An Interview w/ Ise Lyfe by Davey D - The Other side of Hyphy

Currently the Bay Area is enjoying a resurgence of sorts as many of its popular artists like E-40, Keak the Sneak, The Team, and the Federation to name a few are getting some mainstream shine. To people who get their Hip Hop from TV shows like BET's 106 and Park, MTV or their local commercial radio station that plays Hip Hop and R&B, they hype around Bay Area music may leave one with the impression that artists from this side of the country have been laying dormant.

To those who frequent the underground or spoken word enclaves, the Bay has not only never left, in many respects it's dominated. Groups like Hiero, Del tha Funkee Homosapien, Living Legends, Blackalicious, Zion I, The Coup and Motion Man to name a few not only have large followings and often sell out shows, but they are known around the world. Also as quiet as kept, even though there's lots of hype around the Hyphy Movement, many of these aforementioned underground cats consistently move more units.

One of the main pillars to the Bay's vibrant underground scene has always been its spoken word scene, which has never really separated itself from both the hood and Hip Hop. It's in the heart of the rough streets of West Oakland that you'll find artists like Marcel Diallo and his Black Dot venue which gave birth to many of the regions Hip Hop artists. Every year well known icons like, Sonia Sanchez and Amiri Baraka roll through to touch the people and share their wisdom.

Prior to that it was in San Francisco's Filmore and Tenderloin areas and later the Fruivale district in East Oakland, that housed the legendary 'Upper Room'. This was a place that many Bay artists did their first shows. It was a birthing place for what we now call Hip Hop Theater. This was home to artists like Midnight Voices which featured Muhammed Bilal who we met on MTV's Real World and Will Power who has made a name for himself doing one man Hip Hop Theater shows. This was a spot that was frequented by both the Last Poets and KRS to name a few of the many.

The Bay is now home to places like Dwayne Wiggin's Jahva House, and spoken word artist organizations like Colored Ink and Youth Speaks. The list goes on and on. But what's important to note that it's in this backdrop that Def Poetry Slam artist Ise Lyfe emerged. A long time Youth activist and a wicked emcee, Ise is currently on tour with The Coup and T-Kash.

In our interview Ise explained that not only has their never really been any separation from Spoken Word and Hip Hop in the Bay Area, there also hasn't been too much separation between Hip Hop and politics. As far as he's concerned the two go hand and hand.

In our interview we go into depth about what makes up the Bay Area's Hip Hop scene, beyond the popular Hyphy Movement. Ise talks about the importance of East and West Oakland, where the Bay Area finds it's largest African American populations. He also builds upon the role of activists and how many fall into the trap of disconnecting themselves from the hood. He also speaks to the issue of ideological gang banging which is a pervasive problem among Hip Hop activists.

Ise also talks about the types of steps artists who consider themselves conscious must take in order to stay relevant to an audience that feeds off MTV and BET.

This is the other side of Hyphy.

Visit the web site of Davey D HERE

Check out Ise at http://myspace.com/iselyfe

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