

Southeast Stylings: Northeast Flair

BY KHADIJAH ALI-COLEMAN

"It is quite a natural thing in my opinion that the expression of my political views come out in my music," says Head-Roc. Photo by Anike Robinson



DC Music Legend Head-Roc The No Holds-Barred Interview

If you haven't heard of DC hip-hop lyricist Head-Roc before, chances are that that won't be for long. Head-Roc, a DC native and long-time performer in DC and in the tri-state area, recently began touring with his new afro funk band, GODISHEUS and has been headlining such noted events as the recent FUNK FENTY protest held outside of the administration building last month to performances throughout the DC area promoting his "Tip the Band" series. Head-Roc is unabashedly honest with his outlook on everything from music to the political scene in DC, and here you will read a Q & A that will be sure to answer all you want to know about this irreplaceable DC icon.

EOR: Head-Roc, you are known for both your high-energy shows, classic music and love of DC, most notably your political stance in many of your songs. How do you view the connection between music and politics in general, and specifically when it relates to DC?

Head-Roc: For me, music is synonymous with life expression. It's the nature of the spirit to produce sounds, and to me all sounds are musical.

Now politics, very broadly, is whatever the set of factors are that determine how one behaves and decides to interact with other persons. The politics of a person or group of people can beneficially or adversely affect the life and livelihood of another person or group of people. They in turn have set a of politics that will determine how they respond when acted upon. Our politics are born and

shaped out of our life experiences, which of course can be expressed musically.

So, it is quite a natural thing that the expression of my political views come out in my music -- as is the case when Robert Nestor Marly, Paul Robeson, Nina Simone, and all the other great soul expressionists made their wonderful rhythmic compositions. Unfortunately, there are groups of people on the planet who have disconnected from certain aspects of their music expression and who have organized themselves to promote a culture that actually devalues the importance and relevance of people doing so freely and uninhibited.

Our consciousness as a people expects and assumes that our brothers and sisters in political office actually will advocate on our behalf to attain long overdue fairness in this political process for us. So, I try to write songs of empowerment in an effort to counter these complacencies.

EOR: What is your opinion on the current state of music in DC and how can it change for the better?

Head-Roc: There are many different aspects of DC music. I'll answer this as a big fan of those who choose to trail blaze and stand firm in the creation and presentation of original works. That said, DC music is phenomenal! The diversity and level of proficiency in song writing, recording, and performing is second to none in the country I think. The Package, Krayola, Kokayi, Poemcees, Noon:30, Trophy Wife, Cornel West Theory, N'digo Rose, Elikeh, Chopteeth, See-I, Sitali,

Asheru, W. Ellington Felton, Nea Posey, Elisha "Teapot" McKinney, Deborah Bond, Mustafa Akbar, are a few notables who come to mind immediately. There are so many more... young bucks Lyraciss and ProVerb are my favorites from the next generation right now, too.

How things can change for the better is simply that people need to support one another.

EOR: You are a headliner in the upcoming Capital Hip Hop Soul Fest in Marvin Gaye Park. What led you to an event east of the river?

Head-Roc: I am very much interested in doing events east of the river and even more so into being part of a movement that creates sustainable enterprises for hosting and nurturing DC music culture. The CHHSF is a wonderful investment and contribution, and I am very honored to be a part of it, and psyched to be rocking it with GODISHEUS! As soon as possible I'd like to produce an event east of the river for the very good folks on that side of town. They deserve quality, responsible, and energetic entertainment just like the folks west of the river get on the regular, you know?

EOR: What advice would you give to a struggling performing artist in DC who wants to have his music heard?

Head-Roc: Plain and simple, get organized. You have to organize your support base into a moving force that will follow you around to the

different venues you rock. Keep creating, practicing and performing fresh material so as to give your supporters a reason to come and check you out each and every time you rock. Record and release in conjunction with organizing your fan base, and your sustainability factor as an independent artist will increase.

Head-Roc and his band GODISHEUS will be performing at the Capital Hip Hop Soul Fest which will take place on Sat, July 25. Visit www.CapitalHipHopSoulFest.com for details. Visit Head-Roc online at www.head-roc.com ★

Farah Lawal used her Artomatic appearances on June 20 and July 3 as a promotion also for her one-woman show "So Do You Love Me Yet?" which will open on July 10 in the upcoming Capital Fringe Fest in Washington, DC. Photo by Khadijah Ali-Coleman



Celebration @ the Artomatic

In celebration of its 10th anniversary, Artomatic has brought its trademark one-of-a-kind multimedia arts event to 55 M St., SE in DC's Capitol Riverfront neighborhood. In 2008, Artomatic attracted 52,500 visitors and 1,540 participating artists. It is expected that over 60,000 will visit the Artomatic this year. Artomatic began on May 29 and extends until July 5.

In conjunction with the Capitol Riverfront Business Improvement District and Monument Realty, Artomatic presents more than five weeks of art, music, theater, workshops and more — all of it free for visitors. Artomatic is a nonprofit organization headed by a volunteer Board of Directors. It is funded in part by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, an agency supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

East of the River visual artists featured this year include Amber Robles-Gordon and Camille Mosley-Pasley. The popular go-go band Mambo Sauce will perform on the Fourth of July. Held regularly since 1999, Artomatic transforms an unfinished indoor space into an exciting and diverse arts event with displays by hundreds of artists, the event features free films, educational presentations and children's activities, as well as musical, dance, poetry, theater and other performances over the course of five weeks. Artomatic is an unjuried event, and registration is open to all artists, from professionals to beginners.

"Two of my poems are getting published in an anthology called, 'Liberated Muse Volume I: How I Freed My Soul.' I will be performing at the Artomatic to promote the book," says local actress, Farah Lawal. Lawal is used her Artomatic appearances on June 20 and July 3 as a promotion also for her one-woman show "So Do You Love Me Yet?" which will open on July 10 in the upcoming Capital Fringe Fest in Washington, DC.

To catch the final week of the Artomatic, visit www.Artomatic.org to view the calendar of performances and map of visual artists. To purchase the anthology Liberated Muse Volume I: How I Freed My Soul, visit www.OutskirtsPress.com/LiberatedMuse. Purchase tickets to Farah Lawal's show at www.FarahLawal.com. ★

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