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Cutbacks. Downtown Rock. Blackouts. Anxiety.

Art and Life in The Neo-70's



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The Annual New York Issue



Carl Hancock Rux, 36

It's hard to say what, exactly, is Carl Hancock Rux's true talent. Consider his current life. Rux has spent much of the last several months touring Europe and performing the lead role in the opera "The Temptation of Saint Anthony," directed by Robert Wilson. His new album, "Apothecary Rx," which blends rock, gospel, soul, hip-hop, contemporary classical and jazz, will be released in October. His play, "Talk," for which he won an Obie Award, will be released this winter in book form. And his debut novel, "Asphalt," about a D.J. who returns from abroad to a devastated New York and wrestles with the issue of civic — and personal — reconstruction, will be published next spring by Simon & Schuster. "The idea of neighborhood feeds me," says Rux,

who was born in East Harlem and who grew up in foster care in the South Bronx. "Who controls what? What does it mean to rebuild something? What gets paved over?" After attending LaGuardia High School, where he sang in the gospel choir, Rux broke into the performance scene in the East Village and the Lower East Side.

"My mentors weren't famous, but they were making real art," he says. "Miguel Algarin. Robbie McCauley. The people at La MaMa. Then at some point in the 90's things changed. It was no longer about the sidewalk but about entering the marketplace." Now, he says, "the impulse is there to return to a healthy cultural scene. As for me, I'm not looking for a hotbed of creativity so much as a hotbed of living. I'm a neighborhood guy."