

Bowdown the Godmother of LA Hip Hop is Here - Medusa

Written by Davey D ID4242

Thursday, 27 March 2008 10:37 -

Every once in a while I feel compelled to do my duty as a productive citizen and generously give back to the community. Sometimes I volunteer my time. Other times I give money. Still on other occasions I give sound advice.

Today I wanna take some time out and give some sound advice to anybody who is an aspiring artist as well as to those who have been around the block a few times.

My heartfelt advice to you is as follows; If you happen to be booked for a show and the promoter has you coming on AFTER this LA based artist named Medusa... DO NOT DO IT.

Have your manager re-negotiate your contract, but do not go on stage right after her.

You may be able to get by if they let the deejay play an hour long set or something or you have an artist like KRS-One performing alongside you... Maybe if you're a bit sadistic and like pain then following Medusa might be the thing for you to do. This woman is not to be followed.

If you are a battle emcee who has won a few contests and you're feeling good about yourself and your looking for new challenges-Be warned! DO NOT set your sites on Medusa. Don't let your homies or an over ambitious promoter set you up. If you find yourself on the bill and they schedule you to go one on one with her, the best thing for you to do is call in sick. Go on vacation.. leave the building. A true friend does not let their good friends get in the ring and trade lyrical jabs with Medusa. She will cause you extreme embarrassment, lots of pain and is likely to end your career if its in front of a large crowd. This woman who is often dubbed the Angela Davis of Rap or the High Priestess is no joke. Please Believe that.

When we look back on Hip Hop history one name that we simply will not be allowed to ignore is the Gangsta Goddess, The Angela Davis of Rap, the Top Cat of the clique Feline Science, the Godmother of West coast Hip Hop-the High priestess-Bow down to the one and only Medusa.

Most people know Medusa the "Top Cat" of the clique Feline Science as colorful engaging

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pioneering sista who has been rocking packed houses here on the west coast for the past 15 years. This skilled emcee hails from the legendary night spot-The Good Life Cafe which gave birth to legendary groups like Jurassic 5, Freestyle Fellowship, Volume 10, Kurupt, WC and many many more. Anybody who was anybody paid their dues at the Good Life back during LA's Golden Era of Hip Hop in the late 80s/early 90s

Medusa was a regular to this haunt and later Project Blowed, where she not only held her own but would routinely surpass her male counterparts. As she explained during our recent sit down, that there were many a days she had to step into the arena and battle her Good Life comrades.

One memorable bout involved Peace from Freestyle Fellowship who she took out during a Source Magazine battle at the House of Blues. Many who know Medusa and hear about her past wins are not surprised, this is a woman who once she gets on stage -all eyes on her and you can feel her energy down to the core. Like I said before, if you can beat a cat like Peace or even just hang with him, then you are truly-no joke...

Medusa has always been known as a cutting edge, fierce emcee who is always willing to push the envelope. This was best illustrated on another memorable evening when she first performed what is now her signature song. "Power to the P" is a spoken word piece that pays tribute to the female's private parts. Medusa wanted to see how far she could go in terms of kicking up dust while adhering to the Good Life's strict "no cursing" policy. She laughingly recalled how it shocked everyone's senses because it was very descriptive, very provocative and yet still "clean".

"It took a minute before everyone realized what I was doing. Once people caught they started cheering and flicking their lighters", Medusa noted. She said the sexually suggestive content prompted the owner B Hall to rise up and make her stop but that brief performance got everyone talking to this day.

Long before many groups were on the scene with a live band Medusa and Feline Science were out and about in LA breaking ground. Medusa explained that she's a child of the funk era and came up at a time when Hip Hop was still unknown in many parts. Groups like; Parliament/Funkadelic, The Barkays, Confunkshun, Brass Construction to name a few were the order of the day.

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She noted that she always wanted to fuze Hip Hop and funk and bring those two experiences to a new heights. She explained that using band allows for so much more freedom of expression. And yes her band includes a DJ. But as she noted, it was wrong for so called music critics to place limits on what Hip Hop should ultimately be. She scoffed at those who claimed Hip Hop was ONLY two turntables and an emcee with a mic. It's so much more.

Long before it was acceptable to sing while you rapped, Medusa was out in the fore-front alongside artists like Lauryn Hill, Queen Latifah and the Force MDs who came before them who were paving the way by including harmonies and melodies with their raps and re-introducing that style to the Hip Hop audience.

During Hip Hop's pioneering days groups like Crash Crew, Cold Crush Brothers and Grandmaster Flash frequently incorporated singing with their raps. It was considered Hip Hop back in those early days and then seemingly overnight it was a practice that was seriously frowned upon. It seems like some high brow, out of touch music critics got it in their heads that singing "wasn't real Hip Hop" and they went straight to the bank with that high profile distorted definition. During the period that Medusa included singing with her group Feline Science, it was ground-breaking. Today its commonplace today as we now have everyone from Mos Def to Snoop Dogg singing as well as rapping.

For all of us who know Medusa the emcee, there are many who recall that long before she rocked the mic she was a dancer. We didn't call those who pop-locked, strutted, tutted, robotted and all that good stuff b-boys or b-girls back in the days. But let the record note that Medusa's been popping since the 70s. She hooked up with a dance crew called the Groove-A-trons and been dancing ever since. During our recent sit down, Medusa went into detail about what the scene was like during those early days.

She explained how she first got exposed to emceeing via the song "Rapper's Delight". Later on she was inspired by watching Ice T do his thing at the now defunct Radiotron which was made famous in the movie Breaking.

This Godmother of west coast Hip Hop took us down memory lane and spoke in great detail about west coast Hip Hop's early days. She also went into detail about the difference between spoken word and emceeing. We later morphed into a discussion about emceeing techniques including the skill it takes to truly ride the rhythm. Medusa also spoke about the challenge many emcees have in terms of keeping their egos in check. Far too often emcees overshadow the

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beats that are provided to them.

Medusa also broke down the challenges one faces doing the independent hustle. She feels the grind is necessary but a good thing in the end. She said the trick to being successful is to be consistent. We also talked about the challenges she faced as a woman in the male dominated industry. Medusa started off by explaining that one needs to first love themselves in order to gain confidence.

She revealed that she was once incarcerated in a woman's prison called "Civil Brand". It has since closed down. For her it was a wake up call and she came out determined to never ever go back, but she was also made aware and tuned into the plight of women who were starting to come into prison in increasing numbers.

She talked about this experience and how it made come out stronger and the end result was Medusa becoming how she came to form Feline Science. She said that came about after she felt she was being rejected to be a member of a group called 'Masked Men'. Years later she realized she wasn't being rejected, but instead being encouraged to start her own group which would and did become an entity on to itself. Everyone who got down with Feline Science both men and women all took on cat names with Medusa being 'Top Cat'.

Medusa talked about how the music industry has seemingly only given a platform to one female emcee at a time. She recalled a conversation with Rah Digga who expressed the same concern about how only one female at a time "gets their run". Much of this has to do with so called critics claiming that listeners can't really tell the differences between female emcees. It's an idea that Medusa soundly dismissed.

Medusa concluded our interview with Medusa talking about how women need to go about striking a balance between maintaining control of their art, but being willing to confidently work with folks and giving way to other ideas and perspectives when working on a project. Medusa talked about how being so rigid and controlling may have led to her not being able to work with Dr Dre. In retrospect there was a way to maintain ones credibility and still turn over control to a dope producer.

Medusa is currently set to drop her new album Gangsta Goddess.

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You can check her site at <http://www.myspace.com/medusa>

[**Medusa Interview on Breakdown FM pt1**](#)

[**Medusa Interview on Breakdown FM pt2**](#)