

# Michael Franti is back preaching positive at the Canopy Club

## Accent m yōō' zik

By TROY MICHAEL

Since his early days with Beatnigs, singer/songwriter/musician/political activist Michael Franti has had something to say. In his youth he carried a chip on his shoulder and displayed his emotion with fiery passion through his songs. He was into hip hop during his twenties and had a political, socially conscious appeal. Franti conducted his strong bravado from an angry youth to a man on a mission to help change a distraught world with his songs and words.

Franti, who was also the driving force behind the band Spearhead, is a student of music, more specifically vintage rhythm and blues, soul, and the early hip hop. He has taken the past and present to release some of the most

politically charged albums to date. Including his 2001 sophomore effort "Stay Human" and more recently Michael Franti & Spearhead — "Live in Sydney" (Music Video Distribution), which was released on a dual disc DVD/CD combo.

In his wake of six solo album and recordings with prior bands, the Oakland, California native has left behind impetuous, noise making music full of much artistic freedom. Franti is powerful to say the least. Like his uncontrollable dread locks, his music has charm inspired by a community of others.

The music and fervor was started when Michael Franti was adopted by white parents in the inner city of Oakland, a contradiction to say the least. The fact that he was a black kid being raised by white parents in the struggling part of town gave the budding musician a hyper-awareness in finding his identity. This gave him an unselfish demeanor that you can see in his later



**Michael Franti, seen here performing at a rally against war in Telluride, will make a return visit to the Canopy Club on Friday, Oct. 21.**

albums. In 1986 Franti formed the drum and bass duo entitled Beatnigs. The band released only one record and quickly fell apart.

Franti's music began getting noticed further with his next band, the Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy. This band merged a lethal dose of jazz-

influenced rap that focused on confronting the greediness and misogyny of popular rap. That project also disbanded after one album and Franti went on to form an even better group. In 1990, Spearhead released their watershed album simply titled "Home." Franti was now a main staple

on music television with the hit single "Hole in the Bucket." That song of homelessness was followed with another single "Positive," which touched on the growing AIDS epidemic.

With Spearhead, Franti continued to evolve with funk, guitars, melodic soul and sampling. In 1997 Franti touched more raw nerves on his "Chocolate Supa Highway" album. This record had themes of police brutality, the injustice of government and kidnappings. The album wasn't as accessible as "Home" and Franti lost the mainstream support. Like a true man on a mission, he carried on with one of his greatest efforts to date, "Stay Human." The album was another step into the musical future for Franti with songs being developed with techno, rock, and funk sounds. The album was also new territory for the singer as he penned songs about love and freedom of the soul. One to always explore his options, an acoustic album was in the

folds in 2003. "Music from the Front Porch" showed that Franti could really sing his songs. The new songs were passionate, expressive and down right intelligent.

This year fans got a double dose of Michael Franti with "Love Kamikaze: The Lost Sex Singles & Collectors' Remixes" and the "Live in Sydney" album. The latter of the two is a collection of ten energetic performances from the Hordern Pavillion in Sydney, Australia. Some of the stand-out tracks include "Pray for Peace," "Every Single Soul," "Rock the Nation", and the classic "Everyone Deserves Music." The dual disc showcases the smooth transition this artist has made from the angry young hip hopper to the new more intelligent poet.

On Friday, Oct. 21, Michael Franti will most likely be playing an onslaught of his catalog of music when he makes a return trip to the Canopy Club in Urbana. The show begins at 7:00 p.m. and is \$10 to enter.

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