



ARTE

IMAGES COURTESY OF COPEZ

cope2:trainspotting

words/joelsosa



In the late 70s New York City street kids created a world of music out of improvisation. Some had broken stereo equipment and stacks of abandoned vinyl their parents kept around. From broken parts emerged the sounds of rap and today's hip-hop. There were also kids watching old kung fu flicks who felt the urge to run outside and strike the air. Electro-buggy rose out of concrete. As these adolescents ran out onto the street, they couldn't resist whipping out a Pilot marker and christening the walls with their names in graffiti.

In the days before hip hop left its signature in aerosol paint on the world and its recording artists reached platinum, fame was acquired differently. Some traversed the city battling lyrically. Others turned fancy footwork into combat. Then there were those who, with a knapsack full of spray cans, went seeking fame; they yearned for everyone to know their names. Invisible to the world outside of N.Y.C.'s five boroughs, this generation of poor kids created a culture that transformed reality in less than three decades.

Cope2 was one of the preteens who set out to conquer the world of flying iron cars commonly known as elevated subway trains.

Just about everywhere you travel by elevated train in N.Y.C. you can spot a Cope2 piece. I spotted at least 10 on my way to the Bronx to meet him.



Looks like Rosario Dawson will be lighting up the big screen soon. She has been cast in the film version of the cartoon Josie and the Pussycats. Guys everywhere will line up to see this beauty beat a tambourine...Realizing how large the Latino market has become, ABC News will run its first Spanish language version of a story on their Web site....Fresh from his appearance in Shaft, Fidel Vicioso has wrapped up shooting the first episode where he plays Det. Dan Reynolds on NBC's Law & Order:

"When I was little my cousin used to write 'Chico.' He wasn't a big writer. He was a neighborhood writer. In the neighborhood where I grew up I remember a lot of pieces in the schoolyard handball courts from 'Mark 198,' 'Russ 75,' 'Jay,' and 'Gem'.... On the 6 train I saw a lot of 'Seen' pieces and it influenced me, I was like, 'Yo, this is the shit!' There were always neighborhood writers on my block and I saw them writing all the time so I started getting into it. That was in '79, I was mad little, like 10 years old."

"I remember my cousin in '80-'81 had a crew, the Master Skaters, and he used to hang out a lot with Mr. Freeze of Rock Steady Crew [RSC]. That's how I started to know a lot of people too. That's how I started to get more into the culture. They [RSC] used to throw jams in the schoolyard. That was the culture back then. Break dancing, hip hop music, Sugar Hill Gang, the trains, graffiti. That's how hip hop started."

"My boy Daryl used to write Kope with a K. I wasn't really a writer but we were partners... So he told me, 'Yo, why don't you write Cope with a C and I'll write Kope with a K?' So I said 'fuck it,' and I [became] Cope with a C."



[L-R] LA FAMILIA DE COPEZ. COPEZ TRYING A NEW AEROSOL COLOR. IMAGE/TK/D

"We used to ride the train from station to station in the back of the train and on top of the train. I remember always seeing 'Ban2,' 'Phaze2,' '2Dark,' and '2Famous.' I wanted a 2 too, so I put Cope2."

"The first time I went to the [train] yard I was with Soul, Pizz, 2Bang, 2Slash from my old block. I knew where they parked the trains but I was scared to go. I was 10 or 11 years old and they gave me a can of silver and a can of red. I remember it was some car paint and we went to the yard and boom!



It was like nothing; all you saw were all these trains with pieces and burners, the insides were destroyed. We were running up and down the trains, just buggin' out.... I used to find cans in the yard, sometimes half cans, sometimes full cans. I guess writers used to get raided and left the cans behind so I started doing pieces."

"I did my first Cope piece right on [a train] door. I remember about two or three days later I was walking with my mom...she was going to get her Welfare check and to get me some sneakers. Then the train passed by. Boom! 'Cope' right on the door. That shit had me going crazy. I was jumping up and down. I said 'Yeah, look at my name.' My mother didn't believe I did it. I [said to] her, 'Mom, look what I did,' and she said, 'That wasn't you.' She didn't believe me."



Special Victims Unit.... Video producer J.C. Barros (think spectacular clips from Gloría Estefan and Carlos Vives) will soon be directing and producing in cyberspace. Barros is working with the hip hop site Hookk.com to create live action, interactive, animated and mixed "webisodes." Move over Arnold and Jean Claude, Hector Echavarría is heating things up! The Venezuelan martial arts expert and film star will make his U.S. debut in the action adventure flick Extreme Force.... El nuevo "cara de niño," LUIS FONSI is moving to the small



"So, I started going more often by myself. I started going with my boys from the neighborhood. I started my own crew which [included] KD, Kids Destroy with my boy Reo, Spell, Am-1 —who was the original Kope. This was in '81-'82. We started going to the yards. My pieces started to enhance." "It was for fame. When I was younger, you saw all these writers [who wrote] 'King.' That was the goal, to become a king. I asked the old school writers what a king [was], and they told me whoever is the best at the moment, whoever has the most pieces, the most tags, the most throw-ups of the lines. I wanted to become king of the 4's after Mitch 177, Ban2, Blade, and Mark 198. So I set out to become king and I started to destroy it. Inside, I had tags in every car, I had throw-ups on top of throw-ups. I was king of the 4's in '83-'84. Then I moved over to the 2's and 5's. I became king of the 4's, 2's, and 5's. In '82 I took king of the D's on the insides. The 4's were the first line to become [stain-resistant] silver trains in early '85. So I moved onto other lines. The 2's and 5's became red from white. We were vandals. We destroyed the trains. If you look at a really old train and you looked in the insides and outsides those shits were fucked up."

"I lived it. I'm a legend now. I paid my dues. I'm an old man now. I can't be like a young kid trying to destroy everything. When I was 15 I was a king, a destructive little muthafucka. My son is 15 now. I look at him and I'm like 'Yo that shit is dead.' [I've] got to chill, it's time to hang up the markers the cans, and just live off the fame and thank God I lived it."

Today Cope still lives in the Bronx. He has a video called Kings Destroy. "It shows my life story on graffiti. Fat Joe, KRS-1, Rakim, Flavor Flav, Cool Herc are in it. You see me still hitting trains, still racking, still bombing. Just showing how it was done and how it should be done." TO ORDER HIS VIDEO CONTACT XYLENE DISTRIBUTION AT (877) 995-3637.