike many of the pop artists in radio today, they aren't waiting for someone to spoon-feed them the melody and lyrics of a hit. As I settle in to the interview, I decide that my first question will be to ask about how this process works:

"Minus one song that Tory brought in, when we first created the group, we all take a part in writing the music we play. Each person contributes to each song," Emcee Caleb explains. TCP cites the fact that the entire band contributes to shaping the sound as a major reason that the members are able to remain so close. When all members of the band are able to share in the creative process it ultimately brings them closer together, solidifying the five-way relationship of TCP into a family whose members respect one another. It also helps that, as Eddie states; "We were all friends before we joined. Each of us knew at least one other person. We all hang out together and support one another, band event or otherwise." They are a democratic group, and don't have a bandleader dictating all their moves. "It's more that if one person is lacking somewhere there is always someone there to fill in the gap. And if someone is getting too crazy then Jen is there to 'Put em in their place!'" Shaun explains. (Laughter fills the room as Jen playfully shakes her fist at the others. Jen is the only girl in the band, and while I don't doubt her feistiness, I'm sure she wouldn't harm a fly.)

Me: "I believe it (laughing)! At your live show you have a great chemistry. Is this something that had to be learned over time, or was it natural?"

TCP: Tory pointing to Caleb, "Oh no, we practice that act all the time, cause I don't even like this dude." (More uproarious laughter fills the room. This light-hearted banter grows continuously as the interview continues, and we all become better acquainted.) "Actually," Tory states, "We are all friends naturally so it just transitions to the stage. It's like a party for us when we're up there, and if



the crowd likes it then it just gets us that much more pumped up." That being said, it's important to note that The Concrete Project has as good a time, and brings the same amount of energy to the stage, whether 5 people are watching or 500.

Me: "Let me speak for the crowd since I've been there. We love what you guys are doing, and I have to ask for everyone reading this; what's next on The Concrete Project calendar of world domination?"

TCP: "We are currently working on an EP. Stay posted to find out more information on that per the 'Band Heartthrob' Shaun. Like a lot of artists The Concrete Project wants to collaborate with other musicians, but don't look for that on this album. "We have to prove to ourselves that we can hold it down on our own first" says Cody. And as for what the future holds: "We want to take our music as far as we can, but as long as we can make a living off of this then we have made it".

Me: "Locally is there anywhere that you haven't played yet?"

TCP: "Pretty much the only two places that we have yet to play in San Diego are House of Blues and Casbah, but we're working on it" (Jen).

I'm sure it won't be long before we're able to watch and to hear them perform on both these stages. After only two years on the scene, The Concrete Project was nominated, "Best Hip-Hip in 2009 by San Diego Music Awards." TCP is a group of down to earth musicians who make appearances all over town: the more that people hear them, the more awards and recognitions of this nature they are bound to achieve. And TCP is a supporter of unity amongst musicians. Caleb: "There is a lot of talent in the Hip-Hop community and it would be nice if we could all offer support and respect to one another."

**Upcoming Shows:**

- Onyx Room July 9
- Winston's July 22
- 710 Club July 23
- North Park Music Thing Aug 13
- Winston's Aug 14

To book The Concrete Project email: [tcpmanager@gmail.com](mailto:tcpmanager@gmail.com)

-[www.TheConcreteProject.com](http://www.TheConcreteProject.com) - San Diego's

Live Hip Hop Band

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-[www.RamenDays.com](http://www.RamenDays.com) - Food For Your

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