

MF DOOM

FATHER OF CIVILIZATION, GOD OF THE UNIVERSE

BY ROOSEVELT FRANKLIN (I, SELF, LORD AND MASTER)

Once upon a time, rap music (rhythm and poetry) was used as a tool for enlightenment and education that at the same time helped kids have mad fun. This may be hard to believe since the music and culture in today's times has become so boring underground, and so murderous above surface. Acts like dead prez, Common, Mos Def, Kwei + Hi-Tek were once the norm, not the "alternative" minority they are now. Back in these days a group of young Muslim cats from NYC called KMD represented. Their principal MC, Zev Love X, you may remember from the classic 3rd Bass cut "Gas Face." KMD's debut LP Mr. Hood was the father of styles made popular later on by the WU and Kool Keith, among others. It was the first to have film dialogue as interludes and use multiple aliases and characters to make the album work as a thematic concept and not just a collection of loosies. They had a taste of success with the xylophone sweetened single "Peach Fuzz". Unfortunately before they could release a follow up, Zev's brother, group member Sub Roc, was tragically killed in a car crash. Elektra Records soon after dropped KMD from the label due to their protests over cover art drawn by Zev Love. The piece he intended to use was done in the style of a 1930's black and white cartoon, depicting a dead black man hanging from a noose, similar to dead prez in their video "they schools" which has been banned from MTV and BET.

After a lengthy hiatus, the love is back. He goes by the name now of MF Doom, a new character to express a different purpose. The self-produced album is Operation Doomsday. In the Marvel comic book universe, Dr Doom is a genius and mad scientist. Alone in the laboratory with his experiments and concoctions, he's driven by profound loss to mix science with the supernatural in the hopes of contacting a loved one who'd passed over to the spirit world. When tragedy occurs and projects start to blow up in his face, he's left twisted and bent on revenge with a strange desire to conquer and make this world recognize.

MF- Metal Face, Motherfucker; like graffiti, it's whatever you want it to be. He wears a mask not to necessarily hide his identity, but to get the listener to concentrate on the music + lyrics instead of what whip he's pushing or jewels he's rocking. The jewels are mental. He takes it back. This is a Hip-Hop record. It's built off of poetical lyrical prowess and the lost art of sampling (like Prince Paul used to do for De La Soul).

The album's deep, like it was done in the basement. Riffs are lifted from strange places and well known ones remixed in a way that's fresh and gritty at the same time.

He mostly jacks beats from old rap records like the Jungle Brothers and R+B joints like Biggie did, but then flips some contemporary jazz like Weather Report and what not. Doom makes his sampling work on different levels to communicate a message. The titles of the cuts he's sampled often enhance the lyrics of the piece. For the 1st song, he uses the beats and DJ cuts from BDP's "Poetry", which is appropriate for an album that's designed to be a metaphor in and of itself. On "The Mic", where he's coming from the point of view of the microphone speaking on the different women that have "rocked" him, he uses the beat and Rakim's voice from "Microphone Fiend".

The way Doom warps the samples evokes the soft breath of Body and Soul. His jazzy boom bap is reflective and melancholy, a lyrical meditation on life and lost loves. Using a complex rhyme style and clever word play, the focus is not on big vocab but slickness, how and where words are dropped. Like Roosevelt Franklin on ripple, the production's funkier than Sanford and Son. On one piece he even samples the opening horn licks of the Scooby Doo theme song! Bits and pieces of the 1960's Fantastic Four cartoon are used for his interludes, as well as Japanese Monster movies and clips from the graf flick WILD STYLE.

Without a doubt, this is one of the best unheard rap albums of this past year, a true buried treasure. There hasn't been anything this innovative since Company Flow did Funcrusher Plus. Quasimoto's The Unseen comes close, but at least it got props from mainstream publications like SPIN. Operation Doomsday works in the same "underground" category, but the album is still straight ghetto like a badge of honor. It's being re-released on Metal Face/Fondle'm for vinyl and on Metal Face/Sub Verse CD/World-Wide. If you really 'bout it, cop this classic. I'm trying to tell you, man, they just don't do it like this no more.

