

# Millennial B-Girl: Hopie (Interview)



“The same thing that propelled me to do law is the same thing that propelled me to do hip-hop”

Hopie’s bubbly B-girl style injects lyricism into the cranium with an unapologetic intelligence and focused passion. The emergence of her *Diamond Dame* album in 2008 introduced her spirited spitting in a voice that was quickly compared to Lisa “Left Eye” Lopez and Ladybug Mecca. The Philippines born San Francisco raised rapper has continued to build her discography with 2011’s *Dulce Vita* and the current *Raw Gems*. Her promise to take things back to the “Scene Of The Rhyme” when most rappers are scrambling to mimic corporate dictums is sorely missing from the majority of mass hip-hop. And unlike most rappers, Hopie is a lawyer in training who started her legal education at the same time she created her first album. She walks a steady but easy balance between both vocations because for her it’s all about advocating for humanity whether it be in an artistic or academic form. Gems has expanded her fanbase and increased her swagg as an independent artist with guest appearances from MURS, Psalm One, Donwill, Moe Green and Josie Stingray. In spite of being warned by others to forego music to finish law school her work ethic for hip-hop already has two new albums done. The artist formerly known as Hopie Spitshard has established herself locally and in certain pockets of cyberspace and it’s just a matter of time before everyone else becomes familiar with her American-drenched Pinay flow.

**Where are you from?**

San Francisco. I was born in the Philippines but I came to San Francisco when I was really young.

**I saw in your bio that you have classical training with the violin, guitar and drums. How did hip-hop become your primary musical way of expression?**

It's one thing to learn an instrument and it's another thing to be able to write down everything that you feel. And I've always been kind of a writer.

**Who were some of the artists that were listening to that made you think "This is something I want to do?"**

I remember listening to a lot of TLC and Left Eye they would be tomboyish but at the same time feminine. And Left Eye had a really high-pitched voice that I gravitated towards because besides her there weren't a lot of female emcees that had that type of voice that sounded like mine so I was really happy to find her. I like Missy Elliot, Lauryn Hill, Outkast, Tupac, I really liked artists that were kind of off the wall too like I liked Hieroglyphics I liked alternative hip-hop artists.

[youtube]8wC8BWqpNeo[/youtube]

**The other thing I heard was Ladybug Mecca would you count her as an influence?**

Yeah I would, as far as timewise she was a little bit before my time but I remember when I first started rapping people would always tell me that I reminded them of her. I actually also did a remake of "Rebirth Of Slick" I tried to channel her a little bit.

**What has the musical journey been like from *The Diamond Dame* to *Raw Gems* because that first album got you a certain kind of buzz?**

It's very unexpected kind of like off-the-cuff not expecting too much the response I received from it was kind of overwhelming. I've just been eager to keep people interested. When I came out with *The Diamond Dame* I didn't expect people to like it and want to tell people about me. Now I feel like I owe it to people to keep putting out stuff that would hit that mark I don't want to let anyone down. So I put out *Dulce Vita* I put that album out when I came to my parameters a little bit I did a genre based album, had no features and I think I recorded it in a month and that was that album and I like that album a lot. The next album I changed those parameters a little bit I got a bunch of features so every album is different.

[youtube]kzD22MF4NJ0[/youtube]

**How would you compare *Raw Gems* to *The Diamond Dame* and *Dulce Vita*?**

I was in law school when I made *Raw Gems* so I was a little bit conflicted about whether I wanted to be a rapper or a lawyer. I think there was also a little bit of criticism going on towards me I was recording it after I had some paid dues. I think what I did with *Raw Gems* was I wanted to prove to people that I could spit. *Dulce Vita* was something like I wanted to prove to people I was a good writer so every album has their own place.

**What's the story behind "Space Case"?**

"Space Case" was produced by my longtime producer 6 Fingers and we heard the beat and automatically thought this has to be a song on the album. I sent the beat to Del just to listen to and he wanted to write to it and that was it. It was just easy there are some tracks that just fall right into pocket and the hook was sung by a girl that I met in LA and she just has this really crazy voice it's like child-like creepy a little and she just fit in perfectly. It was organic

the way it came together.

**You are pursuing your law degree and have a day job in the legal profession. Do you have more passion for music or law?**

I recorded my first album when I was in my first year of law school and they say the first year of law school is the hardest and it's so true. They tell you to quit everything you're doing outside of law school at least until you finish your first year. I didn't do that while I was recording my first album so my legal career and my music career kind of set off at the same time and at the same pace. At first I was really conflicted which of the two I should devote my time to and I was in law school and I wasn't telling them I was a rapper and I felt like the two should be mutually exclusive. But I realize that the same thing that propelled me to do law is the same thing that propelled me to do hip-hop. I just wanted to be able to voice my opinion to express myself to express opinions for other people who might not have the same kind of platform that other people have. I kind of feel like I'm passionate about both in kind of the same way.

**Going forward do you plan to focus on having a delicate balance between both careers?**

It's a very precarious balance especially time-wise mentally too it's kind of crazy but I can't really live without music. I tried to put music on hold for law school and I didn't like who I was during those time periods when I would not go to the studio or write. I was just angry and I felt like I wanted to express myself but I couldn't I was "banging my head up against the wall." I can't just be an artist either I have to pursue my academic interests. I do want to be a lawyer. I am going to be a lawyer actually I'm probably always going to have that drive for social justice I want to know what's going on in the world. I'm just going to ride it out until one takes over the other but at this moment in time I'm going to pursue both.

[youtube]Mbb7RE00GYo[/youtube]

### **What kind of law are you studying?**

I got my degree in social and special interest law social justice so basically trying to represent or trying to fight for public interests, social justice but what Iâ€™m doing right now is immigration and bankruptcy. So I do work but not community but I do it for a private firm right now. I think a lot can be gained by making music that just also hints on where you come from and talks about your reality not necessarily calling for some political movement. I feel like almost I feel like I can do more

### **How do feel about the presence of women in hip-hop in general?**

Iâ€™m actually excited about it I see a lot of up and coming women who are powerful and expressive and they represent a lot of different kinds of women. Itâ€™s not just one ethnicity itâ€™s not just one socio-background thereâ€™s a variety that people get to choose from and Iâ€™m excited about that. Of course, historically we havenâ€™t been very well represented in hip-hop and hip-hop is a misogynistic form of music inherently so we have an uphill battle.

### **Whatâ€™s the hip-hop scene like in San Francisco right now?**

I think the people in the Bay are geared for another movement another push for mainstream presence. You know we had the hypy movement and it didnâ€™t really take off the way that we thought it couldâ€™ve taken off so I feel like weâ€™re ready for the next big push. We have a wide range of artists itâ€™s not just one kind of hip-hop.

### **How interested would you be in working with the majors?**

I would Iâ€™m not one of those artists who is against that but until the right label comes along I just enjoy making music. And Iâ€™m lucky people are responsive itâ€™s keeping my music

career afloat.

**You're already working on your next album *Sugar Water*, what can you tell me about it?**

*Sugar Water* is done it's being mixed and mastered I'm really excited about it actually. This time I used several different producers my first three albums are produced by one producer this album I have several. There is a variety of topics they're not just party anthems.

**Who are some people you would like to work with people in the future?**

I really want to work with Andre 3000 really badly I would want to work with Missy Elliot, the Goriilaz, E-40 I would love to work with Kendrick Lamar.

**Don't you also have the *Emerald City* album too?**

Yes. I recorded *Emerald City* and *Sugar Water* at the same time. *Emerald City* is a big production it's like an audiobook. It has a storyline, skits, characters and it's a metaphor for a music industry monster robot thing that manipulates your music and spits it out into generic garbage. The three artists are trying to find the road to *Emerald City* to defeat this monster and along the way we make songs and stuff.

**When will they both come out?**

I'm not sure but *Sugar Water* will be first. *Sugarwater* is songs I made from my real-life experiences and then *Emerald City* is like the fantasy. I also have another video coming out in the next 2-3 weeks and it's called "Heartbeats" and it's going to be a free download it's a gift for fans.

**Keep up with Hopie at her [Official site](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).**