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ANTI*POP 2006

Q&A with X:144 and SPS

By Soorya Arsala
OrlandoCityBeat Staff

November 15 2006

On-stage and off, a new force in hip-hop known as [X:144 and SPS](#) are ready to be reckoned with and recognized. Producing hip-hop that's true to them and pure to the genuine schematic of the genre (an emcee and a DJ), this isn't just a hobby for them, but a mission.

Orlando CityBeat: You go from being familiar faces in town to having your first record (M.E.) available nationwide. How did this happen without the help of an old school, super-sized record label?

SPS: First and foremost, we both have a love and desire to express ourselves through the music, and musical gifts that we so long have crafted. We finally had the opportunity to let it be heard through Nonsense Records. Long story short, Kelly Shockley, founder of Nonsense, saw and heard our talents individually, and wanted us to collaborate. X and I were already friends in the hip-hop community, and both of us were already reaching another level of creativity while working solo. So we met up, mapped out ideas and the rest is what you hear now.

OCB: Your first single "Last Voice" has been receiving a lot of love from college radio, how do you see this sort of attention building into the bigger picture?

SPS: I see this as a re-evaluation, or sort of wake up call and voice of us collectively as a new face in the hip-hop scene, one that needs to be taken serious. That song sparks a revolutionary change over the airwaves. Much [is] needed today amongst a lot of the cliché, commercialized music. We're glad people are requesting it and hearing the urgent message as well as appreciating the quality of the song. Hopefully people will want to explore our minds more and know that we are for real at what we do as a group.

OCB: The title of the tour was "Quit Your Dead End Job"... serendipitously, you both left day jobs to pursue music full-time. What lead to this decision and do you have any regrets?

SPS: For us, quitting our jobs was a step that had to be done in order to feel free of the mental strain of deciding what was right and wrong. I knew our music made us feel good inside. Our jobs had restrictions that took away from what we really should have been pursuing, which is the music. I was uncertain of course, but if we were to do it all the way, I told myself now is the time. We had to believe in ourselves and in what we stand for...there's no looking back. The "Quit Your Dead End Job" tour was a learning experience that showed us that we can do anything in life. You have to go out and do it, with no regrets.

OCB: So after you decided on your new path, what was it like to perform in front of rooms filled with people who have probably never heard your music before?

SPS: Most people at first have to warm up to what we are doing at the shows. X knows how to get a crowds attention right away, and let me tell ya, he's not afraid to let you know to loosen up. People's reactions after

our shows are either initial shock, or, well-received. That makes me feel like we've made a connection with the crowd, and that's a good thing.

X:144: The process of going out to different cities is equivalent to performing in your [own] hometown. Whatever effort you took in creating any notoriety at home, is the same process needed everywhere. In other words ... it's not something we aren't familiar with, we're starting over in every city we go to.

OCB: What is it like to come back home after months on the road, personally and as a team? What should we look forward to in 2007?

SPS: After coming home from being on the road, we've gained more experience together as a team on stage and off. We've realized that this is what we chose to do with our lives, and we take it a lot more serious now than ever. We have also learned that there are still people out there that support good music, and are down to come out and show it to the artists. Personally, I still have my bags still packed with clothes. I miss the road already ...!

X:144: I have yet to un-pack also (laughs). In 2007, expect more tours, and a new album. We have some other secrets up our sleeve, but Orlando will always have first dibs on what moves we make.

OCB: What kind of impression do you want people to be left with of X:144 and SPS?

SPS: I want people to know that we are genuine at what we do. Our message is key to the preservation of hip-hop. We as a people are the last voice when all is said and done.

OCB: Kidding yet curious: do you ever see yourselves producing a ballad?

SPS: I will let you answer that one, Mr. Balladeer 1:44 ...

X:144: (Laughing) I thought 'Almost' and 'If the shoes fits, wear it...'