

# MC Shy Luv'n every minute of it



**Carol Johnstone**

**G**iselle Cunningham— better known by her rap handle MC Shy Luv— appears at the North Branch Library Tuesday night to offer tips and tricks to would-be rappers. But Cunningham herself says she isn't sure "if I want to continue rappin' or not."

After three years of performing in Nova Scotia, Montreal and Toronto with her posse (group) 2-on-2 — she opened for Maestro Fresh Wes and Third Bass, performed with the Dream Warriors and toured with MC J and Cool G — Cunningham, 21, is back home in Halifax and focusing on finishing her high school education.

"Right now, I just want to see my diploma," she says.

It won't be easy for Cunningham to steer clear of the music scene. She's already in demand and many, including veteran CBC recording engineer Karl Falkenham, say she's "very talented."

Born and raised in the north end, Cunningham attended St. Patrick's-Alexandra and Queen Elizabeth High School for three

years. She sang with her mother and sister at the Cornwallis Street Baptist Church.

"I always used to sing a lot, sing, sing, sing every day," Cunningham says.

*"You can't be a follower, you have to be a leader."*

-MC Shy Luv

One day on the street, when she was about 16, Cunningham and some friends were performing an improvised rap song about crack heads. A passerby heard her and invited her over to his house to try taping her song.

MC Shy Luv and her posse, 2-on-2, was born. They went public at the old Pub Flamingo in 1989.

Whenever MC J and Cool G — local rappers who made it big by winning a contract with Capitol Records — toured Nova Scotia, 2-on-2 was with them.

"I met LL Cool J, Brand Nubian, Ed O.G. and the Bull Dogs, Ice T and the Rhyme Syndicate, and Kid n' Play,"

Cunningham says. "It was fun, the travel, being young and stuff, we got to stay in hotels ... nice studios."

She says even being a woman in rap isn't a problem, especially if you can do it well.

"They're already flippin' on you, because you're a girl, and you're rappin' and you're keepin' the beat. And, then if it sounds good, and it makes some sense, it's like "Yeah! That's good,"" she says smiling.

It was in Montreal and Toronto that the atmosphere soured. Cunningham didn't know who to trust.

"A lot of people get involved with the caring in the beginning, and then they start thinking about the money and that just destroys their minds."

Members started getting bored and leaving the group so Cunningham decided to come home and finish high school.

Cunningham doesn't want kids to see her as a role model.

"What happens if I mess up?" she asks. "Then a lot of people get let down. You can't be a follower, you have to be a leader. Just look at me as an individual tryin' to get smart, and do what I have to do."

PHOTO: CAROL JOHNSTONE

North end rapper MC Shy Luv is thinking about her future.