



SOMETHING FISHY

BY CAMERON GORDON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LYNN GREENAWAY

Are The Carps about to smell success?

Mash-ups have been en vogue with the nu-gearhead set for a minute now, so the big deal over blending, bending and swerving between genres is over. That is, unless you check two dudes doing it with just a bass guitar, a drum kit, some mics and a whole lotta moxy. That's how The Carps do it.

Raised in and around the subdivisions and strip malls of Scarborough, Ontario, Jahmal Tonge and Neil White's beats, lines and musical manifestos have put them on the edge of that shuffle tip that's redefining how we listen to music. And, thanks to their *The Young & Passionate Days of Carpedia* E.P., they're about to fall off that tip in a big way.

With a growing cult following in Philly, Chicago, Miami and New York (where their live sets buzzed big at CMJ and the release bash for James Spooner's *Afropunk* doc), and a campaign with wireless giant Verizon that will pre-load a Carps video game on to handsets, it looks like Jahmal and Neil - who first scored local crowd and critical acclaim at last year's

NXNE - are already outgrowing the scene west of Scarborough. That's not a diss on Toronto, just a recognition that the city might not be ready for such eclectic sounds.

"I love Toronto," says Jahmal, who first met Neil in church when they were tweens. "But a band like ours is never going to make a move in this city. Unless you sound like Broken Social Scene, Toronto isn't ready for you. It's a tough city to crack because the kids are pretty tuned into trends and not always that interested in something new."

But The Carp's debut on 'something new' is stirring up music geeks, indie rockers and urban hipsters in Toronto, and beyond. At just five tracks, *The Young & Passionate Days of Carpedia* is a quick hit of groove-infused hyperactivity that taps Gang of Four, ESG and Bloc Party via a major soul inspiration that comes from both sides of this fishy equation.

"Soul music is one of the few genres that has really stayed true to its roots," says Jahmal. "It's still using the same scales that blues musicians were using 100 years ago. There have been a lot of adaptations and changes over the years,

but the basics have never really gone away. It's definitely something we observe when writing and performing."

Jahmal's vocals behind the drum kit (or the MPC, or the occasional guitar) do hint at more than a few Motown and Stax records lying around his house as a kid, but he and bassist/occasional synth-player Neil both name Philly - not Detroit or Memphis - and one of its hip-hop trailblazers as this disc's key soul influence.

"There was one Roots song called 'Seed 2.0' that was a real defining song in terms of the sound we were looking to capture," explains Neil. "Ultimately, we ended up in Philadelphia and recorded the EP in the Roots' studio. Not only that, but we hooked up with Nouveau Riche, a band from that area that we admire and share an affinity for. The city is pretty much a second home for our music at this point."

So catch these Carps while the two of them are still swimming at home. And don't expect them to spawn beyond their limited numbers, ever.

"I don't think we could even find a third member at this point who's on the same wavelength as us," says Jahmal. "We stopped trying a long time ago."