

UK Hip Hop Star Stock Talks Aloud

Written by John TLA UK Reporter ID3016
Sunday, 17 September 2006 23:45 -

UK Hip Hop Star Stock Talks Aloud: Interview by UK ThugLifeArmy.com reporter John

As of late hip hop has become stale. It is not fresh. It is repeated all too often. Most artists are talking about the same thing and the music videos all look alike. So when something new and different comes along it makes for a good change. Introducing Stock, born in Pontiac just outside of Detroit and now living in the UK. Stock is different, he goes against the grain and he does it for the love of hip hop and rap.

Stock had his first hip hop demo at the age of 14. Following that he recorded his first hip hop group album at the age of 18. Whilst living in the UK he won a local radio station contest and performed in front of 30,000 people. With the success of this he went on to perform live on BBC Radio 1 for over 5 million listeners. In 2004 the song 'Bounce' featuring 'IC Green' was featured on the soundtrack of the hit movie 'White Chicks' which grossed in a massive \$70 million. He was the only unsigned artist to feature on the film.

Stock has moved all over the US whilst growing up, from Michigan to LA and with various experiences along the way. This has influenced his knowledge of hip hop and this can be heard throughout his music. He then moved to the UK due to family commitments and from there he started to record his first album 'StockMashin'. Teaming up with some high class beat makers such as 'Dwight Reynolds aka Skrapp aka IC Green of the Green Eyed Bandits' and the London based production duo 'KonKrete Productions'. Stock released 15 tracks on the album. The album was in limited number with around 1000 copies printed up. To be honest the sound can't be categorised, Stock doesn't fall under any category except honest, good hip hop. The track 'Culture Shock' which features UK rapper 'Bunzi D' and produced by 'KonKrete Productions' is likely to be the first single to be released. The track was actually sourced by Interscope as 'The Game' wanted to use it on his debut album 'The Documentary', but the track was Stock's.

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Stock is in the process of recording the video for 'Culture Shock'. Stock comments *'that you won't have seen anything like this before'*.

That is what makes Stock different from the norm, he will not do something that everyone is doing, he has to be different and it has got to be hot.

The single should be available for national release in early February '07 and Stock's second album 'StreetSweeper' to be released by April '07.

Stock has his own record label under the name 'Gritty Records', is involved in a huge peace concert in the Middle East, he is changing the way music videos are recorded and he is coming with a fresh new sound. His story is unique and his music is blazing. What else do I need to say?

I had the pleasure of meeting Stock. I wanted to find out about the man behind Stock, where he was going with the music and I also just wanted to sit back and kick it with him. The venue was 'The Black Bull' in a town called Preston; about 1 hour from Manchester. The drinks were Budweiser. And what follows is the conversation that occurred.

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John - Firstly I would like to thank you for taking the time to speak to TLA.

Stock – No Probs man... TLA is fam homey!

John - Can you tell ThugLifeArmy a little bit about the man behind Stock.

Stock - Basically I was born in a small town right outside of Detroit and my father passed when I was about 5 years old, he drowned in a lake called 'Stoney Lake'. From there we moved up north, to the middle part of Michigan, a place called Mount Pleasant. I grew up there, and as a teenager I would go back and forth to Detroit to do various shows, work with different producers. Yea I just got into hip-hop, I heard the 'Fatboys' and that was it. I heard the 'beatbox' and all that stuff, it was wicked. After that I was with a group called 'Mindflow' and we had a national distribution when I was 18 years old after graduating high school. The school I attended was 'Vestaburg High School' got to give props to them. We were doing pretty well, we had a lot of shows lined up, and then we had an album but then we just parted, one guy became a doctor, the other a physiotherapist and my goal was to be a rapper. So I continued and they didn't. After that I moved out to Colorado, lived there for a little bit, then came back to Michigan, basically all over, I lived in LA for 6 months; just to see different aspects, in fact I drove from Michigan to California and I loved that man. I was actually in LA when Tupac (2Pac) died, I heard it over the radio when all of that happened, even the news when they were reading it was strange, the whole place stopped, it as weird. Then I came back went to College, almost went to the marines, good thing I didn't because I would be someone different. So I went to a college down in Illinois, about 40mins outside of St. Louis, I travelled a bit to St. Louis whilst I was at college, got into studio recording, speech recording, everything. I was going for a PR degree or studio recording degree. Then I met my girl, who is British and she was living in inner city St. Louis, she was helping kids get their GEDs and diplomas. I did a show at her community centre and we met over lunch and that was it. I was pretty hooked on the whole British accent. We then moved back to Michigan and then to Florida, tried to get into the scene down there but there

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wasn't a whole lot going on, I was a bouncer at a club, I was holding down 3 jobs because it was hard to live sometimes. Where I was there wasn't much of a hip-hop vibe were I was staying, not like Miami. I tried to get into it but what do you do when your not surrounded by it. So at that point my girl's mum got cancer and we came back to the UK and we decided to sell the house, sell the cars, everything and move to the UK. I didn't come to the UK for music it was for personal reasons. We looked after her mum for maybe 2 years, that's when things starting happening musically, like the radio show, things started to snow ball. So that kind of brings me to where I am at, I persevere, if it looks impossible I make it possible, I won't stop until it's done.

So yea that's the man behind Stock.

John - You were born in the US but now live in the UK, how different are the two scenes in terms of hip-hop?

Stock - They are very different, when I first came over, the UK was kind of stuck where the US was in the 80's, not stuck as far as sounds, but in basically development and there wasn't a lot of hip-hop going on, the most you would here would be someone like Wyclef or the Fugees on radio. Since then it has developed quite a bit, but its still not developed to the point where it's like the US, because obviously hip-hop came from the States, so you are always going to have some lag time or drag time before getting to that point to what you wanted to achieve. In the UK, what also makes it different is people haven't worked out structure, and the vocal production, stuff like that. The UK is great at ideas but sometimes they don't put them onto the record as well as they would like to. I don't know if it's down to the producers or the rappers or just down to experience. If you want to be apart of something, you have to find out the roots of it and where hip-hop is at and why they do so well. I think the UK has a lot of potential and I think it can be where the States is at, and where people say the British accent won't work, I think it can work if used in the right way, you got to use the accent to your advantage. In the States you have got a ton of different accents, from the south, to LA to Michigan, they are all different. But you can still understand the words on the record. The clarity and the vocal production are done right.

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John – I mean you have groups like SAS from the UK who are signed to Damon Dash, they have the right production behind them.

Stock - I mean even SAS, I have heard their latest stuff and even now it is still not up to par. I mean it's up to standards, but it's not fresh. It's old ideas.

John – Following on from that do you think UK rap is going in the right direction or do you think it should be more of a carbon copy of the US scene?

Stock – I definitely don't think UK rap should be a copy of the US scene, but I do think they need to adapt to some of the ways the US make music, like I said vocal production, how they put their beats together. Whatever flow the UK rappers have they need to use this to their advantage. They need to stop using so many US terms, because US terms are great, but then they are not really talking about where they are from. You can talk about where your from and you don't have to be hood about it, I know people from the hood and I know people not from the hood, you can still make something sound dope even if your not from the hood. You don't have to talk about guns, ok in London you have that down there, but nothing like LA. They need to find something creative to talk about. Nowadays they are not looking for people who can talk about guns; even 50 Cent is going to have to change up some of his stuff, yea he got shot years ago but you have to evolve. The people that I know like Bunzi D, this is one person that is very underrated, with the right production, the way he uses his rhymes are outstanding. I look at Dizzee Rascal or Kano, there is a difference between the way he is delivering it and the way that they do.

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John – To be honest I am not a big fan of Dizzee Rascal.

Stock – For me Bunzi D, that whole feel, if people can get the feel that Bunzi is trying to get across, then it's going to be big.

John – When I interviewed Bunzi D, he said that if he can't get the verse down in one take and in one flow he will not do it. If he can't do it live, then he won't do it in the studio.

Stock – I like seeing him in the studio working, he is a hard worker. I really like what he does. He is one guy who make the crossover to the US, when I was playing his stuff to hip-hoppers in Michigan, they were like 'The States aren't ready for this'. What my goal is to, if I can, I would love to be a catalyst for UK hip-hop and bring it to the states. Kind of like the south, they had a particular person that helped people understand the south and their lifestyles. There needs to be somebody that can bring the UK behind them and help the US understand where they are coming from and make it mainstream. The west coast had those special people that brought their music out. I think we should look at the UK as a region, quite like a state, it will help unify people and once there is a particular sound coming from that region then people will begin to recognise.

John – It's a bit like Nelly did for the whole St. Louis vibe.

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Stock – Exactly and that person needs to have the UK people behind them and putting their stamp out, saying this is who we are. That's why I am working with British Bulldog Productions, KonKrete Productions, Bunzi D. But it's all about timing, marketing and everything like that.

John – One of your big breaks is when you won a contest on a radio show in the UK and performed in front of 30,000 people, how was that experience?

Stock – Yea it was Rock FM in Preston, I played at Ewood Park and it was amazing. I did the track in my bedroom on little Mac PowerBook and a keyboard, and then recorded at my friend's studio and my girl said you should enter this track in this radio competition, and at the time I almost gave up on the whole music scene. Then I got a call about 3 months after sending the track in, I had forgotten about it to be honest and they said that I had made it to the last 20. Then every week it would get closer to the winner and friends and family would be voting for me and all of a sudden I then had to perform live on the radio and then I was up against a 15 year old girl who was an amazing singer so I won the contest. It was a major thing, it was a dream come true because they were over 2000 demos that were sent in and the prize was to perform in front of 30,000 people. So I performed with at that time who as hot, Will Young, Daniel Bedingfield, Miss-Teeq and we all did the same set, 2 songs each. So that was pretty cool and when I got up to perform there, and there was a carpet of people, I was like 'I ain't going back!' It was hot, they filmed it and I tried to get a copy but never did. That was the start and it snow balled from there. That's when I got with Dwight Reynolds and that was a freak incident in itself, because I met this guy in Miami and basically I was in Hooters and this guy had a Sony jacket on, I went over and rapped for him and he gave me his card. I told him I was moving to the UK and he said to phone him when I get to the UK and he would hook me up. So I thought to myself I need a good producer now and I shopped around in the UK but they didn't know what to do with me and how to market me, so I called this guy but the number had been disconnected, so all I had then was a fax number and I faxed him saying I have performed for 30,000 and I need a good producer. 3 months later and the phone rings at 2.00 am and it was the guy saying I got your fax, and he hooked up a 3 way call to the producer who has worked with Whitney Houston, 112 etc.

So Dwight said he will come over and do some tracks and to the studio in Chorley in the UK and we did 4 tracks in 3 days.

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We did 'Bounce', 'Throw it up' and a couple others. It was like my demo, it created some heat, I was doing shows and that afterwards.

John - Back in 2004 you had a track feature on the film White Chicks, how did that come about and are there any more soundtracks that you will be featuring on in the future?

Stock – Yea the track 'Bounce'. When I went back to the states I promised my girl that I would quit music and then the 'White Chicks' film got hold of me and within 2 weeks I was on the soundtrack. Sony authorised the deal. The movie did \$70 million in the states. Even though that song was on there, people still would not pick it up. They didn't know what to do with me and I just said whether you like it or not, this is happening. I was told it was a hot track, I was the only un-signed artist on the soundtrack, next to people like the 'Black Eyed Peas' even my good friend Terry Crews who dances to the track in the movie loved the track. He didn't know it was my track until I told him. But labels still didn't want to do anything with me and I was like, what other un-signed artist has achieved what I have achieved on my own? But I will just keep doing my thing, by the time I get to where I want to be I won't even need a label.

John - One of my favourite trackz that you have done is 'Culture Shock' feat. Bunzi D. The track was produced by 'KonKrete Productions', how did you hook up with them and any plans to work with them in the future?

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Stock – A friend of mine Jason Ganner, he was the one who hooked me up with ‘KonKrete Productions’ and basically we went in and banged out some trackz. We did about 4 or 5 trackz, ‘Culture Shock’ was one of them. Since then I know ‘KonKrete Productions’ have been taking a break, but they have so much material that they are trying to get out there. They then brought Bunzi D on and I was like this is the guy and when he did his verse, I just thought fire. So I am hoping that he is around for the video shoot.

John – Will the video be done this year?

Stock – I am going down on Monday to meet with the video producers, so hopefully within the next few weeks. We want to have it released by November, promotionally anyway. Then release the video to MTV, Channel U, all the other stations.

John – Are you working on the new album right now?

Stock – Yea there will be a couple of trackz taken from my first album that will make it onto the new album, just because with the first album only 1000 CDs were printed up. Probably ‘Culture Shock’ and ‘Hustler’s Anthem’ will make it to the new album. But the rest will be new, like ‘Daddy’, ‘Struggle’ and ‘Break up’. We will release it on my label and I am securing investment in the label at this time, and we may go with Universal with distribution. We have been working with some people who market artists like 50 Cent and The Game. We want the release of the new album to be in 2007, around March/April time. Another track that will probably go on the

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album is a track called 'Shaanti', and it's a theme track for an event in the Middle East, called 'The Middle East Peace Party'. I can't say too much about it but basically it's a very big event, I will be performing at that event, hopefully CNN and Time magazine will be there. There is also a girl called 'Sheila G' who features on the track. I also secured her a deal in India for her album, and so she has just released that in India.

John - If you had a 6cd changer in your car what CDs would be in there?

Stock – First off, Tupac 'All Eyez On Me', I would have a Biggie album, also a CD of just beats so that I could freestyle and get ideas whilst driving, Busta Rhymes, Outkast 'Aquemini', so many more, maybe Foxy Brown or Dr. Dre '2001'.

John - Are there any artists that inspire you at the moment, and any that you would like to work with?

Stock – I would have to say that there aren't many that inspire me at the moment that are out there. I don't get my inspiration from current artists.

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John – Do you think hip-hop is going in the wrong direction?

Stock – I think it's stale and there is nothing fresh. I think that nothing really stands out.

John – I find that when you watch MTV, that every video is the same.

Stock – And that's the thing. I don't tend to draw much inspiration from anywhere for any of my stuff. Most of my inspiration comes from artists I grew up with. The last inspirational artist of recent times is probably Eminem, and that's because I am from Detroit and lyrically he is very good, very good on his flow. I don't want to be related to him in any way, but we do come from the same type of area.

John – Do you think the producers have something to do with it as well? I mean all the top hip-hop artists today all use the same producers. You know when you hear a Neptunes track or a Dr. Dre beat.

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Stock – It needs to be more creative. I am trying to learn how to produce myself, and I am working with other producers, but I will not be on the track if its not hot and I will let people know if I am not feeling the beat. At the end of the day I have to be able to draw from the beat.

John – On the 13th September 2006 it was the 10th year of Tupac passing, as an artist did he inspire you?

Stock – ‘Pac was one of the reasons why I like doing hip-hop, he was very creative and the best thing that I pulled from ‘Pac and you might see in some of my own work was his passion, his passion is unmatched. He really inspired me a lot.

John – Do you think the hip-hop scene would be different if Tupac (2Pac) was still with us?

Stock – Yea I do, I think he would still be more creative than anyone out there today. I think that he would go against the grain and go against the norm of what is going on.

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John - If you were not blessed to be in the music business, what do you think you would be doing now?

Stock – I would be probably a financial advisor or something, maybe a DJ or a broadcaster, maybe digging ditches; I will do all of the above to make that money.

John - Finally you have just released your label Gritty records in the UK, when can we expect some releases from yourself on the label and do you plan to sign other artists to the label?

Stock – The title of my new album will be ‘StreetSweeper’. The first release of the single will probably be in January/February. But I do plan on signing artist onto the label, as an artist myself, you only have a certain amount of time to be an artist, I want to do more production, maybe I will do 3 or 4 albums and then after that take it from there. But it’s got to be hot and different. I won’t go with what everyone else is doing. There are a million white rappers in the states trying to come out and only a handful that have made it with the right marketing, the investment etc. But now it’s no longer a novelty to be a white rapper, now as a white rapper I have to come with something different. It’s a lot harder now, but I don’t shy away from being a white rapper. I have always done hip-hop, it’s in my blood, I can’t get away from it. So the only thing that I can do is learn and soak in as much as I can and be the best that I can be. So hopefully you will see a lot more of me.

John - Is there anything I haven’t asked you that you would like to add?

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Stock – Not really but I appreciate you doing the interview and thanks.

John – Thanks a lot Stock.

Stock also gave me a limited edition copy of his CD 'StockMashin' hand signed by the man himself. To enter for this great giveaway please email, giveaways@thuglifearmy.com and put 'Stock' in the subject bar. The closing date will be the 30th October '06 and winners will be notified by email.

You can buy the album 'StockMashin' at www.cdbaby.com/stockmashin and also at iTunes.

You can also check Stock out at <http://www.myspace.com/stockmashin> and his official website www.stockmashin.com

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You can also check out 'KonKrete Productions' out at www.myspace.com/konkreteinthhouse

*Interviewed by John TLA UK Reporter for www.ThugLifeArmy.com

John can be contacted at John@ThugLifeArmy.com