

CROOK RODNEY IMPREVERT

Rodney Imprevert said he often feels stereotyped by his look. For someone who modeled his style after the gold-toothed drug dealers he grew up idolizing, his music is about more than bloodshed, beefs and bling.

“At one point I really didn’t feel like I fit in to where the music was going,” said Imprevert, 25, of Wilton Manors. “People were writing about shooting people, and I’m writing about suicide and having a wife one day.”

Born in Freeport, Bahamas, to Haitian parents, Imprevert is the youngest of seven children. He was drawn to music in part as a relief from the deaths of four brothers and his father.

“It’s therapy to me, number one,” he said of his rhymes. “It’s either write or go out and do something stupid.”

Fate didn’t favor his family. While his cousins headed to college, his siblings headed to early graves or jail cells.

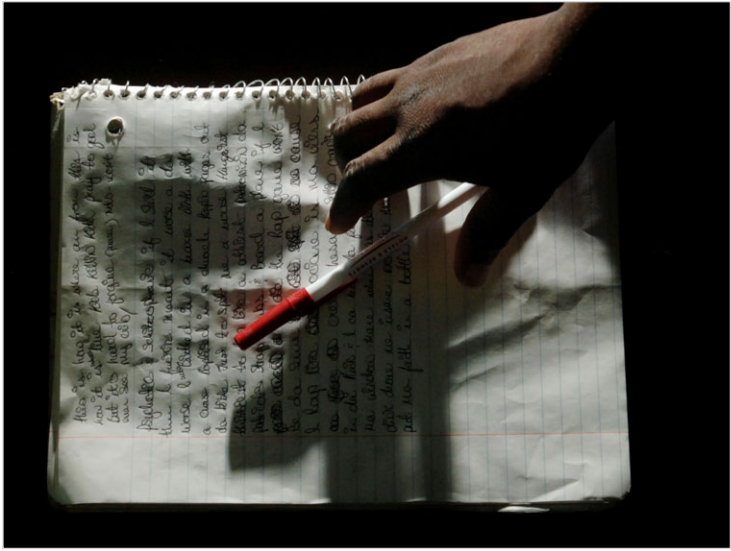
“Our little section of the family was outcasts. Most of my people don’t like tats and gold teeth,” he said through a bullion-covered smile, a Jesus-piece hanging from his neck.

At 7, he watched his father die in the Bahamas, looking on as the medical examiner wheeled him from the house. Three of his brothers died in Florida, either while trying to get high or make money from getting people high. The other died in a car crash.

At 11, his mother sent him to an uncle’s home, hoping a male role model would turn him around. It didn’t. “I was never a pocketbook snatcher, but ‘Crook,’ I got the name in high school because I would steal one dude’s beeper and sell it to another,” he said outside the Hallandale Beach studio of the company that manages him, Tri Kounty Gangstas.

His uncle kicked him out after he was regularly suspended from school. Imprevert dropped out of high school several years ago, a decision influenced by a conversation with a teacher who told him how much money she made. What could he learn from someone who earned so little? he wondered.

Now, he works in construction and daydreams about million-dollar record deals.



WRITING RHYMES: Rodney Imprevert, also known as Crook, reaches for his pen and notepad, saying he is rarely without a notepad and has stacks of them filled with lyrics.



NO SUGAR COATING: Imprevert, left, records in a Pompano Beach studio with rap artist Chico Smylez. “The music is a way out. It’s either that or drug dealing,” Imprevert says. “... I’m not going to sit here and sugar coat nothing.”

DANGER WILKENS BRUNA

Wilkens Bruna hopes to make his mark through his lyrics. “My music is a way to give to my son,” said Bruna, of Oakland Park. “Even if I’m dead and gone, he can be like, ‘Man, my dad knew what he was talking about.’ ”

Until about three years ago, Bruna, who goes by the stage name Danger, ran the streets. A high school dropout, he worked odd jobs and hustled to make ends meet.

But the birth of his son, Stephon, helped him settle down and sharpen his focus. Now he holds a 9-to-5 job as a customer service representative for a timeshare company.

“Here you are a daddy. You got a kid looking up to you. You don’t want to be struggling,” he said.

About a year ago Bruna, 26, gained full custody of his son. They live with his sister and niece.

Bruna, who arrived in South Florida from Haiti at 8, left home at 16. The youngest of six children, he bounced from a neighbor’s house to staying with a friend to living with his brother. He transferred to three different schools, and by 18 was a high school dropout.

The sense of responsibility Bruna felt at being a father made him want to also be a role model for young men and women. He hopes to do that through his music, which is heavily influenced by Christianity and black culture.

As an emcee “you can get your voice out there harder than a preacher can in his little church,” Bruna said. “You can ... kind of straighten a young’un out, by them looking up to you and ... seeing you as this person they probably want to be.”

The problem with rap music today, he said, is emcees aren’t giving fans a well-rounded view of life. The music is too full of drugs, sex and money references, he said.

Still, he makes secular music.

“Right now, it’s not in me ... my mind and my soul is not telling me to do Christian rap right now,” Bruna said. “But I do believe that it’s gonna work for me to change later on in life.”



EXPRESSING HIMSELF: Wilkens Bruna, left, known as Danger, jokes with friend Herby Cherenfant while dining at Denny’s in Oakland Park. “As an artist, you gotta always try to express yourself,” says Bruna,



SERIOUS PARENT: Bruna, right, and friend Steve St. Hilaire listen as a song is played back while Bruna’s son Stephon, 2, peeks between them in Oakland Park.