

# Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

The Portland Observer

## SPEARHEAD



Aesthetic pleasures aside, Spearhead is distinguished by Michael Franti's social consciousness. Like Africa Bambaataa, Michael has been inspired by King Shaka, the great leader and warrior who jumpstarted the Zulu nation's march to greatness in 1816. It was Shaka who redesigned and made more deadly the traditional southern African spear known as the assegai. Nearly two centuries later, Michael wonders, "How do we reinvent our own struggle in 1994? Obviously, we have to honor the spirit of those who have gone before us, but it's not the same now as it was in the Sixties or the Forties or the Thirties or the Twenties. We need new tools and new strategies that are equal to the task of remak-

ing today's crazy, violent, high-tech era."

Michael spells out his mission even as he suggests some new strategies on his new album's title track: "If I don't have enemies, I'm not doin' my job/I might throw out a curveball, but I never throw a lob." Accordingly, "Hole In The Bucket" adds a modern moral dimension to a lighthearted Jamaican folksong popularized by Harry Belafonte a generation ago. "Caught Without An Umbrella" is an ultimately hopeful song about an attempted suicide, inspired by a poem by Los Angeles-based poet Ruth Foreman. "Love Is The Shit" is a wry meditation on the perils of falling in love. "Dream Team" imagines a day when African-Americans wield as much power in Wash-

ington as they do now on basketball courts. "Of Course You Can" is an upbeat response to "all the experts who go around saying that my generation of black men is a lost generation." "Positive" faces the threat of AIDS with a rare honesty and maturity.

The title of "Crime To Be Broke In America" speaks for itself. Even relatively carefree party tracks, like "Run Fa Ya Life" and "Piece O' Peace" are made weighty by the knowledge that the cops might bust in at any moment. Finally, there is "Red Beans And Red Rice," which would seem to be about nothing more -- and nothing less -- than an author's appetite for good, healthy food and what he calls "the sacred space in your kitchen."



## The Nutcracker Returns

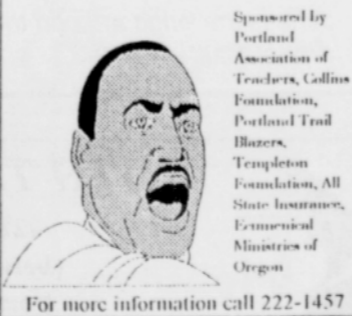
(Above) Dancing in Oregon Ballet Theater's production of *The Nutcracker* is Davida Haas as Marie and Fabrice Lemire as the Nutcracker prince.

(Left) Alexandrous Ballard and Maricar Drilon portray the Mandarin boy and the Peony girl in Oregon Ballet Theater's production of *The Nutcracker*. The holiday classic performs at the Portland Civic Auditorium through Dec. 30. For tickets and more information call 2-BALLET.

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