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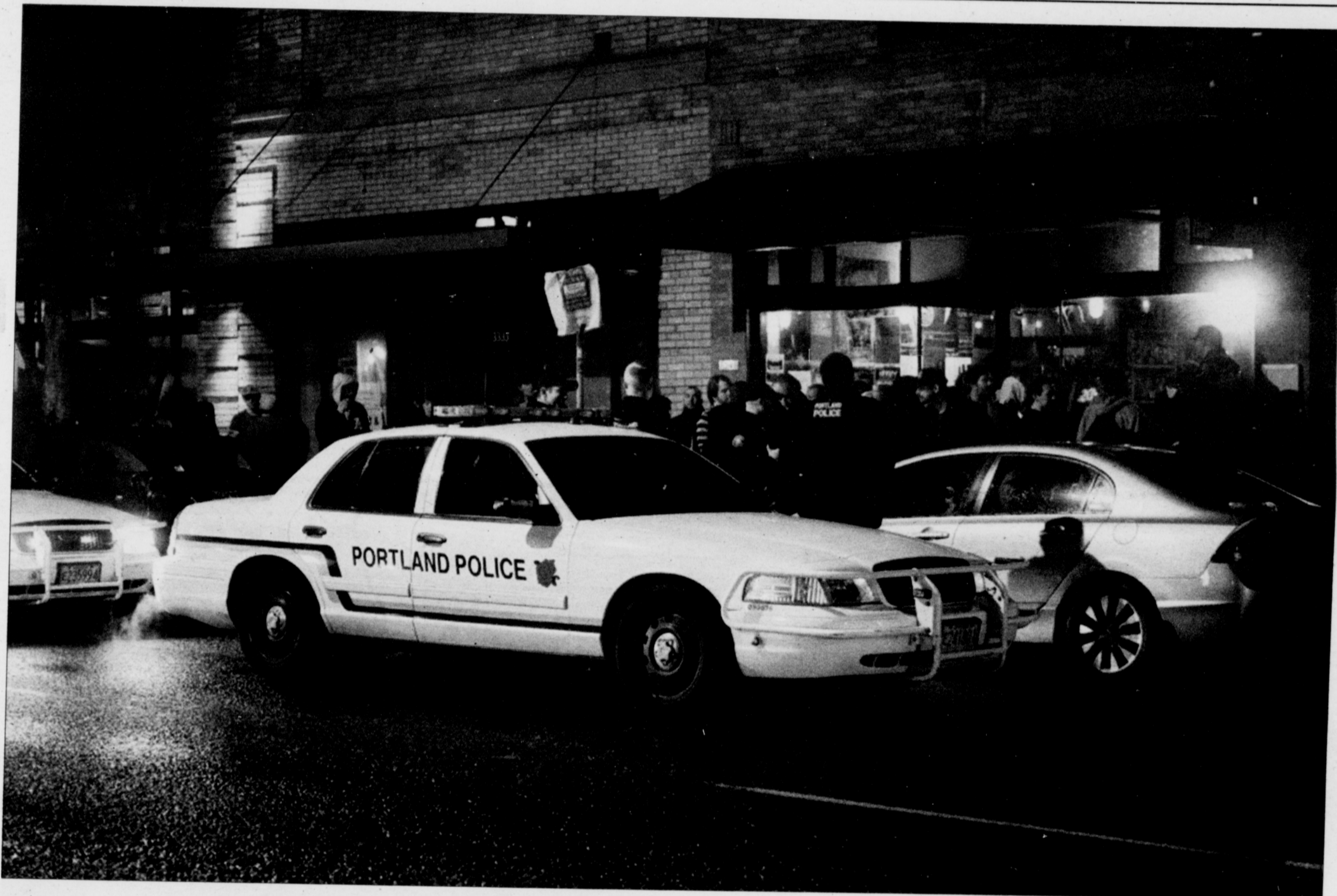
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A Hip-Hop show at the Blue Monk is halted following a massive police search for gang activity and fire code violations, renewing complaints that authorities are targeting rap shows. PHOTO BY COLIN MCLAUGHLIN

Hip Hop Shakedown

Show comes to abrupt end after police swarm club

BY DONOVAN M. SMITH
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

In the book "Art of War," mastermind general Sun Tzu proclaims that "the whole secret lies in confusing the enemy, so that he cannot fathom our real intent," and on Saturday, at the Blue Monk there was certainly confusion injected between the grooves of Hip-Hop that were meant to be the star of the night.

Three of the biggest homegrown Hip-Hop acts in the city, Luck-One, Mikey Vegaz, and Illmaculate, were billed to headline an intimate stage at the restaurant and entertainment venue located at Southeast 33rd and Belmont.

The sold-out show however was brought to an abrupt halt once Illmaculate took the stage, stating that he would not perform as a result of the ever-swelling police presence that

began to engulf both the immediate blocks around the venue, and inside.

The enforcement action was what many in Portland's hip hop music scene see as on-going, targeted police harassment of rap shows.

Over 20 officers from the Portland Police Bureau as well as a Portland Fire Marshal ended up being at the Blue Monk that night. The authorities said they went to the entertainment site initially over concerns about possible gang affiliations, but then escalated their response over fire safety issues because it appeared the downstairs venue was overcrowded and they couldn't get a radio signal or cell phone connection to reach 911 dispatch.

The fire marshal, Portland Fire Bureau inspector Rob Crusier, talked with the Portland Observer on the night of the

event.

He said he personally counted 135 bodies in the performance area. An official police report quoted the tally as "at least 120 people in the room;" and the Blue Monk website said they have a capacity of 100 in a cabaret-style setting.

Crusier denied that there was an effort to shut down the show, but said he did require that the crowd get thinned down to a legal capacity.

"I didn't shut down the show off immediately, which I could've done," Crusier said. "I wanted to work with the promoter to see if we could keep the show going."

He said he picks a "handful" of shows to check in on nightly, and Saturday's inspection was random.

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