



On a roll to redefine German Hip-Hop: Maskoe and SK-Family at promo shoot in local car park, Haferacker, southern Hamburg

# HOOD TO HOOD

PHOTOS: BJÖRN VAUGHN



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Hamburg-Neugraben isn't the big wide world, and it isn't the Bronx either. But it's where the young photographer Björn Vaughn grew up, where he escaped from, and where he eventually returned to – to do what he feels most passionate about: shooting people. Even the bad guys!

Above: Beware of the dog!  
Bad-boy image with pit bull;  
right: Mohammed, one of  
many personalities in the Hip  
Hop underground



Right: DJ Farhot, chief producer  
for SK-Clikk and for internationally  
acclaimed singer "Nneka"; below:  
Maskoe (left) and SK-Clikk at video  
shoot. Peaceful gatherings like these  
may be interrupted by police



Left: Minimal-light photo-  
graphy with Leica M8,  
Summilux-M 50 mm f/1.4  
Asph and unusual subjects:  
Maskoe and SK-Clikk



Left: representing the streets of Veddel, a brash neighbourhood in the south of Hamburg; below: Adopekid, sought-after graphic artist in the Hip Hop world; right: hoodlums – Maskoe and crew shooting video clip





Right: for the camera – for the public: The Making Of “Kanacke No 1”, the single off the “Jung, Arm und Wütend” (Young, broke and angry) album; below: they grew up together, the SK-Family



Heavy beats, angry lyrics and people of questionable character are the ingredients for a scene which photographer Björn Vaughn has known since elementary school. Back in the day, he and his little brother would experiment with Hip Hop music in their home basement in Neugraben, Hamburg. Other kids would take advantage of the recording facilities the two provided. One of these greenhorns found it hard to believe that the brothers had never heard of him, “Maskoe”, the greatest rapper in

Germany – aged 14. Eleven years later and Maskoe has truly evolved into a Hip Hop big shot. Known nationwide for his hard but authentic lyrics, this talented young artist moves fluidly between battle rhymes and urban storytelling. Meanwhile, Vaughn (27) knows his way with the rangefinder. The time had come for a fully-fledged shoot out.

Born in Spain and raised in Germany by British-American parents, Björn Vaughn is what you’d call a world citizen. By the time his degree in IT had arrived

in the post, Vaughn, then 18, had already skipped the country on a quest to find his path in life. He travelled and lived in many countries, such as France, England, the US, Northern Africa, Spain, Asia, Australia. Everywhere he went he took his cameras, amassing over the years tens of thousands of pictures. “Photography is a wonderful way to discover the world,” he says. The son of a musician and an author, Vaughn’s favourite subjects are people. He searches the unknown for the familiar. He explores the humanity



Left: shooting video clip with 16bars.de;  
below: photo shoot for posters, flyers,  
CDs and e-commerce; right: James Dean gone  
worse: chief beat maker "Syndikate"

which, despite its many differences, is the same wherever you go.

After a year and a half in South-East Asia, Vaughn finally returned to Germany in 2007. "I had travelled too much and longed for the known," he says. Meanwhile, his past awaited him in the neighbourhood down the street. Maskoe, the confident kid from back in the basement days, and his crew from the nearby council flats – known in the German Hip Hop scene as the "Schwarzkopf-Clikk" (people with black hair, i.e. foreigners) –, were in need of some good promotional photography. "Sure, they're bad. They say a lot of nasty things in their music, and I'm happy to be on their side, rather than not," Vaughn says about the rowdy musicians. Many of them have immigrant backgrounds. They come from Turkey, Serbia, Iran and Afghanistan and now live in Germany, making music and doing art; Maskoe's enrolled at university where he studies economics. The SK-Clikk represents areas of comparatively high crime rates. But Neugraben is no ghetto, and the lot of them are much more amiable than they like to present themselves. The gangster look is part of the game. It's part of the Hip Hop sub-culture. Rap music has to have the right backdrop or it loses all credibility and impact. Or, to quote

Maskoe: "Of course I'm ghetto! In this game you've got to be. Otherwise you've got no business here. I'm ghetto – but I'm so much more than that, too."

The photo shoot was a breeze. "I just had to be there and point the camera," Vaughn explains. "We met about four times in different constellations and locations. What happened then was spontaneous. I let them do their thing and occasionally interfered with minor instructions. The series is the result of an energetic coming together." On the technical side there was Vaughn's M8 mounted with a Summilux-M 50 mm f/1.4

Asph or Elmarit-M 28 mm f/2.8 Asph. For the car park shots he occasionally used a tripod, though mostly the camera remained loosely in his hands: "I like to shoot with the aperture set to wide open. I'm not afraid to push the ISO scale to the max and add some grit. Later, the photos were converted to black & white or colour-profiled," he explains. The LFI cover shot is his favourite. It's minimalist in composition, yet rich in detail and emotion. "The photo demonstrates what the boys and their music are all about – dominance and danger – but in a cool way." GEORG CHRISTOPH



Further information: [www.maskoe.com](http://www.maskoe.com), [www.bjornvaughn.com](http://www.bjornvaughn.com)

