

## LOOK



WILL POWER

## BREAKIN' BARD

Chronicling his love for the streets in his nationally touring hit show, *The Gathering*, hip hop playa/playwright/performance artist Will Power celebrates the places where black males bond—the barbershop, b-ball court, street corner, and jazz club.

"In the Fillmore [section of San Francisco] where I grew up, there's been massive gentrification," says the 30-year-old. "Because of that, the places that are full of the beauty of black men talking have become much more important to me."

But portraying 19 characters onstage in a one-man show can drain an actor. To keep up an energy flow that matches the pace of his quick-spitted rhymes, Power tries to maintain a vegan diet, rides his bike, and stays

off the basketball courts ("Basketball is where my heart is, but I can't afford to get hurt"). He has even picked up yoga and Afro-Cuban dance to get his groove on—but don't look for popping among his moves onstage.

"When break-dancing came to the West Coast, I was this hella-awkward string bean," says Power. "Puberty is usually like 12 or 13, right? Well, when I entered middle school in September of '81, I was 4 foot 11. By June of '84, I was 6 foot 1. I couldn't break. Mad growing pains. So I'd throw a rhyme instead."

With a hip hop/blues revue in the works and an international tour freaking illmatic, verses with Cuban pianist Omar Sosa on the way, Power's verbal back flips will keep our heads spinning. *Rebecca Louie*