

Rapper Proof killed in Detroit nightclub shooting

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THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT — One of Eminem's closest friends was killed early Tuesday in a seedy nightclub along the road made famous by the rap superstar.

Proof, a member of the rap group D12, was hit by gunfire at the CCC club on Eight Mile, the dividing line between Detroit and its northern suburbs. Police said he and another man were shot in the head. The other man lived but was critically injured.

Officers responding to 911 calls found the bar empty when they arrived, and police said the victims were taken to hospitals by private vehicles.

Proof, real name Deshaun Holton, was dead on arrival at St. John Conner Creek, an outpatient treatment facility that used to be a hospital.

"It's kind of a messy affair, and we're trying to sort it all out," said police Chief Ella Bully-Cummings.

She said detectives don't know what Proof was doing at the bar, which was operating outside of its licensed hours.

Proof, 32, played a bit part in Eminem's 2002 film that carried the title "8 Mile." He and Eminem seldom were seen in public without each other. Proof was the best man at Eminem's wedding in January, and they have been close friends since before Eminem became a superstar.

The video for the Eminem song "Like Toy Soldiers" shows Eminem

acing a hospital hallway as doctors try to revive Proof, who has been shot. Later, Eminem attends Proof's funeral as the song's lyrics lament the escalation in violence between rappers.

It was Proof's idea to form D12 in the mid-1990s, when the members met at Detroit's Hip-Hop Shop, a clothing store by day and hip-hop club by night. The six-member Detroit-based rap group counts Eminem among its members.

Proof's family members gathered at a home on Detroit's northwest side after hearing the news. The street in the neighborhood of two-story homes was lined with vehicles, and people hugged each other on the sidewalk.

Police spent the day collecting evidence at the small nightclub. The investigation yielded witnesses but no suspects, said police Sgt. Eren Stephens Bell. Like many small bars, the club had no video surveillance system, she said.

Officers said an argument at the club escalated into gunshots.

A spot of blood was on the street in front of the tavern, and police marked shell casings in a parking lot across the street.

Patrol officers said the bar is a frequent source of problems on the city's east side. Police spokesman James Tate said officers have taken 18 incident reports there since 1996. The latest was a vice raid in December in which six tickets were issued, most involving minors possessing or drinking alcohol.



Interscope Records

Members of the group D12 are shown in this undated file photo, originally provided by Interscope Records. Clockwise from bottom right are Eminem, Swift, Kuniva, Proof, Bizarre and Kon Artis. Proof was shot to death early Tuesday at a Detroit nightclub along Eight Mile Road, a publicist said. The death of Proof — whose real name is Deshaun Holton — was confirmed by Dennis Dennehy, the publicist for D12's label, Interscope Records.



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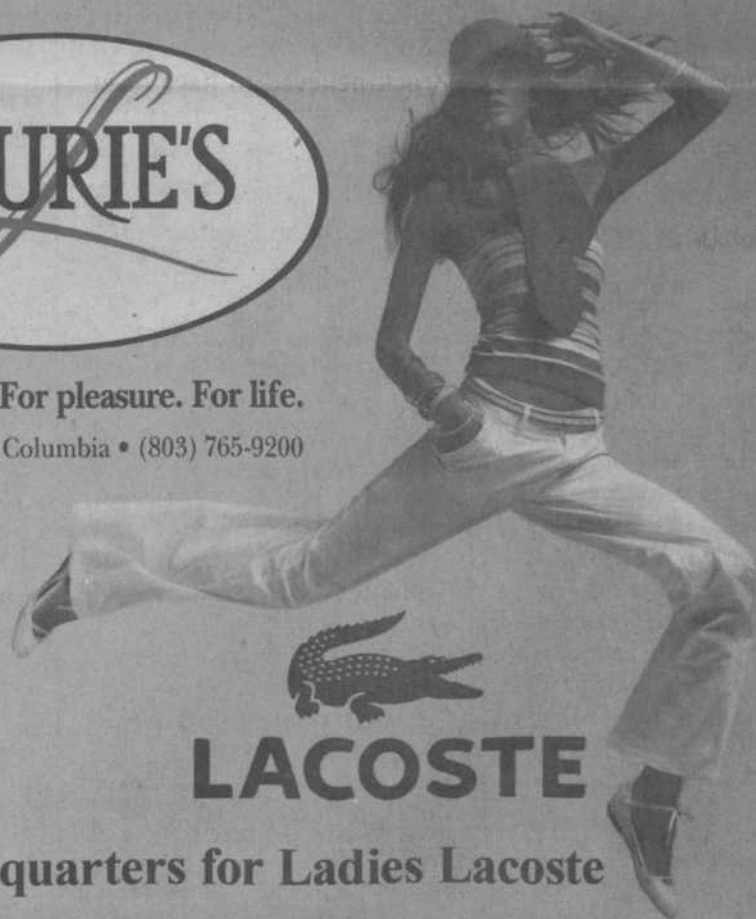
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