Rhymes and Reason, Too

Spearhead takes the rap about safer sex into the black community

December 1, 1995 By Casey Davidson

Michael Franti of Spearhead is a rapper with a conscience and a quick tongue who manages a meat trick: He rhymes the word “magic” to “prophylactic.” Cool.

Spearhead’s video for the latest single, “Positive,” off the *Home* album (Capitol Records) is a story about one man’s decision and subsequent fears about having an AIDS test. “The main reason I took on the issue is that I am a straight black man, and I see in our community of other black men a lot irresponsible sexuality,” says Franti. “Positive” features lost of sexy poses while the San Fransisco—based singer raps about living someone enough to get tested. Erotic images of Franti running a woman’s back, of a bra and some necking are interspersed with a visit to a clinic and a syringe going in for the blood. The chorus is thoughtful and catchy: “How am I gonna live my life if I’m positive? Is it gonna be a negative?”

Franti wants people to realize that AIDS is “a disease, not an affliction. I try to develop compassion. You get better results with honey than with vinegar,” he says wisely.

“When I look at the disease within our community, it encompasses all the problems: Economics, health care, education, sexuality, teenage pregnancy. All of these things fall under AIDS. It’s a perfect opportunity to fix these things.”

She died of AIDS in 1987, but the life and death of exotic dancer Althea Leasure Flynt at 33 is attracting the attention of a slew of young, edgy actresses today who want to portray her in the upcoming Columbia Pictures movie about her husband, *Hustler* publisher and First Amendment rights crusader Larry Flynt. So far, Mira Sorvino, Marisa Tomei, Courtney Love and Patricia Arquette have read for the role. The movie will be directed by *Valmont*’s Milos Forman and will star Woody Harrelson as the publisher. Does all the commotion over this particular part have anything to do with Hollywood’s warming up to aids issues? Forget about it. According to a spokeswoman for Sorvino, women want this role because “it’s a great character for an actress. It will receive a lot of attention.” As in Oscar attention. Even co-screen-writer, Scott Alexander admits that AIDS isn’t a focal point. “It’s a flashy role,” he says. “Then she dies.” Columbia Pictures will release it sometime in 1996.

From the everyone's-a-critic file: Some people wrote to *POZ* to complain that I had been too harsh on *General Hospital* and its teenage AIDS storyline ["AIDS Sweeps Week," *POZ* No. 8]. Well, whatever! But I bring it up now because ABC deserves high fives for its latest tie-in to that storyline, the ABC Soapshare AIDS Awareness Challenge, a media literacy unit designed to help teachers raise AIDS awareness. The network, working with the educational publisher Scholastic, provided teachers with guides on how to help students produce a print or broadcast campaign or event designed to teach adolescents about HIV, AIDS, safer sex, condom use—all the basic AIDS 101 stuff that needs to be delivered to each generation each year. ABC will judge the projects and award winning schools in several categories $3,000 media prizes (for word processing, sound or video equipment). Posters for the Challenge feature *General Hospital*'s Stone (Michael Sutton) and Robin (Kimberly McCullough) and the frightening fact that "AIDS is the number one killer of young people in America."

On December 7, ABC goes one step further with an After School Special called *Positive: A Journey Into AIDS*. "It follows the young actors Kimberly and Michael as they learn about AIDS for first time," says ABC's Scott Barton. But don't expect a serious, dull documentary. "The guys that are doing it have done a bunch of things for teens. It'll be fast-paced, not just lectures," Barton promises.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Rhymes-Reason-HIV-20801-2004