Challenging Hip-Hop with Heart and Soul

Rapper reveals inner psyche with second album

Eddie Solis Jr.
THE SANTA CLARA

Like his underground predecessors Immortal Technique and Nas, Santa Clara-based rapper Old Sol creates a clever flow of carefully plucked words. No grand chorus, no bravado of effects and tunes — just a poetic stream over a simple sampled beat. Minimalist to the end.

Old Sol's new album, "Power and Will," is not what you would expect from a hip-hop artist. Listen to any popular rap song and there are common themes money, brands, sex and drugs. That is not Old Sol's bag.

"I see rapping as a way to express philosophical ideas, a way to vent about things that I normally wouldn't talk about with people," he said.

Each song speaks to the mind and soul of the artist's soul. The rapid fire of lyrics stripped away the facade of the rapper star and present an observer of the human experience with social anxiety and a passion to create.

Some of his songs tell stories, such as "Casual Attraction," which recreates a tumultuous relationship the rapper had. Others broadcast a stream of consciousness like, "I am..." which boldly declares the mind's power over the ego. Quick as lightning, Old Sol's high-energy rhymes invigorate the listener and move the cogs in their minds.

"I want people to hear my raps and just get them thinking," said Old Sol. "I talk about a lot of things that other rappers don't."

Self-awareness, anxieties and life purposes are just some of the subjects he tackles. There are three versions of "Old So(1)," the album's introductory track, experimenting in style and flow.

Old Sol laces his raw, deep voice over jazzy beats to create a clash of quick-witted lyrics and sultry sounds.

With beats produced by DEEPSEA Records, "Power and Will" is like the mesmerizing freestyle of teenagers in the smoky neighborhood of New York City.

Self-started DEEPSEA Records has been adding creative types to the label. Producer Chris Gaines and Old Sol have a common appreciation of music as a means of expression.

"We don't rap about 'money and b***' like other rappers you hear on the radio today," said Gaines. "We like to make music that people can relate to."

Old Sol is certainly not for everyone. If you're looking for a song to move to, move along.

"The majority of things you hear from other rappers is people who are trying to portray an image that is not themselves," said Old Sol.

With the album now available on SoundCloud, the honesty and artistic thought that go into Old So's songs serve as a preview for a promising career.

"If you are trying to show your emotions, people can relate to it," he said. "Even if they are not going through it, they can appreciate it. Everyone is going through something."

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