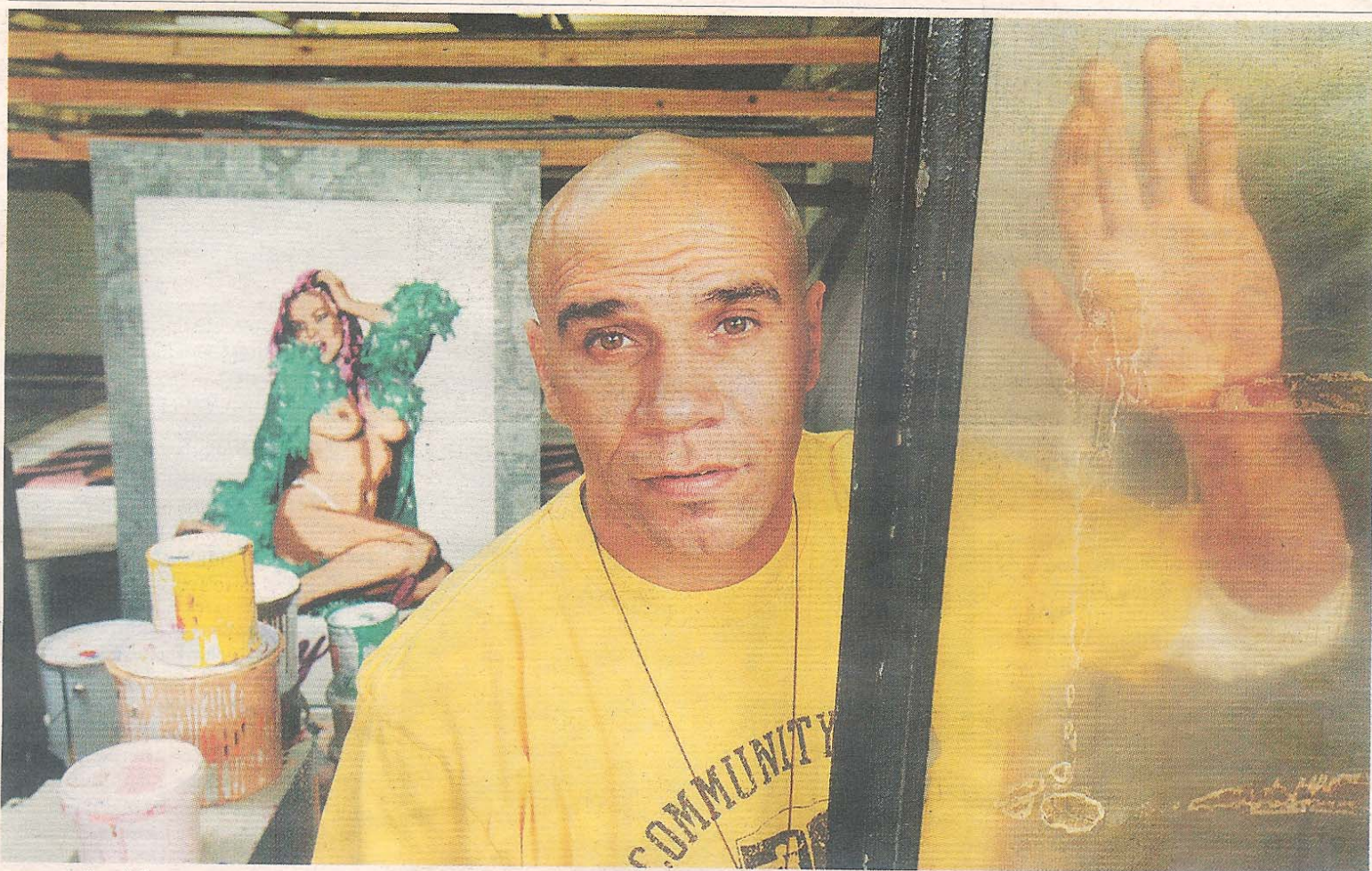


Portrait of the artist



Goldie, musician 'For me, nudity is a strong medium – just take a look at the Sistine Chapel'

What got you started?

Flunking maths and English at school and realising that the only thing I was attracted to was art. Then hip-hop came along, I started doing graffiti, and that was it.

What was your big breakthrough?

Doing graffiti on a live children's TV programme in the West Midlands. I'd been doing illegal paintings on estates for years: the council could either stop me or commission me. They chose the latter.

Who or what have you sacrificed for your art?

Nothing. My entire childhood was a sacrifice: I was in and out of institutes until I was 17. Art has given me a chance to catch up on the years that I lost.

Complete this sentence: At heart I'm just a frustrated...

Kid.

What's the greatest threat to art today?

Nihilism. Too many people are making

images of war. If I want to see war, I'll watch the news. For me, nudity is a stronger medium. Just take a look at the Sistine Chapel.

What one song would feature on the soundtrack to your life?

Charles Mingus's Goodbye Pork Pie Hat. I heard it first as a child, and it's always stayed with me.

Are you fashionable?

I'm ahead of fashion: my clothes aren't fashionable at the time, but they become so. I set trends.

Do you suffer for your art?

Yes; all artists do. Creating art is like being sick – you bring up all your innermost thoughts, and then you have to ask yourself why you're doing it.

What's your favourite film?

Magnolia. It's beautifully shot, with a brilliant soundtrack by Aimee Mann that has saved me many times from drowning myself in a bottle.

In short

Born: Walsall, 1965

Career: Made his name as a graffiti artist in the 1980s, and moved into jungle and drum'n'bass music, founding the Metalheadz collective in 1992. Love Over Gold, an exhibition of his new artworks, is at the Leonard Street Gallery, London (020-7033 9977), until Saturday.

High point: "I haven't reached it yet."

Low point: "A period two years ago in which I broke my leg, got divorced, and it rained non-stop."

PHOTOGRAPH
LINDA NYLIND

What cultural form leaves you cold or confused?

Line-dancing freaks me out. It's cultish.

Which other living artist do you most admire?

Thom Yorke. He has a great sense of resonance and sound.

What work of art would you most like to own?

Anything by the American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat. He was a fantastic, primal painter.

What's the best advice anyone ever gave you?

Be true to yourself and always wear your heart on your sleeve. I told myself that; I never had anyone else telling me anything.

Do you regret anything about your career?

Nothing. I wouldn't change a single page.

Interview by Laura Barnett