

RMS

Predators and Prey
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BROTH READE

ACTION PATROL AND
BROTH READE
LIVE DECEMBER 2nd
2007 @ EMPIRE
AND AFTER THE SHOW,
A LITTLE DRUNK AT
ALADIN'S WITH...
BROTH READE

By Isaac Ramsey
Images by Chris Lacroix

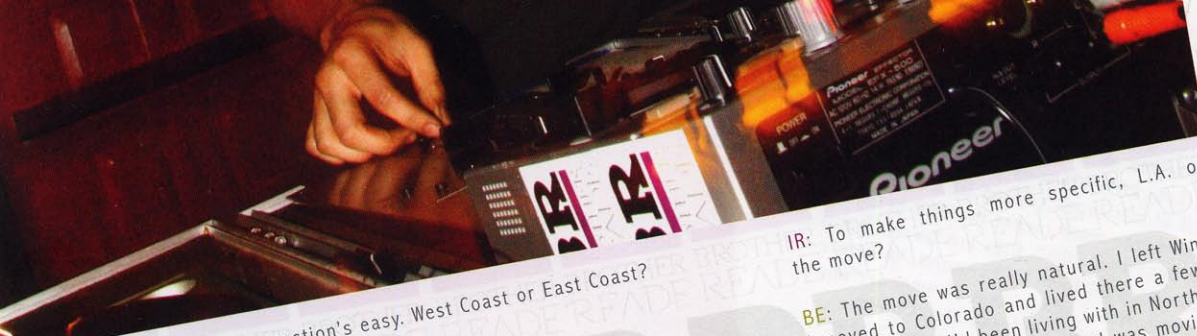
Remember what hip-hop sounded like in 1994? Biggie was Ready to Die, Nas was *Illmatic* and Bone Thugs-N-Harmony was *Creepin on ah Come Up*. Countless other great records came out that year, making more or less of an impact on the growing culture. Nowadays, rappers exist everywhere. And with easy access to cheap recording software, a Myspace page and the Google picture search function, it seems that there are more wack rappers with more wack presence than ever before. This staggering amount makes it a bit difficult to find those rare indie gems scattered throughout the genre's immense and diverse underground. At other times, it is obvious. In 2007, Brother Reade is *Rap Music*.

As the group's first full-length release on California based label Record Collection, the name emits a trumpeting call for attention to any fan of the genre. Thankfully, the music on *Rap Music* doesn't disappoint. MC Jimmy "Jael" Jamz delivers often very real lyrics on such a skilled level that the average listener easily nods their head in agreement, the mind caught constantly on the brink of some grand explosive illumination. The effect of references to Kurt Cobain, Bob Dylan or the Refused could be totally lost on some, while to others it shapes their entire experience with this record. Despite Jael's loud odes to genres outside of rap, his smooth and calm attack on the mic plays gracefully with unique, intelligent production you can still shake a booty to, brought in by beat-maker and DJ Bobby Evans. Each beat hits just right with steady, nostalgic intensity, especially when bumped live right before Action Patrol.

See, these are the same two guys who grew up playing in punk bands in tobacco capital Winston-Salem, NC, only to eventually migrate to Los Angeles and make a name for themselves as a rap duo. For the last three years, they've been blowing up in L.A. with infamous parties, some really nice looking music videos, a handful of mix tapes coming from the creative hands of Bobby Evans and several EPs, the most recent in 2005 being *The Illustrated Guide to: 9 to 5*. Now, in December 2007, they are traveling with the new CD *Rap Music*, and touring has brought them to Richmond, VA before they fly to London to rock a few shows. Now I admit, as a Richmonder who never owned an Action Patrol record, I felt a little confused about going to the second of their two reunion shows just to see one of my favorite rap groups; but in the intimate sweatbox that Empire can be from time to time, I understood. This pair knows how to get loud and have fun while talking about some real shit. They fit well on a bill with a good punk band.

After the show ended, I had the chance to share a table with Brother Reade at Aladdin's and discuss rap music over some kebabs and curly fries.





Isaac Ramsey: First question's easy. West Coast or East Coast?

Bobby Evans: South.

Jimmy Jamz: Yeah, South. Some people say that the South is part of the East Coast and that's backfiring on them at this point. It makes me really happy because southern rap is really awesome.

BE: But then growing up in North Carolina, you're split between New York and what's going on down South. I was more aware of things going on in New York cause I went there more often, than like, Atlanta. West Coast wasn't even on the map for me until Chronic came out.

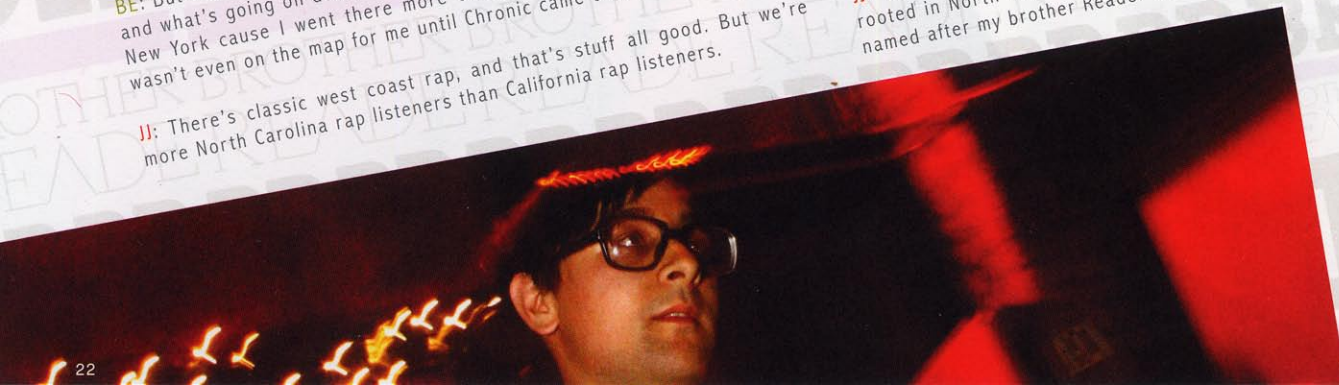
JJ: There's classic west coast rap, and that's stuff all good. But we're more North Carolina rap listeners than California rap listeners.

IR: To make things more specific, L.A. or Winston-Salem? Why the move?

BE: The move was really natural. I left Winston when I was 18 and I moved to Colorado and lived there a few years but didn't like it. Then the dude I'd been living with in North Carolina, he dropped out of school in San Francisco and was moving to L.A., so it was easy for me to go live with him. Plus, I wanted to do something new, went there and kind of hung out for a long time. I kind of convinced Jimmy to stay there.

IR: Was that difficult?

JJ: It wasn't that difficult. I love it there. It's great, but I'm real rooted in North Carolina. I'm real close with my family. Our group's named after my brother Reade. For me it's an impossible choice. So



many of the people we came up with live in L.A. now, and it creates such an environment that wherever or whatever Winston-Salem is, in Los Angeles, I couldn't really leave that either. I feel like over the last couple of years I've had a dual sense of home, really, but (pointing to his chest) this says "First in Flight" you know? I don't have any California tattoos.

IR: So how did a rap group from L.A. end up on the Action Patrol reunion show at Empire?

JJ: Honestly, we got an email out of nowhere from Chris, from Action Patrol; and I can't say how important of a band they were to us, to our particular crew. For some reason their music just really hit at the right place, and it was exactly what we wanted out of music when we got a hold of it. And it's even more awesome because they're not the biggest band in the world, but when you geek out about their record with someone, it means something. So to us, they're this seminal figure. Ten years later we get an email from these guys, and it's not like we know them. It was out of the blue. I called Bobby to tell him and I was in hysterics. I'm not even going to hide it, like I was cool about it. It might as well have been like Dr. Dre was like, "Hey man, I want you guys to play at my last show ever... in Compton."

IR: Tell us a little bit about *Rap Music*, why you wrote it, and why it's not called Hip-Hop Music.

JJ: Hip-hop as a term has this web of associations. I feel it's a word people use as a safe place they can go, to try and build this enclave of insularity. We've done a couple tours and some large parking lot festivals that I won't name, with corporate underwriters that are totally lame. Anyway, we found out a lot of rappers that are saying they're all hip-hop are making such weird, irrelevant, dated shit that it's really disconcerting. And it's a safe word. These people don't feel confident with their access to rap music. They're like, "This is that real hip-hop. This isn't like that shit you hear on the radio." And that's bogus. It's not more authentic. It's bullshit. It's not more real. It's corny. It's stupid. There's a lot of good music that is hip-hop music. Today there're a lot of real artists that write sincere music that is not commercially viable, and they know that. They know they could write more commercially viable records and I fully respect that. I'm among those people in some respects. But people use hip-hop as a safe word, so when their dumbass record comes out and nobody's feeling that shit, they can be like, "Oh yeah, that's cause it's so authentic that people just don't get it." We love a lot of music that could be called hip-hop music, but I think at this point, it's a tired cliché in terms of not wanting to make something new or something really relevant.

BE: We were trying to figure out the easiest way to get that across from the very beginning. So you'd see the record, it's the first record we ever put our faces on. So you pick up the record and you already think something. Then with the title *Rap Music*, just the information you get with that, well it's first off the type of music, and then beyond there, it's a statement, instead of hiding behind, you know, the wall of the elements or the real shit. Instead of just having that direct tie-in people are so searching for, it says rap music, which seems in a lot of ways we should be so far away from.

JJ: But we shouldn't. I don't have a reason to make a play for authenticity. I don't

consider my authenticity as an artist in question. I never have. It's a device, it's not necessary. If you're looking for really safe music with rap music, hip-hop music or whatever, that feels guarded or uncomfortable, I'm not your guy. To me, that's the statement. Part of the album in general is the process of arriving at that conclusion.

BE: Then there's the whole tie-in to the Refused quote at the beginning of the record as well.

JJ: Yeah, they put out *The Shape of Punk to Come*, which is pretty much a very produced hardcore record that was extremely dynamic and had trance parts in it. Then they called it a punk record in the title and that was a serious inspiration to us. You know, they got into the...the game. The punk game (laughs and starts talking like a stereotypical rapper). So they came out, they had a couple of 7 inches on Crimethink or whatever (ends voice of stereotypical rapper), but they made less and less stereotypical, or classifiable, music as they matured.

I'm not acting like that happened to us or something, but it's like, we are making punk and we can call it whatever we want to 'cause we know where it came from. Same thing. It means a lot to play a show like this because it means the guys who grew up listening to the punk shit hear our music and they identify with it in a certain way. They see we're all on the same page. Maybe they can see the common origin. For us, that's kind of the idea. Refused was doing that. They may not sound like punk to you but their favorite band might be Crass, and that's the point. Especially with genres like

hardcore and hip-hop where people get stuck, where they don't like anything except stuff that sounds exactly like what they already listen to. So if you're an artist, you definitely want to trouble people's assumptions like that, ya know? I do.

IR: At one point on *Rap Music*, you say, "The rap game is just that dog, get another income or you won't get that far." How true is that?

JJ: You look at people in music. The most satisfied people are the ones who aren't creating perceptions that are such high profile or rock star or whatever. You don't want to make a record from a position of hunger. You want to make your records how you want to make them. You don't want to be a musician with that being the only way you could ever eat. There's that variable of being able to pay your bills somehow, then you can make better music in certain ways. You see, most of the people in the punk bands we like, they deliver pizzas. They're weren't like, "I'm gonna make money off my band." They were like, "I want a band because it's going to make my life way more amazing."

I know a lot of rappers who have this grand notion they are going to get discovered and go triple platinum or something. I don't think that dream needs any more encouragement.

IR: So what kind of day jobs do you have?

JJ: I work for this small company that does a whole lot of things. It's kind of a record label. We do a lot of client work like music supervision. But that's really, really recent.

BE: There's a lot of things that exist out there in L.A. where you help your friends out and make money somehow. Like PA assistance or whatever. Right now, I've been doing a bunch of mix tapes and remixes. I've done music for a couple scores to films, too.

JJ: I just did this voice over for this Evander Holyfield documentary. So infrequently in that voiceover world you want a southern accent, but it happened.

IR: So this show is your 2nd show in Richmond, why haven't you been back since?

JJ: You know, I have an answer for that...Paige moved. She was the reason we were all at that show at the Nanci Raygun but strangely not the reason we played this show. I was actually really weirded out when it wasn't Paige. It was our Myspace page.

IR: Besides the three shows in London you have coming up on tour, what's next for Brother Reade?

JJ: We really want to do a lot of smaller releases...some special vinyl stuff. Coming up in that vein, things limited to a certain amount or certain tour.

BE: Put together a few EPs, then we're going to do another full-length, and just tour a bunch. There're all these things that we really wanna do. We need to make a follow up.

JJ: I'd like us to work on a film together. I supervise it and have Bobby score it.

There's a ton of bands in Los Angeles that we're trying to collaborate with. I'm suggestively joking with Chris about doing a 7" with Action Patrol that's not going to happen.

BE: At least we could just do a split.

JJ: We might just take one side of an Action Patrol 7" and then bootleg it (laughs), that kind of collaborative stuff. Releases that are a lot like the show tonight. I refuse stopping. We just have to make this a part of our lives without making it feel like a serious drug dependency or a gambling problem, you know?

IR: Nothing wrong with a gambling problem if it's dice.

JJ: I'm real good at dice, that's my thing.

IR: Cee-lo or 3's?

JJ: Cee-lo.

