

fiti, or tagging, on account of its being illegal. If someone is caught writing graffiti in the city, they face receiving a fine of \$120.

One local graffiti artist, AtariPosterBoy (apb), explains the troubles he's encountered trying to express his art: "I've been taggin' for over a year. Mostly marker tags, but I design a lot o' pieces too, (i.e. big-assed tags that are supposed to be painted on walls) but I've only tried cans twice... and the second time I got spotted and chased and ended up losin' my backpack and all my paint and caps and a pair of pants that were in the bag. Sucks. I was just in the stairwell of a parkade — no big deal. Parkades are ugly as hell. They deserve to have something cool painted on them.... Anyway, I was lucky the bastard was fat. I don't think he ran more than two steps to try to catch me."

PLATINUM THUGGZ

Another important member of Charlottetown's hip-hop community is Troy Carter, owner and founder of Platinum Thuggz, the city's only hip-hop shop.

Carter's store sells clothing

(urban fashion including his own line), hair products, head gear, jewellery, magazines, rolling papers, and new vinyl and CDs by local artists.

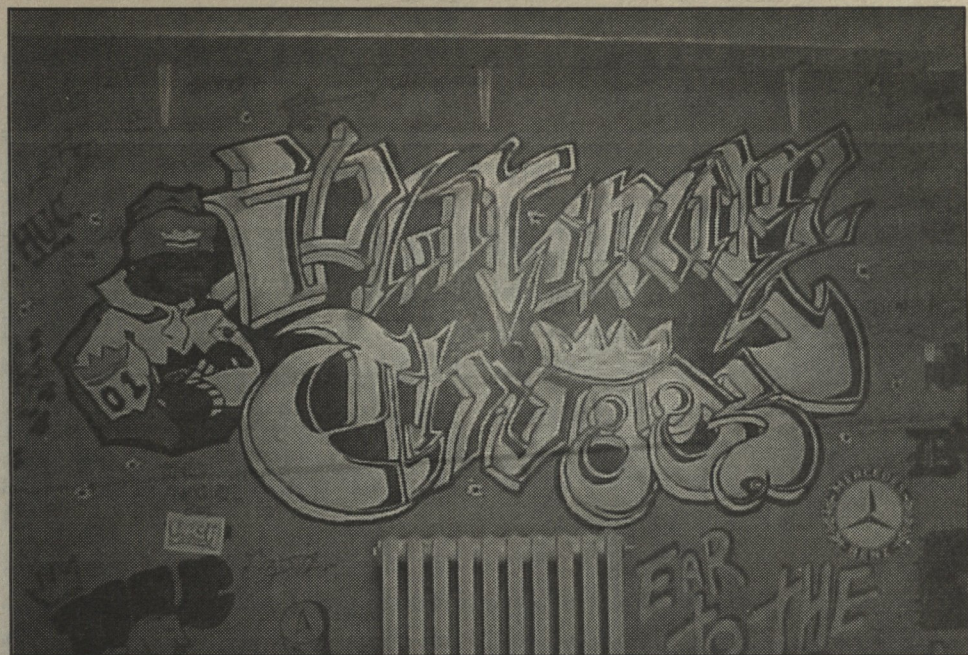
Platinum Thuggz allows local "heads" to come and hang out or hone their skills on the microphone and turntable.

Carter explained his inspiration for opening the shop: "I was always into hip-hop culture, the music, the clothes, and there was nothing like this here. You could never find any of the clothes or a place to hang out so I started my own line, King Club Hip Gear, and from there on I just put that and the store all in one and started it all up."

Before opening the store, Carter circulated surveys and learned how great the demand for a hip-hop store actually was.

Carter has not encountered any adversity from people who might not really understand the culture, but he also had not received any financial aid from government.

Carter's shop is currently Prince Edward Island's only supplier of new hip-hop vinyl. "I never knew there were so many DJs here. I just brought in a few pieces to



Graffiti on display at Platinum Thuggz

check it out and all of a sudden there were DJs coming in from all over. So I'm turning a whole section of the store to sell vinyl and another part for old used vinyl so a lot of DJs can look for beats."

Other innovations that Carter is introducing into his store are a barber shop area, a section for playing dice, and an area where he will sell turntables.

On top of running Platinum Thuggz, Carter has been putting on hip-hop shows. His shows have been all-ages shows and have featured Halifax artists including Classified and local artists. He also hopes to bring in bigger names such as Chocclair and Naughty by Nature.

When asked why he puts on all-ages shows, Carter said, "The people who came here so far, (Maestro, Chocclair) were at Myron's and there was so many people that wanted to see that and there was not that many people at the show because of the age group. I want to do shows for all ages so that everyone can enjoy it."

Another important feature that Carter's shop has is an area in the back of the store where graffiti artists have a place to display their pieces. This section features art-

work from Halifax and Charlottetown artists.

"There is nothing wrong with good graffiti," explained Carter. "There is crappy graffiti with just swearing, but you see in other cities where there is some nice artwork. I think there should be a place in town where the city should let the people who are good express themselves. Because it is art."

FREEDOM

Some graffiti artists, however, do not agree with Carter's opinion that the city should designate a free space to practice their art.

Apb explains, "I'm totally against a sanctioned spot for kids to go. That's wack as hell. It takes all the meaning away from graf and turns it into nothing more than a style. Graf is supposed to be a weapon against all the ugly shit that's in our city. Public space has been sold to private interests (i.e. advertisers and the businessmen who hire 'em) and we're subjected to what they want us to be subjected to all the time. I think it sucks. Public space should be free of all that ugly shit. They try to fool us



Platinum Thuggz: Charlottetown's only hip-hop store