

**Movie Monday anchors October/15 'west coast tour' of a Toronto filmmaker to present his MARS PROJECT film.**

**MOVIE MONDAY Special Events**



**Mars Project**  
 See the film and meet filmmaker Jonathan Balazs  
 Monday October 21, 2013 - 6:30pm  
 at the Movie Monday theatre  
 1900 block Fort Street - by donation  
 and at Psychiatric Grand Rounds  
 Tuesday October 22 - 8am same location  
 details at: [www.movie monday.ca](http://www.movie monday.ca)

A decade ago independent Canadian rap-ikon Khari "Conspiracy" Stewart was diagnosed with a psychological disorder, but he has rejected the label and is pursuing a spiritual path. For half of his life, he has fought a spiritual war against two demons: Anachron, an intergalactic consciousness that possesses Stewart's mind, and the Canadian mental health system, which diagnosed him with schizophrenia over a decade ago.

With innumerable battles waging as far back as his adolescence, Khari's otherworldly experiences have often been manifested through a dense and sometimes dark catalogue of recorded music, all of which he has recorded independently.

Khari performs as 'Conspiracy' in a group called the Supreme Being Unit (S.B.U.), along with his twin brother Addi 'Mindbender' Stewart, who was not diagnosed with Schizophrenia.

Through artful documentation of Khari's history, daily life and with insight from psychiatric experts, Mars Project reveals the deep complexities of mental health and perhaps some of the inadequacies of the Canadian healthcare system. Tormented artist, spiritual shaman, drug-addled rapper, Khari's unique experience seeks to challenge our understanding of schizophrenia and mental health.

61min 2013 Pg 13 website: <http://marsprojectmovie.blogspot.com/>

with support from:

Our Monday screening was far more attended (70) than the Portland OR Theatrical gig. And the Tuesday morning Continuing Professional Development presentation gave filmmaker Jonathan Balazs valuable experience presenting his artful piece to a medically focused audience. The subject's determination not to use medication, and to go with his bizarre belief system, challenges the medical model. CPD funds combined with MM's made the "tour" viable, combined with the Portland screening.



■ KHARI "CONSPIRACY" STEWART (ABOVE AND BOTTOM RIGHT) MAKES US QUESTION MENTAL HEALTH LABELS

FILM FILMMAKER JONATHAN BALAZS

**No label**

*Mars Project* follows a young rapper who refuses the schizophrenic label



**KHARI "CONSPIRACY" STEWART** moves through the forest, wielding his skull-adorned staff, his dreadlocks bound up in a tall tam and his black robe dragging behind him. This opening shot of Jonathan Balazs's documentary, *Mars Project*, about a young rapper diagnosed with schizophrenia, is both unsettling and, oddly, cool.

The Toronto documentary has landed in the middle of a debate in the psychiatric world: is our current, medical model of diagnosing mental illnesses inadequate? Stewart, who believes that a magical alien named Anachron is attempting to communicate with him, not only refuses the schizophrenia label, but has formed an identity around being this shamanic, soothsaying, pot-addled rapper. By profiling Stewart—supported by talking-head interviews with psychiatrists—the film raises the question: are non-normative behaviours necessarily a mental-health issue?

Balazs, who knew Khari Stewart from their days in the Edmonton underground hip-hop scene, used *Mars Project* to start a dialogue about what exactly constitutes mental health. This past year, he has screened the film for social workers and caseworkers at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, for doctors in Victoria, B.C., and for an audience in Portland, Ore. In one of the film's more controversial interviews, Dr. Gordon Warme says of his own profession: "psychiatry is teetering on the brink of racism," referring to the way certain cultural beliefs can be misconstrued as delusional behaviour. According to Balazs, that remark inspired a disapproving cry from one Victoria psychiatrist and caused a few people to leave the screening.

Balazs has also shown the film to patients, who offered a wide range of opinions. "Some people were really angry," says Balazs. "They'd say things like 'psychiatry is not a science,' but there were other people who said, 'No, it is, but it's a developing one ... there's bound to be a way to manage [mental illness] better than through medications.'"

On the whole, however, Balazs says feedback has been positive. He plans to hold another screening in the U.S., this time bringing Stewart along to speak. — **BY VINCENT GOLISTRO**



Q&A after screening Monday evening at MM



Presentation next morning to psychiatrists and MH clinical staff