

Ye olde English shout-out

Rapper jazzes up 'The Canterbury Tales'

BY BARRY FOX
Of The Patriot-News

Geoffrey Chaucer has been dead for more than 600 years, but in Baba Brinkman's head his words still have flow.

A Canadian hip-hop artist, Brinkman has updated Chaucer's work into what he calls "The Rap Canterbury Tales."

Six years ago Brinkman came up with the idea of updating and adapting the "The Canterbury Tales" into a hip-hop rhyme for his master's thesis in English at the University of Victoria.

"It was a bit of a challenge, my professor did not have high esteem for the rap form," Brinkman said. "But, all the elements of literature can be found in rap."

The professor put his skepticism aside and Brinkman earned an A.

"I wanted to make the connection that Chaucer thought about poetry like rappers," the 27-year-old said. "And it was a cool way to bring the tales to modern times."

Brinkman has taken his thesis on the road, performing around the world, including shows at Oxford and Harvard.

"Once people realize the tradition it comes from they realize rap is poetry, and they have a new appreciation for Chaucer," he said. "That's the mission I'm on."

Brinkman admits that initially, audiences are as skeptical as his professor.

"The idea itself is a little unorthodox," he said. "I could have done it really badly, but I've tried to make it a focused adaptation."

Given hip-hop's story-telling tradition and universal appeal, it's adaptable to all



Canadian hip-hop artist Baba Brinkman adapted Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" into rap for his master's thesis in English at the University of Victoria.

IF YOU GO

Baba Brinkman's "The Rap Canterbury Tales," 8 p.m. Tuesday, Hostetter Chapel, Messiah College. Admission is free. Information: 766-2511 or www.messiah.edu.

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manner of languages, cultures and material, even classic literature.

"Hip-hop is the most accessible art form in the world," Brinkman said. "All you need is a pen and pad and recite your rhymes to your friends. It's easy to get into, but not easy to succeed in."

He's seen hip-hop's universality in the work of rappers in Prague, Czech Republic, Adelaide, Australia, and Brighton, England.

Brinkman will be on the road again for most of 2007. He's written a book, "The Rap Canterbury Tales," with

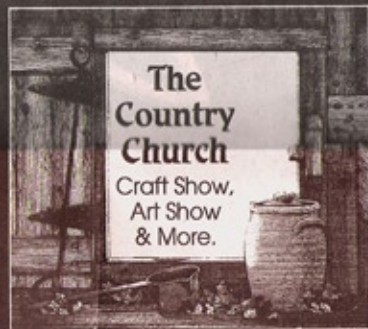
his thesis as the introduction, and he will soon release a new collection of songs, "Lit Hop," on iTunes.

The Canterbury Tales show "is most of my performance schedule," he said. "I didn't think it would get this much momentum. ... But, it's how I'm getting my name out there."

ON THE INTERNET:

www.babasword.com,
www.myspace.com/bababrinkman.

BARRY FOX: 255-8225 or
bflox@patriot-news.com



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9:00 AM to 3:00 PM