

EGO TRIP MAGAZINE. ISSUE 12

International God of Mystery: An M.F.'n Look Back With M.F. Doom.

POSTED BY EGO TRIP ON 01/09/2012. 5 COMMENTS

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PREFACE by Noah Callahan-Bever:

Please, for a second, imagine a world where every album, bootleg and demo is not available to you at the speed of thought. A world where you have to know someone who knows something and someone(s) who are "connected" in order to get your hands on the elusive tunes not sold over the counter at Sam Goody. I know, scary right? That world, friends... well, it has a name: The '90s!

As a teen who grew up in this pre-Internet prison-world, there was one specific Holy Grail of unreleased hip-hop that me and all my friends sought: K.M.D.'s shelved second LP, *Black Bastards*. See, K.M.D., who stylistically were very close to the Native Tongues (far and away our favorite rap artists), had a solid, if soft first album, *Mr. Hood*, that we all liked. But the first single from *Bastards...* it was different. From its controversial name, to its jarring 12" art, to its decidedly harder and darker sound (not unlike the sophomore turn taken by K.M.D.'s God Squad brethren Brand Nubian), "What A Niggy Know" made it clear this time around the Gods weren't fucking around. But the LP was never released! Word had it a dispute with the label over the album's cover art (lead rapper Zev Love X had illustrated a Sambo being lynched) got the guys dropped. And compounding the label foulness, Zev's brother, group member Subroc, was killed in a car accident shortly before its completion (not after as we'd originally thought – this fact corrected below). But, again, this was pre-Internet; so all the information was second hand. All we knew was what had been printed in the *The Source*.

Anyway, you can imagine my music nerd delight when, two weeks into my 1997 internship at ego trip, Chairman Mao offered a dub of the promo *Black Bastards* press cassette. He'd been sitting on it since, you know, '94!!?! I devoured the lost classic – which absolutely lived up to the hype – and distributed copies to all my impressed friends. Also, I talked to Mao about it. A lot. Brent, too. I was totally fascinated by the estranged angst of the album, the meticulous collaging of *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* clips and Gylan Kain's *Blue Guerrilla* (both of which Jeff schooled me on), and the morbid story of Zev, Sub and their once happy rap crew.

So, five months later when Zev re-emerged under the moniker M.F. Doom with an off-kilter but awesome 12", "Dead Bent," on Bobbito's Fondle 'Em Records, my 18-year-old ass was kind of a shoe-in to pen the feature for the magazine. And whether it was 'cause they actually believed in my ability, or simply wanted to avoid the awkwardness of pooping on my enthusiasm, the guys actually let me write it. I was suuuuper excited, to say the least. This was to be Doom's first interview since *Black Bastards*, since his brother's passing, since he disappeared. This was going to be news!

I got Doom's number from Bobbito. But not his cell. Like most people in '97, he didn't have one. It was his home number. The home he shared with his parents. And, perhaps understandably since he was 25 or so, he was never there. And didn't like returning calls either, apparently. But finally after two weeks we spoke and arranged for me to meet him out where he lived in Long Beach, Long Island. I took the train out after school and Doom was nice enough to only leave me waiting at the station for two hours before him and his boys pulled up on their BMX bikes. His parents house was walking distance, and when we got there we drank 40s and he played me most of what would become *Operation: Doomsday*. I remember finding it sad-funny that the K.M.D. Yo! MTV Raps trading cards from '91 were still magnetized to the refrigerator. Then me and him and Onyx, who he'd kicked out of K.M.D. for the second LP but apparently was back friends with, rode bikes over to the boardwalk and sat and did the interview on the beach. It was really tough. I'd done, like, three interviews in my life, and this one was heavier. Donda had lost his deal, lost his brother, and spent three years

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me, and this chick was heavy. Dope had lost his gear, lost his brother, and spent three years doing nothing in a crappy little town in Long Island. He was depressed, likely an alcoholic, and very dissociative. I was not prepared. He gave a lot of canned answers at first, and deflected queries about Subroc. Eventually he opened up when we broached the dramas with Elektra, and I got a halfway decent interview out of him. Halfway. Having sort-of bonded, Doom invited me back to the house to make a copy of the unfinished songs, and to get me high for the train ride home. He tried to teach me how to play spades. Buzzed and stoned, I didn't get it. But I did figure my way back to the station and back to the city. Suffice to say, it was THE BEST DAY EVER!!!

Kidding, but kind of, actually.

What you're about to read is my first stab at feature writing. And to call it a stab is to be kind. It's more like a wild Michael-Myers-jumping-out-the-bedroom-closet-with-a-ginsu slash at feature writing (thanks to the tutelage of the guys whose site you're reading this on, I got better). But it is a document of an incredible creative in a transitional time and a place. Doom, not me. So read on and enjoy the O.G. origin story of the Metal Faced Super Villain, M.F. Doom. Hey!

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Big U

nice interview, love the throwback pics of doom too!!!! got more?

egotrip

MORE Doom pix? Yes. We will post them? Hmmmmmmmm.

Big U

haha those throwback pics are just mad cool, would love to see some more of doom around that era.

Mike Frank

word, i want to see some old doom flicks too....nostalgic.

Sankofa

"we sell music, not my face." but still tho.. post em :)



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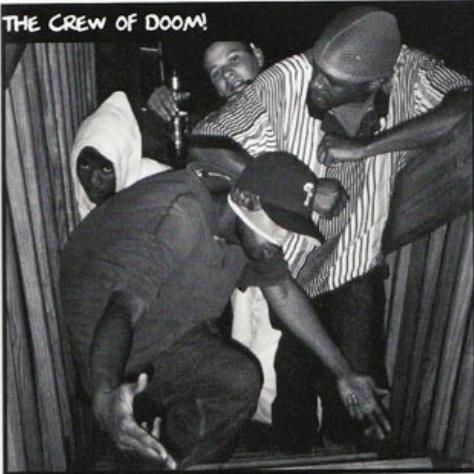
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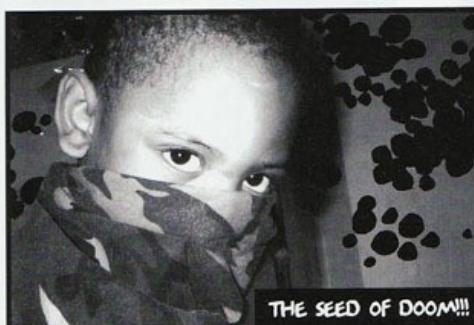
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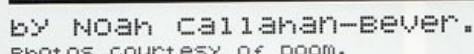
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BY NOAH CALLAHAN-BEVER.
Photos courtesy of DOOM.

International God Of Mystery— AN M.F.'N LOOK BACK WITH M.F. DOOM

"Many Flows. Metal Face. Mic Friendly. Magnetic Field. Money Flow, as well as My Friend and oh yeah—Mutha Fucka," says M.F. Doom in explanation of the M.F. prefix on his name. "The Doom shit is just mad old. Niggas been callin' me that since I was a shorty. M.F. Doom's just a totally new character of myself. It's still me but it's just a different side."

In the last three years, the life of M.F. Doom (**the former Zev Love X, front-man of KMD**) has endured a lot of change: from his crew's days as teenaged Islamic rap scientists to his recent exploits on one of the past year's best independent hip hop 12"s—"Dead Beni"/"Gas Drawls"/"Hey." But there's been one constant throughout his entire recording career—his Long Island residence.

It's only appropriate then, that Doom recaps his experiences on his hometown's boardwalk in Long Beach, a stones throw from the Atlantic Ocean. Joining him are Duce (the ex-KMD member formerly known as Onyx) and his long-time friend Quest (a/k/a J. Quest The Boogieman). It's a clear night in the suburban town and from where we sit both sky and water seem to go on forever in every direction.

"Long Beach isn't as wide as Brooklyn, as long as Manhattan, or as dense as the Bronx," Doom concedes. "But there's the beach three blocks away and that's a fuckin' escape. That's the lovely shit."

But don't get it twisted. Doom ain't some shook kid from the other side of the suburbs. Growing up, he did bids in Manhattan and like many inner-city youths became immersed in hip-hop culture. Graffiti bombin' and listening to New York rap radio shows were the activities of his teenage years, and along with his younger brother, DJ Subroc, and Onyx, they formed the group KMD.

Recorded on a friend's 4-track, their demo attracted the attention of 3rd Bass' MC Serch and Pete Nice, and the trio was invited to record with the white wonders. Fresh off "The Gas Face," the fellas signed to Elektra and released their 1991 debut, *Mr. Hood*. An amalgamation of Five-Percenter knowledge over uptempo soul-influenced tracks overflowing with cleverness, the LP's linchpin was the ingenious framework which held the songs together: a series of hilarious conversations between the band members and the stiff voice of the anonymous Mr. Hood. Despite critical acclaim and the moderate success of the singles "Peachfuzz" and "Who Me?," *Mr. Hood* met with disappointing sales, sending the trio back to their lab to regroup.

Officially pared down to the duo of Zev and Subroc, KMD struck back at the world with a most astounding aesthetic realignment. Returning conspicuously more jaded for their sophomore effort (much like their tour-mates and "God Squad" compatriots, Brand Nubian), the darker opus *Black Bastards* still managed to retain its wit. Beautifully constructed from deep bass grooves around a skeleton of vocal samples from original Last Poet Gylan Kain's *Blue Guerrilla* LP and filmmaker Melvin Van Peebles' epochal blaxploitation cinematic masterpiece, *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*, *Black Bastards'* inventive edge was typified by its intro, "Garbage Day 3." An aural montage of snippets pertaining to the group's changing focus over an erratic bass line, the track's brilliance was sustained through cuts like, "What A Nigga Know," "Sweet Premium," and "Black Bastards and Bitches."

"With the second joint we really flipped the script," says Doom. "Like, 'Okay, this is a real jewel right here.'"

"There was always enlightenment," Duce adds, "but the second album was a warning."

But shortly after completing this masterpiece, tragedy befell the group when Subroc was fatally struck by a car on the Island. Compounding the calamity was a "Cop Killer" era controversy over *Black Bastards'* Zev-illustrated cover artwork that depicted their Sambo character symbol in a noose swinging from a tree; an incident that wound up getting the group dropped from their label. Yet despite the bleakness of that period, today Doom is able to maintain his perspective on the big picture: "Elektra spent loot to make the album, they gave us loot to step off the label and now we got the rights to the shit anyway. More than anything, time got lost."

Having now adopted the identity of a "Super M.F. Villain," Doom is now ready to move on and has a full plate of upcoming releases including his third album, *The Super M.F. Villains*, and a collaborative release with M.F. Grimm and others called the *Monster Island Project*, which uses the themes of movie monsters like Godzilla, Jet Jaguar and Megalon.

"It's all just evolution," the illusionist says of his forthcoming works. "I'm-a just lay it down on some real hip hop shit. Fuck the distractions."

Focused on his art, Doom is not wetting C.R.E.A.M. or fame, which is epitomized by his refusal to be photographed. "Super Villains get part of their power from muthafuckas not knowing who they are," he reasons. "It's music that we're selling—not my face."

Besides his two LPs, probably the greatest gem that the Villain will finally bestow upon us is the proper release of *Black Bastards*—on wax on Bobbito Garcia's Fondle 'Em label. It seems that finally the wrongs that have plagued Doom's career have been obliterated.

A perpetually elusive master of masquerade, M.F. Doom, the artist has returned to us in full form. And all we can say is—welcome back, muthafucka.