

SLUM VILLAGE



WHO STOLE THE SOUL A.K.A. LOVE PUNANY BAD

words by Roosevelt Franklin (Supramicrophonist) photography by Goodvibe

Slum Village. You've probably heard their story by now. Three cats from Detroit (T3, Baatin, JayDee), they've been doing their thing for more than 12 years with nothing happening 'til JayDee got put on, doing production for this one and that, including Tribe called Quest. Q-tip passes their demo around influential types in the industry (it gets crazy bootlegged in the process). They get a deal with A+M, then Interscope, who fuck up and have 'em in label limbo 'til they finally bounced to Good Vibes, the California indie. Although there was a heavy buzz, when the album was finally released, like D'angelo's 2nd joint, critics gave it mixed reviews claiming, "Don't believe the hype." While JayDee's production got props, rap journalists complained of insane lyrics and mediocre content. It could be a lotta heads are missing the point.

SV represent something new to the game, a return to the concept of soul music for this generation. Along with heads like Erykah, Lauryn, Common, Bilal, the Roots fam, Outkast klan, Angie Stone, Pete Rock and Black Star, they're at the head of a progressive movement trying to take black music to that next

level. They want to create a space and fill a void in this thing of ours that takes us deeper. Most of what you hear nowadays that's rap related, is on some old beat you in the head and make you wanna fight shit. Instead of pushing people away, this right here is designed to bring people closer; it draws you in. Introspective as opposed to explosive or nervous, this is not the soundtrack for a driveby. It's too sexy. The musical tone sets a mood reminiscent of a house party with the lights down low and couples grinding in the corner. SV's style of MCing only complements their production. These cats rap real laid back. They pimpin' like Morris Day in Purple Rain, shootin' the gift, like they kicking it to a coupla freaks at the club trying to get some leg.

Unlike their contemporaries, they don't take themselves too seriously. It's about having fun and gettin' it on, all to the tune of bubbling basslines and bluesy type jazz keyboard chords, for sure. Now as much as I love what's going on in the "underground", not a single one of these acts can make a nigga dance. This is the be-bop era of hip hop. The extra-curricular linguistics and turntablism are the

equivalent of wildstyle in graffiti. This mega-intellectualism can often take away from the physical joys of the music. With SV, the emphasis is clearly on the groove. An important aspect of what they do is the fact it makes you want to move, shake your ass, not just stand there and nod your head. Hate on Puffy and the Dirty South all you want, but them brothas do they job. Whenever their jams are played, honeys pack the dancefloor, and where the women go, the men are sure to follow. This is keeping the tradition alive. There used to be a new dance in hip hop every week that you had to know in order to be down. That's dead nowadays, the reason being the majority of today's rap audience can't dance. MC's don't even kick steps like they used to or have dancers with them on stage. Maybe it's because of unresolved Hammer residue, I don't know; the bottom line is, the thrill is gone. Slum Village focuses your attention on what the party was about in the first place. This may be why they have such a large female audience. Remember, what happens while you dance is just practice for the bedroom. Roosevelt Franklin, still slummin' ya'll...