



DEEP ROOTED

WHERE DID THE
HIP HOP GO?
WHERE DID THE
HIP HOP GO?
WHERE DID THE
HIP HOP GO?

805
VISION
AESTHETIC

NOY2 THE SHIP CHIT...
GLADY DONT TEK NA!!

dj artistic

ANDREW MCINTOSH | Words
JAMES ELLEDGE | Photos

Portrait of a DJ as Artistic

ADVERTISING HIMSELF AS “INTERNATIONALLY known and locally accepted”, DJ Artistic possesses a wisdom reflecting what it’s like to both trot the globe and stand on the corner. You see, Artistic is a renaissance b-boy, schooled in at least two trades. He is currently DJing for legendary Hip Hop group X Clan and has also produced beats for San Diego’s Deep Rooted and Los Angeles’ Abstract Rude. But perhaps more importantly Artistic is an ambassador for the SD Hip Hop scene and a guardian of a culture that currently may be in dire straits.

So are you looking for a feel good Hip Hop success story? Artistic offers himself as living proof for Hip Hop youth.

What was your first Hip Hop memory and when did you begin wanting to express yourself through the culture?

First thing I remember was my cousins were breakdancers. I remember these guys stopping cars and breaking, blocking traffic until they would get a donation. But I was really struck at the age of seven when my dad had a party and he was the DJ.

What was he spinning?

He was spinning disco and funk. But I remember one song that me and him connected on, I can’t remember the title, but it went, “Wikki wikki wikki!”

“Jam On It” by Newcleus?

Yeah, I remember we really liked the song.

After you moved to San Diego in 1987 what kind of Hip Hop music were you listening to?

Steady B, BDP, LL Cool J, Busy Bee, Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince, Rappin’ Duke. My cousins and I would play the records and perform the parts. But then my neighbor had an older brother and he was the first person to expose me to NWA. We had to sneak around to listen to that.

So you were a big fan before becoming a DJ?

Oh, yeah, something about Hip Hop just grabbed me. I always wanted to be a DJ. And I’m doing that, DJing for X Clan on this tour with Public Enemy. But now I want to do it with my group Deep Rooted.

You’re also known for being one of the people who gave birth to the San Diego Hip Hop scene in the mid 90s.

I don’t want to take all the credit for that. There was a foundation before me, Legion of Doom, Masters of the Universe, Green Eyes, there’s a whole bunch that had been there before I put in my work. But what I did was I threw an open mic at a coffee shop where people could rhyme and DJ called the Breakthrough Hip Hop Collective.

We did it like the Apollo where people could vote on the performers. There were DJ competitions, MC battles, dance performances, talent showcases. The Breakthrough helped give artists in San Diego an identity and helped define a sound that was distinct from other places.

It seems nowadays, audiences won’t call out a wack performer. They’ll just let the dude go on when he should be booted off the stage.

I would agree. I’ve hosted battles where MCs have used someone else’s lyrics! And because the crowd isn’t educated or go as far back in the game they think those are new lyrics. As a host, I always call an MC out on that and try to educate the crowd and include the audience.

The thing about hosting shows is that you have to talk with and to the people. A lot of hosts and MCs will yell at the people - they’re not connecting, they’re just trying to intimidate the audience. What I want to do is get the crowd involved. Because if we get honest feedback from the crowd, a new standard of what you can expect from San Diego Hip Hop develops.

Tell me about Deep Rooted.

We are trying to perpetuate a positive message, have a lot of fun and raise the standards.

Your music has a quality to it reminiscent of A Tribe Called Quest’s best work yet you don’t sound derivative.

Listen, I still get goose bumps listening to Big Daddy Kane. We’re an offspring of the people who did it before us. But we don’t want to simply do what they did. We are influenced by the legends of East and West coast Hip Hop. We want to use Deep Rooted’s music to educate the young kids about what came before us. It happens all the time in rock ‘n’ roll and jazz, it needs to happen for Hip Hop in order for the music to survive.

What’s your take on the most frequent debate these days: is Hip Hop is dead?

It can’t be dead! If I’m going around the country touring with two of Hip Hop’s greatest groups of all time, how can it be dead? What they mean by Hip Hop being dead is that the youth are not getting schooled in the culture.

Well, people today are being told a ringtone or a reality show represents Hip Hop. Those things might be entertaining but they don’t make a culture.

Yes. Lots of kids have on fake diamond earrings, big hat, big chain, pants sagging. That’s the Hip Hop dress... but that’s a costume, brother.

What you see right here is Hip Hop. I’m a front line soldier, fighting for Hip Hop. And not only for Deep Rooted and X Clan, I am representing for San Diego. I am representing my city across the nation.

It wasn’t something I expected to happen but it’s happening. I think I have been blessed with this opportunity because I stayed true. And that proves to me that if you stay true and believe in what you want and if you study, and you’re disciplined, and you’re humble, you can accomplish it all.

See DJ Artistic at BATTLE In The Mix, June 30th at the San Diego Air and Space Museum. www.myspace.com/battledjcompetition •