

## MAPEI STOCKHOLM

by Nancy Dunham  
Photography by Edwin Tse

Although some artists consider music the first rung on their stairway to international recognition, widespread acclaim is just a pleasant side note to alternative hip-hop artist Mapei.

Perhaps that's because her music is born of an international existence, which split her childhood between Providence, R.I., and Stockholm, Sweden soaking up the influences and attitudes of both cultures. Or maybe it's a disbelief of sorts that her rapid fire observations presented in hip-hop on the international Internet stage can actually prompt others' introspection and creativity.

"In my lyrics I try to be truthful. I don't want to mimic gangsters or mimic whoever is out there," she said. "I'm just me, so whether it's more comical or heartfelt, that's me. I don't want to create deceptions... I grew up here half my life and

half my life in Sweden, so I can mishmash all my influences. I like that I created my own little path."

But don't think her continent hopping path translates into an untethered existence. In the world of Mapei, her family and friends are the muses that influence her sound.

"The most important thing is to stay with your friends," she said. "If you are creative enough and true enough you can create your art for them and they can be your inspiration. I grew up in a family that was very free. When you grow up with people who joke a lot and are comical and are very dramatic, it feels natural."

Of course being uprooted at age 10 for the move to Sweden did curb some of that unconstraint, at least for a while, as Mapei became acclimated to her adopted country.

"I stopped doing music for a while because it was really hard with the language barrier," she said. "I started doing music again with friends when I was

16, and I'd come on the scene and rap at [political] rallies my father had until I went back to Sweden. Then I wrote a whole lot of poetry and started to put down raps on his beats, and people started hearing it and liking it, and I wrote more."

For Mapei, writing is parallel to spilling her emotions and ruminations onto paper as quickly as she can scribble. For now, most of her work lives on the stage, MySpace and YouTube, where "Video Vixen" caused a sensation. Signed to Downtown Records, she plans an album but doesn't know when it will develop or even what she'll call it. She does know the music on it will be "fresh, nice. I've matured. I'm older now. I'm 24."

"You don't have to be a product... People like hearing others' truth. I just want people to see a different stereotype," she said. "It's also like I just did this for fun and keep doing it for fun. If more people like it, cool. Let's connect. Let's vibe."