



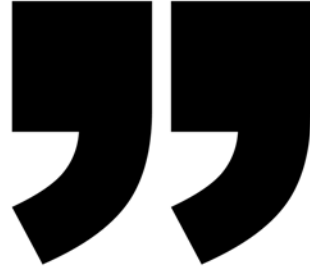
## Organized

This interview was not chosen (perhaps clearly to the reader) based on the quality of the writing. It is actually a piece that begs editorial apology. However, as tends to be the case with shards of journalism, there is relevance contained in what follows that is a credit to timeliness rather than craftiness of authorship. Organized Konfusion however exemplifies one of rap's aesthetic extremes. Their albums are great specimens of how ornate and complex hip-hop can be. Their works are as brazenly artistic, philosophical,

and self aware as any other bit of human poetry. They are more in league with lyrical writers like Joyce or Langston Hughes than with Nelly or Sean Combs. This comparison also gives rise to AHTT's second motivation for choosing to compile this interview. Recently it was announced that Pharohe Monch of Organized Konfusion will be writing Diddy's next album.

The obvious question (also the question to keep in mind while reading this interview) is: what the fuck

# Konfusion



has happened to rap music and the world that has made a pairing like Diddy and Monch possible? Not to mention speculations we might have about what the record will actually sound like or sell. The conclusion to be drawn may not be so simple as it seems. One could marginalize it all: perhaps Pharohé Monch has just fallen off; maybe the dollar can buy anyone among the purest of the artistic elite. Perhaps it's just a function of time, maybe he 'phased out' of doing it for the sake of doing it. These two suggestions seem too

easy. This turn of events marks a distinctive change in how rap musicians view their products, as well as changes in how rap listeners scrutinize their idols. In this writer's opinion, it is a better world when orthodoxies (such as so-called underground hip-hop) are forced to reckon with crises of change this big. And if a visionary like Pharohé Monch winds up owning property as a result, than the world grows better, not worse.-AHTT



“When you make it a point to bring light into manifestation, you are met with an opposite force of darkness,” hypothesizes Pharaoh Monch, one half of the severely under appreciated hip-hop group Organized Konfusion. “Let’s say I attest that there is a truth and the truth is...’If you put your hand to the fire you will get burned.’

If someone stands to gain financially or whatever from people getting burned, they will make it a point to lie and be like...’That’s not necessarily true because if you wear this glove, you won’t get burned,’” Monch explains. Light versus dark, truth versus lies, positive versus negative- all opposite, but not always equal, forces working in everyday life. When your life is hip-hop, which force is pushing harder? Where is your balance? Pharaoh Monch and his lyrical comrade, Prince Poetry, are a couple of hardheaded mutha-fuckas. Neither of them can boast of having a single “murder/death/kill” notch on their glocks, the death toll remains at zero for now. Shit, last I heard, they

aren’t even prone to flashin’ steel much less bustin’ it. They also have very few “bitches” making their way through the revolving door of a posh hotel and up to their penthouse. Not enough hoes are getting served...you gotta wonder why. Maybe it’s because they have yet to pop the cork on a bottle of Cristal. Then, if they aren’t burning an acres worth of herb a day - forget about it. What are they...blind? Did someone forget to hip them to the formula for becoming a (in)famous hip-hop “artist?” Bitches + Blunts + Bustin’ Steel = Beaucoup Bucks. Are they trying NOT to make some ends? Perhaps shit doesn’t go down like that for them. You gotta wonder. Since their eponymous debut in

1991, Organized Konfusion has been about elevating heads to higher echelons of emcee technique. As hip-hop was on the verge of being swept away on billows of blunt smoke, heralding the dawn of “The Chronic” era, Organized were on some straight cerebral manipulation of a different fashion. They extended the mind-fuck on 1994’s virtually ignored Stress - the extinction agenda (Hollywood BASIC). Imagine this...academically enhanced, urban intelligence stilos executed over butter smooth production, leaving the average listener cramming to understand and the active listener - awestruck. On both previous albums, folks were hit with some old next shit.

**E**merging from a three year hiatus, the group has just dropped their cinematic opus, The Equinox (Priority). Using several skits interspersed throughout the fourteen musical tracks, The Equinox tells the story of Life and Malice, two friends careening towards adulthood, faced with every external and internal obstacle imaginable. Life and Malice are two sides of the same coin, good and bad, pleasure and pain, hope and despair, understanding and confusion. In short, and as the title of the album implies, they represent balance. The songs on the album also reflect that balance. From the battle rhymes of “Questions” and “Confrontations,”

heading towards the party mode of “Move” and “Sugah Shorty,” and settling in the troubled introspection of “Invetro” and “Hate,” each song presents different facets of Life and Malice’s coexistence, illuminating every high and low that can be associated with trying to survive in this world. The whole story is narrated by a much older Life who comments on his past actions with the kind of wisdom that can only be attributed to experience. The Equinox is yet another ambitious effort by a group that is known for going against the grain. In this age of “guns, money greed, and sex” rhymes, Organized Konfusion’s decision to stay true to form reads like a death sentence.

“I like a lot of rappers today but 9 out of 10 of them are based off of witty metaphors,” muses the forthcoming Prince Poetry. “I’m this and you’re that. I’m like a Benz and you’re like a Volkswa- gen buggy.’ Everything is sound- ing stagnant.” Yeah, things are sounding rather (e)motionless right now. And whether it’s nihilistic tales of gangsterism or play by play accounts of Cristal soaked parties, the vantage point is rarely one actually familiar to the emcee much less his/her audience. These days, most emcees put no heart in their rhymes. Consequently, hip-hop’s heart has slowed, approaching a life threatening state of inertia. “People, to me, make ‘dream’ albums,” continues Prince Po,

his gruff baritone voice exhibit- ing equal amounts of disgust and worry for the present state of hip-hop. “You can’t hustle every- day. You can’t hang out and party everyday. These things just don’t happen everyday. It seems like a lot of people be sellin’ them- selves out for not diggin’ inside themselves and pulling out more intellect. It just proves to me that you’re shallow.” On the contrary, Monch and Po’s songs are often on some “Captain Nemo” type format - 20,000 leagues and un- der most people’s understanding of how life should be portrayed on wax. We’re talking head crushing depths here. “Great balls o’ fire/ I’m traveling at higher speeds to proceed to penetrate flesh/ Hitting the

spleen after splitting the chest of a Queens teenager/ Pager shredded to pieces from the glock 9 inch hol- low tips it releases/ The police is in the back of the ambulance/ Blood loss as I shook across your chest/ I rest, rupture/ I’m the slupture, slash- er/ I’ll bust your liver faster/ blood pours - now it’s up to the mas- ter...”  
-Prince Poetry, “Stray Bullet”

“The whole beauty of being a writer is to allow yourself 100% ability to touch upon infinite sub- ject matter. To say to yourself, ‘If it could be said...if a bullet or an unborn fetus could speak, what

would it say,” explains the more reserved Pharaoh Monch, highlighting a classic rhyming m.o. for Organized Konfusion - the group’s tendency to give voice to the voiceless, to speculate on the thoughts and feelings of persons or things that don’t usually get to express themselves.

On The Equinox the group has recorded the amazing “Invetro,” where Monch and Po assume the perspective of unborn twins, broadcasting live from their crack mother’s womb. Over a Roy Ayers inspired track, Monch relays the vision of the twin who sees no chance for himself in an apocalyptic world and would prefer to be aborted, while Po counters with the optimism of the twin who would like to give

life a shot, despite the adversity that he faces in the womb and the trials that lie ahead. It’s all another part of the “balancing act” that is The Equinox. Quite frankly, the song is a thing of beauty, equally imparting utter hopelessness as well as the unfettered determination that it takes to get through this thing called life - even more profound when coming “from the mouths of babes.” Thought provoking as it is, it’s no wonder that the song’s concept is one that has been marinating in the minds of Monch and Po for about two years.

“Most of the time I second guess my statements. I try to be cautious,” says Monch, the silent intervals between his words conveying his analytical nature.

“Although it’s a conceptual song, I start to question....’Do I really want to say this? Am I saying that or is the character? How are people gonna take it?’ That matters to me.” It’s THAT kind of respect, for the audience and for the art, which distinguishes Organized Konfusion from run-of-the-mill emcees who will rap about anything that makes them money - fact or fiction. Sometimes it’s not all about the Benjamins.

“We’re making hybrids/ Created potent enough to open eyelids and leave pupils dilated.../ Now it’s easier/ Plus economically feasible for me to leave rap if it’s queasy and inebriated/ We made it/We came/

Dedicated - we rated supreme/ Either with or without the cream. -Pharaoh Monch, "Questions"

With unadulterated talent and innovation acknowledged, the question remains, "Why are Organized Konfusion still slept on?" Outside of the love from their small but loyal fan base, Po and Monch are treated like they're pushing a demo. Been there - done that. Record labels still don't know what the fuck to do with a group whose fans range, as Po puts it, from "b-boys with mad jewels and diamonds" to "white kids with backpacks who ride skateboards and listen to rock music."

Prince Poetry tries to break down the record label hierarchy and

how the "hard sell" gets lost in the shuffle: "There's a big gap between the president and the vice president and their assistants and promoters. The president and vice president generally don't give a fuck until sales come in. But they don't know that the person they hired to do your in-store didn't have your shit set up when you got there. All they know is that your record is not selling and they're ready to kick you off the label or shelf you. They want music that will sell itself. Sex and violence sells itself. Basically, they're on some genocide shit."

So maybe record execs are addicted to fat pockets and any money devoted to promoting "experimental" stuff could pos-

sibly mean they won't get a thin dime in return. Pharaoh Monch doesn't see it that way. "If I was president and there was a song that was selling itself, I would give it a banister to lean on. But at the same time, to flip the company, I would redirect some funds and try to make a million dollars out of the stuff that needed the support. If you work something like that into the program, you're setting up a whole fuckin' lifetime of sales for those types of groups."

**A**s the story goes, Organized Konfusion's record sales have not been the object of envy. Most recently, their contract with Hollywood BASIC was bought by the more diesel Priority Records

The Equinox is their first Priority release. A sign of good things to come? More exposure maybe? That remains to be seen.

“I don’t know what Priority’s game plan was but it seemed to be ‘let’s pick them up from a label that has bad distribution and make their distribution better.’ We’re still screwed ‘cause I walk into stores to this day and my shit is not there,” explains Prince. Not once though does either emcee delude himself about their “challenging” marketability. “By putting out albums that are lyrically, emotionally, and musically versatile, I understand from jump that it would be harder to market than someone just saying ‘I’m all about fuckin’ the bitches and ice diamond rings!’”

“How did hip-hop get caught up in this ill rap game?” “In hip-hop, who they following - the niggas with skills or the niggas who be hollerin’?” These are only two of the questions posed by Organized Konfusion on The Equinox, but they are easily questions that every so-called emcee and every so called hip-hop head should be asking themselves. There are a few groups like Organized who are illuminating truth, trying to protect their peeps from getting burned by the “fire” that Monch talks about. Still, the powers that be would have fools believe that true fulfillment comes in the quest for the almighty dollar. So we put on the gloves they give us, as well as the matching jacket, skully, boots, and goggles,

and we leap into the flames. We are so far removed from the days when hip-hop was about taking what little resources you had to lace folks with the illest rhyme, the dopest beat, the unbridled truth about life and how you live it. We now settle for silly rhymes, jacked beats, and fabricated lies...and all this time, Prince Poetry and Pharaoh Monch have been diligently putting in work to insure that hip-hop remains original, artistic, and above all, honest. As Plug 1 would say, they’ve been “keepin’ it right.” So while we race at breakneck speeds to fork over dough for the next ghetto fable, one more question begs to be answered. Is Organized Konfusion hardheaded or are we?

Interview by Cas McGee