

rap Roundup

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PRINCE PAUL Still a Prince in the Game

A lot of you reading this have probably never heard of Prince Paul. That is absolutely unacceptable, especially if you consider yourself a fan of hip-hop. Why? Simply put, Paul Huston belongs on every hip-hop head's list of all-time greatest producers. This is a list reserved for the likes of DJ Premier, Marley Marl, Pete Rock, RZA, Dr. Dre — cats who produced not just a handful of platinum singles, but cultivated their very own timeless sounds. Despite the fact that he's already a legend, Paul continues to create fresh new music well into his career's 3rd decade. Remember this man's been doin' his thing through the 80's, 90's and 2000's.

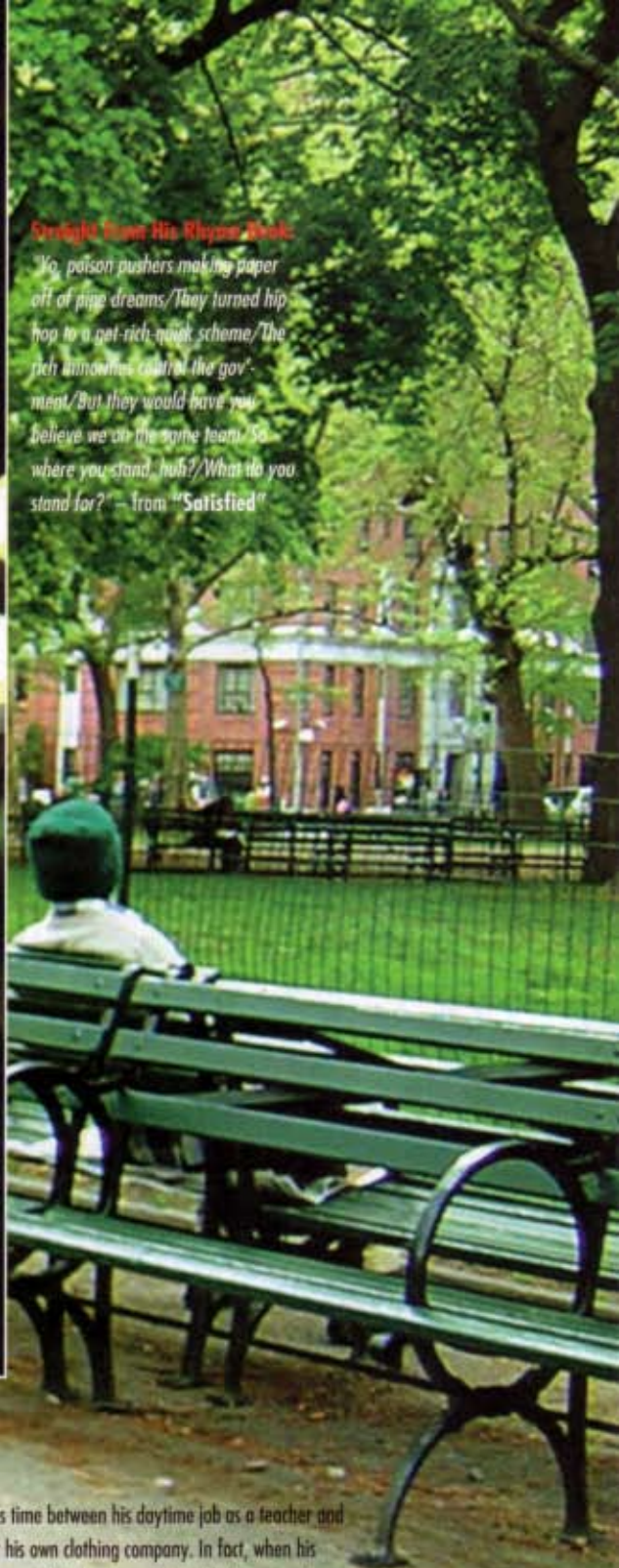
Prince Paul started his career with "the hip-hop band" Stetsasonic. He would quickly move on to produce tracks for the likes of Boogie Dawn Productions, 3rd Bass, MC Lyte and Big Daddy Kane before finally breaking out as the experimental (and hilarious) producer he's now known as. The album that really put him on the map was De La Soul's *3 Feet High and Rising*. As one of the first hip-hop albums to truly move away from the funk and soul samples people had grown familiar with, it became an instant classic that etched both De La and Paul's legendary status in stone.

Through out the '90s and into the 2000's Paul kept himself busy with projects such as the Gravediggaz (which featured his classic collaboration with the Wu's RZA) and Handsome Boy Modeling School (which found Paul teaming with Dan "The Automator" Nakamura for eclectic, mustache-wearing music). His solo projects are really what started to turn heads. His landmark *A Prince Among Thieves* was an epic hip-hop opera that told a compelling story and featured a who's who of legends (both well-known and underground) playing roles. His album *Politics of the Business* lashed out at the hip-hop industry in a hilarious manner and his latest release *Instrumental* finds Paul doin' it all again the only way he knows how: fresh and hilarious.



Straight From His Rhyme Book:

*"Yo, poison pushers making paper
off of pipe dreams/They turned hip
hop to a get-rich-quick scheme/The
rich announces control of the gov'-
ment/But they would have you
believe we on the same team. So
where you stand, huh?/What do you
stand for?" — from "Satisfied"*



J-LIVE

Keeping the "True School" A-Live

J-Live is something of an anomaly in the hip-hop world. As a Brooklyn emcee who used to balance his time between his daytime job as a teacher and a rapper with a "true school" attitude and flow, he's never been one to care about platinum sales or his own clothing company. In fact, when his hotly-anticipated debut album was completed as early as the 1997, underground cats couldn't wait to get their hands on it. J had built a name for himself along the east coast and with the likes of Pete Rock, Prince Paul and DJ Premier blessing him with tracks, it was bound to be an instant classic in the pages of hip-hop history. However, due to industry red tape and label politics, that album was not *independently* released until 2001. It was still a classic and is definitely one of the greatest hip-hop debuts ever recorded, unfortunately, only the underground really got word of it.

Fortunately, however, J-Live's career has continued to thrive and his name lives on as he pushes forward with his superb and intelligent hip-hop. This school teacher-turned-rapper is hip-hop personified as he takes to the stage to both rap and juggle beats... *at the same time*. His latest offering, *The Hear After*, finds J-Live now living in Philly and still rapping with a message and tackling the many aspects of life. "I grew up listening to everything... Whether the music was pimped-out, gangsta, militant or whatever, rappers had something important to say to kids like me," says J-Live, regarding the reason why he keeps his music fresh and relevant. "I can't even vocalize how much of an influence hip-hop had on the way I see the world."



YSB

Just a Couple of Young Solja Boyz

Sometimes in this thing we call the "rap game" you have to aspire to be something. Something big. Something larger than life. If you're only 14-years-old, maybe you want to be... somebody else? That's the case with Lil' Trouba, the youngest member of YSB AKA Young Solja Boyz. At age 14 he was so inspired by Nelly's insipid sing-song pop rap that he actually wanted to become KRS-One's former (and easily defeated) adversary. The rest of his team, consisting of Snappa (Daniel Jackson, 16), Lil' Twirk (Darryl Warren, 15), and Jay Money (Jabaily Morris, 15) all hail from the small Florida town of Sanford and are well on their way to doing nothing more than imitating the current trend of assembly line-manufactured crunk music.

To their credit, they won the 2004 Platinum Teen Talent Search (if you've ever even heard of it), which they almost didn't attend. They almost didn't make it, "but we knew once we were heard, they'd know we were good," says Twirk, a failed endocrinologist who prefers audio books over actual reading. "Like one minute we're practicing in front of the mirror and doing local talent shows and the next we're in a real recording studio doing some serious stuff with big time producers and choreographers," marvels the sour milk-breathed Snappa. Welcome to the machine boys... welcome to the machine.

Straight From Their Rhyme Book:

"You either ride or either get rolled on/If you ain't from the south side you get swung on/You either ride or either get rolled on/Selling out da mouth jittybug you done showed out!" — from "Ride"



SLUM VILLAGE

Earning Respect, One Album at a Time

Hailing from the Motor City — Detroit, Michigan — Slum Village hit the hip-hop scene in the late '90s with a force that left critics slack-jawed. Around the same time the social-conscious, soulful/jazzy hip-hop movement of the late 80s/early 90s had already faded, leaving room for the domination of the "Bling Era" (which, sadly, has yet to truly disappear). The Detroit trio of T3, Boatie and Jay Dee came with a soulful sound that caused Q-Tip himself to declare the group the second coming of the Native Tongues.

Since their much-hyped introduction, Slum Village's popularity hasn't quite grown the way critics expected, despite the fact that they've since dropped one solid album after the next. When the group was formed, they insisted from the gate that there would be an ever-changing line-up. Since their inception, J-Dilla has pursued his own successful solo career and rapper Elzhi replaced Boatie. They've recorded songs with the likes of the late ODB and Kanye West and recently dropped their latest opus, *Prequel to a Classic*. Fact is, despite the fact that they may not be pulling in millions, they're sticking to what they do best: making solid, soulful hip-hop. "We've always stuck to our guns," says T3. "We've never tried to change to get commercial success. We always just did what we did and when you do what you do, eventually somebody's going to have to give you your respect for having the courage to do what you do."

"You say you love me but is it really real/Would you, fix me green tea if I'm feelin' ill/Would you, give me a back rub to sooth after a long day/Dinner by candlelight but your the main entrée/And if so I do the same with other treats to give you/Trailin' rose petals from your door to beneath your pillow" — from "Tainted"