

Mos Def

Black on Both Sides

By Colleen Kenny

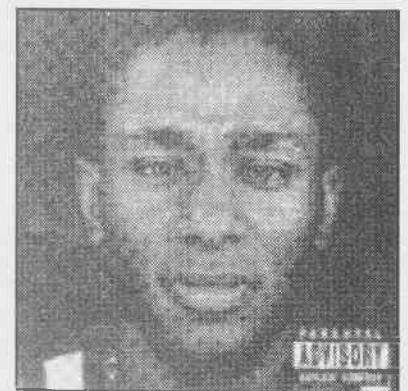
At any hour of the day, in virtually any region of America, you can steer through a sea of mil-quetost radio pop and land upon a catchy drum-roll baseline laced with a juicy loop from Billy Preston, Bela Fleck or any of many from a host of seventies funk-soul classics. But beware your company before you deign to call it "hip-hop." As any purist will tell you, the stuff you're finding on the dial...the Sean "Puffy" Combs...the Master P...Mase...Juvenile — the chart-toppers - is largely short on cogitation, tall on glimmer and gloss and is processed for the quick consumption of the uncritical masses.

To hear the real hip hop, the purist says, you must open your ears and your mind to the rap underground. It's not easy to find. It is not out bouncing on a Saturday night at the clubs, nor is it what makes people nod their heads while driving in the car. To find it, you have to seek it out. To hear it, you have to LISTEN, not

just hear it. It is three hundred years in the making, and its heart cannot be bound between the grooves of a twelve-inch. It moves. And, if you do manage to hear it, don't expect too much. After all, it's just music. Says Brooklyn-hailing genre Goliath Mos Def:

**Hip hop will simply amaze you
Craze you, pay you
Do whatever you say do
But Black, it can't save you**

Last month, Rawkus Records released Mos Def's first full-blown solo effort, "Black on Both Sides." Before that, Mos's stuff was either



aligned with the lyrical musings of Talib Kweli on the March 1999 release "Black Star," or it was found only on singles in subterranean vinyl shops by the aforementioned purists. Rawkus is known for its dedication to pro-

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