



[Register](#) - [Login](#)

- EVENTS CALENDAR
- FEATURES
- COLUMNS
- BLOGGYTOWN
- MUSIC
- ARTS & CULTURE
- FILM
- DINING
- DRINKING
- CLASSIFIEDS
- BEST OF ORLANDO
- FREE STUFF
- ABOUT US
- ADVERTISE
- WORK FOR US

|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| Search Site    | Go |
| Previous issue | Go |

# MUSIC

## FRESH COMMENTS

[KILL THE BEAST](#)

**Anonymous** said, "While some additional oversight of the Express..." "

[KILL THE BEAST](#)

**Anonymous** said, "Its about damn time. Hell, screw the roads, i..." "

[BLISTER](#)

**Anonymous** said, "Boringly entertaining. Sounds like will..." "

[KILL THE BEAST](#)

**Anonymous** said, "... "



Click links to view ads

Go to [CLASSIFIEDS](#)

### **TOP JOBS**

**JANITORIAL POSITIONS-SUPERVISOR & CLEANERS**  
HEALTH INSURANCE,  
VACATION & HOLIDAYS!!

**SALES PROFESSIONALS**  
AFLAC

**RESTAURANT NOW**  
**HIRING!**  
TERRAMIA

View all  
[TOP JOB ads](#)

**TOP HOMES**

Ads by Google

**Villas of Grand Cypress**

Orlando's Premier Golf Resort  
Featuring 45 holes of Nicklaus Golf  
[www.grandcypress.com](http://www.grandcypress.com)

**Office Rental Orlando**

Find Local Office Space Rentals at Verizon  
SuperPages.com  
[www.SuperPages.com](http://www.SuperPages.com)

**Rent a Single Family Home**

Find Condos, Townhouses & More In the Las Vegas Area.  
Search Now!  
[www.RentalHomesPlus.c](http://www.RentalHomesPlus.c)

**Rentals in Florida**

Let NYTimes.com help you find an apartment or house for rent  
[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

Advertise on this site

8/17/2006

[EMAIL](#) [PRINT](#) Comments: (0)
**LEAVING THE GRIND BEHIND**

*With their debut album, X: 144 & SPS mark a career change*

By **Justin Strout****If you popped into your local**

Costco any time between last month and, say, 1996, it's likely that a genuine hip-hop star assisted you. Likewise if you've enrolled in a local technical school or called the number on the back of your credit card. Nearly every medium-sized city in America has at some point been able to claim a small measure of glory for an inhabitant who's made it out and done good, but Orlando's hip-hop scene has proved surprisingly fertile of late. When breakout stars Sol.illaquists of Sound hit the road this fall for a previously unthinkable national headlining tour, they will be accompanied by X: 144 & SPS — two young men who have just quit their day jobs.

On a sweltering Saturday in downtown Orlando, a commotion is heard from an unseen back area of Culture Mart, alternately an art gallery for S.O.S. member Swamburger's canvas endeavors and a makeshift base of operations for Nonsense Records, the label X: 144 & SPS call home. Nonsense founder Kelly Shockley, a burly, tattooed and welcoming figure, stumbles out with an ancient-looking CD/cassette player and cranks the volume on "Lose Control," a Caribbean-meets-crunk track from the duo's forthcoming debut, *M.E.*

"What more could you ask for? It's our first national tour and I'm going out with family," says X: 144, his head nodding emphatically to the outrageous beat as the grinning, gold-plated mug of an Ol' Dirty Bastard painting looms over his shoulder.

"The MC and DJ relationship is definitely not being utilized to its maximum potential, and that's what we represent. We're lovin' it." Lyricist X (born Maged Khalil Ragab) exudes the ease of a man who has put more than a decade's work into a secondary career that has finally allowed him to give up the first. An audio instructor at Full Sail, the notorious

ADVERTISEMENT

**LAKE MARY/SANFORD LUXURY CONDOS****REDUCED!!!**

2/2, 2/2 w/garage, and 3/2 with 1337 sq ft.

**NO MORE RENT!**

JUST \$2500 DOWN NO CLOSING COSTS!

View all  
[TOP HOMES](#) ads

**TOP RENTALS****MANY RENTALS IN ORLANDO**

[WWW.SOLERREALTY.COM](http://WWW.SOLERREALTY.COM)  
HOMES, CONDOS, DUPLEXS

**DOWNTOWN- SOLAIRE @**

**THE PLAZA 17TH FLOOR**  
DINING, DRINKS & MOVIES  
RIGHT DOWNSTAIRS!!

View all  
[TOP RENTAL](#) ads

**SUBSCRIBE**

Sign up here to receive weekly updates from Orlando Weekly

Your Email Address:

 Subscribe Unsubscribe

boot camp for the starry-eyed, Ragab achieved success as a solo artist first. (He was this publication's choice for best hip-hop act in 2003.) When he met SPS, he claims, the years of hard work suddenly made sense.

"At the time nobody was really moving at the speeds we were as individuals, so it only made sense for us to hook up," Ragab says. "We're both looking to elevate our game."

"When we're working together it's not that hard," SPS says. "It's like clockwork." SPS (real name Earl Mike II) is now a *former* member of team Costco after 10 years of service. He sits toward the back of the mart, and one gets the feeling that if he could talk from behind a closed door, he would. A reserved but cordial man, Mike comes alive behind a deck. For years he traveled the country as a competition turntablist, a lost art in which DJs battle with their hands, and last year he repeated his win as the Southeast champion.

"The turntables are a part of him, like a guitar is part of a guitar player," says Shockley. "It's really amazing just to be around the guy when he's around the turntables."

About three years ago, Mike began doing side work for various Nonsense artists, and he quickly became a hot commodity within the family. "I remember Kelly saying, 'Man, SPS has some bangin'-ass beats,'" Ragab says. Shockley had a vision and it has proved to be a fruitful one, but as with any partnership, there were complications. "The funny thing is, I talked to X about it, and I said, 'Man, you and SPS should get together,'" attests Shockley. "He's like, 'Really? What about Andromeda?' I said, 'No, don't worry about that.'"

Andromeda, the wildly popular Orlando duo Mike co-founded with lyricist Carlos Ramirez, was on the ropes when Mike began working with Nonsense. "Andromeda was kind of on the standstill. We weren't really doing much, phone calls weren't being returned. It kind of fizzled," says Mike. Almost immediately following their raucous win at the Orlando Music Awards in 2002, for Best Hip-Hop Act, life began getting in the way. "I still get people that walk up to me and look at me like they saw a ghost," Ramirez says.

Ramirez claims that at the same time Andromeda was peaking, reorganizations at the bank where he works during the day restricted the freedom he previously used to work on the group. Although he supports his former partner "110 percent," he laments that focusing on a more family-friendly, steady career may have cost him the opportunity he so longed for. "I'm working on a solo project, but it's difficult. I feel empty," Ramirez says.

The music fades on the boom box and eyes turn hesitantly to the door, then to the nearly white heat outside. Ragab is still smiling and softly drops a clue that will answer all subsequent questions from fans or press about the origins of this team-up.

"'If the Shoe Fits' is gonna surprise a lot of people," says Ragab. A haunting, jazz-infused meditation on the politics of emotion, "Shoe" begins with the words, "Finding a counterpart/Like finding a new pair of shoes/Help you identify and simplify the family feuds."

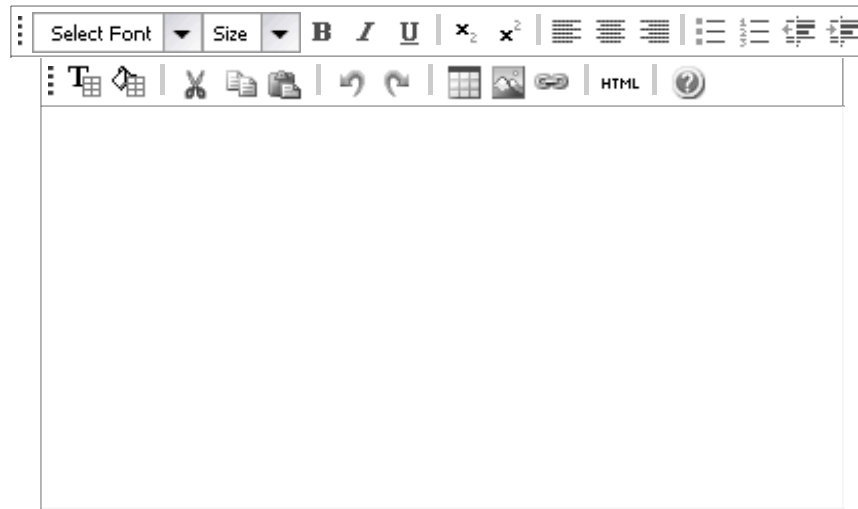
Braving the step from air-conditioning to the outside curb, X:144 & SPS, freed daily grinders who for years have posed at night as hip-hop stars, are ready for the spotlight of the "Quit Your Dead End Job 2006 Tour."

[music@orlandoweekly.com](mailto:music@orlandoweekly.com)

Sorry, there are no comments yet for this story. Leave your message using the form below!

### COMMENT ON THIS ITEM

Leave a comment on this item.



---

[HOME](#) | [EVENTS CALENDAR](#) | [FEATURES](#) | [COLUMNS](#)

---

**ONLINE EXCLUSIVES:** [BLOGGYTOWN](#) | [BEST OF ORLANDO 2006](#) | [FREE STUFF](#)

---

[MUSIC](#) | [ARTS & CULTURE](#) | [FILM](#) | [DINING](#) | [DRINKING](#) | [CLASSIFIEDS](#)

---

[ABOUT US](#) | [ADVERTISE WITH US](#) | [SUBMIT CALENDAR LISTING](#) | [WORK FOR US](#)



©2006, Orlando Weekly