

The Soul of the Streets

Michael Fournier

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"Like love and spirit, trying to neatly define the nature of soul is hard."

That quote is from the opening liner notes of Guru's new project, *Jazzmatazz Streetsoul*.

This is the third installment to Guru's *Jazzmatazz* series, the first of which was released in 1993. The aim of the first volume was to show hip-hop heads the common fibers that constitute hip-hop and jazz music through a fusion of the two genres. That experiment continued in 1995's *Jazzmatazz II: The New Reality*.

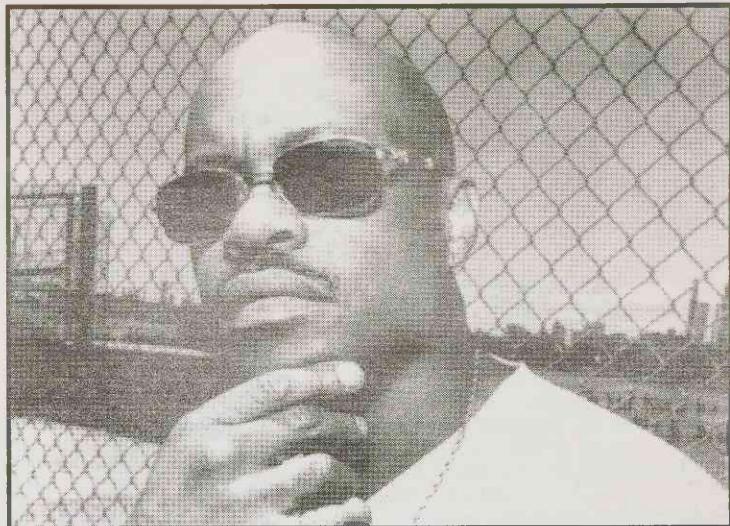
But now, five years after the last *Jazzmatazz* project, it seems that Guru has altered his aim a little. *Streetsoul* is fundamentally a hip-hop album, but in flavor, direction and quality, *Jazzmatazz Streetsoul* is a far cry from the average hip-hop album you'll find

in your local record store.

As Guru puts it, "It's a laid back record... the mood on this CD is mature, playeristic, laid back and sophisticated." That is *Streetsoul* in a nutshell.

The album is an expansive collaborative effort that includes everybody from Guru's Gangstarr partner, DJ Premier, to the legendary Isaac Hayes and pianist Herbie Hancock. As explained in the liners, "Part of the cohesive vibe and vision comes because all of the participants on *Streetsoul* are longtime friends, musical allies and sharers of a common creative dream."

The lead single, *Keep Your Worries*, features the smoky vocals of Angie Stone and the production skills of DJ Scratch. The song is a smoothed out head-nodder, with Ms. Stone's harmonies adding the perfect compliment to Guru's monotone vocals. The distinctly militant B-side, *Lift Your Fist*, features



-Photo courtesy of Virgin Records

Black Thought of The Roots on the mic dropping gems like, "From the time their eyes open 'til the clock strikes death/Brothers is stressed/Walk around holdin' their chest."

Although rap is at the heart of this album, Guru created the majority of the songs with some of the best of today's most talented soul artists. The baby boy of the new soul movement, Bilal, throws down with Guru on the Jay Dee produced *Certified*, in which Guru takes a few moments to claim his respect as an artist in the game. Kelis demands Guru's *Supa Love* on the infectious Neptunes-produced track. Even the French female duo Les Nubians comes through on *Who's There?*, Guru's open-ended question to society about the lack of compassion in the world.

Other highlights include *Plenty*, featuring Erykah Badu, Hustlin' Daze with

Donnell Jones and Guidance, Guru's dedication to his new son, which features Amel Larrieux, formerly of Groove Theory.

Guru and his massive group of allies have, on this album, taken hip-hop to another level. By enhancing his street-sensible music with R&B, soul, jazz and reggae, Guru has once again pushed the envelope in hip-hop.

"I felt a void in hip-hop," he explains. "I felt a void in music in general and I was like, let me fill this gap up right here. I longed to do another *Jazzmatazz* record and frankly, I think the first two were ahead of their time and that now, I felt like it was a perfect time for me to add on."

Although trying to neatly define the nature of soul is hard, its essence is revealed in Guru's *Jazzmatazz, Streetsoul*. See if you can discover it.

High Spirits, Low Attendance at Homecoming Concert

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As part of Homecoming 2000 at Elizabeth City State University, the music groups Jagged Edge and Rare Essence were invited by the Student Government Association to perform at the Fine Arts Center. The concert, which only cost \$10.00, took place on Friday night, November 3.

Less than 100 people attended.

The night began with several opening acts, including a 20-plus minute beat-boxing session by Lamaj and Warren McCain. The Greensboro natives performed their renditions of Common's "The Light" and Musiq's "Just Friends."

Another opening act was a rap group called Trained Assassins. I don't know who trained them, but they should have reviewed what they were taught. When they came out they were hyped to the fullest with an energy that only lasted through their first song. Their music sounded alright; however, their stage presence, which admittedly is one of the hardest things for amateurs to master, needed some work, especially when you consider the fact they were coming on right before a national act.

But before Jagged Edge even came on stage and sang one note, they posed the question, "Where's everybody at?" That was the question running through most people's minds.

According to Mr. ECSU and SGA member, James Polk II, Destiny 2000 [SGA] worked diligently to produce a week's worth of quality events, but encountered several problems. "There were many administrative and logistical obstacles; communication channels were not as open as we would have

preferred."

The lack of a suitable venue and the fact that SGA was not made aware of that problem in a timely manner were also hindrances to the concert's success according to the SGA.

No matter what the reasons behind the low attendance, those who did not attend missed a hot show. The small but enthusiastic crowd, comprised mainly of ladies, cheered Jagged Edge on through a solid 30-minute routine. There were some minor technical problems, but JE showed true professionalism and performed as if the show was for a coliseum-sized crowd. The dance routines were tight and their vocals were on point; the talent that JE displayed that night made it easy to see that they could be on the verge of stardom.

Rare Essence followed with an even more electrifying show. This long-time favorite performed many of their most popular hits including "The Freaks Come Out at Night" and "Overnight Scenario." Even though the crowd had shrunk even more, RE put out all the energy you'd expect to see at a big-time DC Go-Go. And even though Go-Go music is usually not my style, they had my head nodding for the entire performance. They were definitely worth checking out.

Hopefully the low attendance at this year's Homecoming Concert won't have any negative repercussions for ECSU hosting any future events of this magnitude. But if quality events continue to be brought to the campus and participation continues at this level, don't be surprised if we all end up crying about the fact that nothing really ever happens on this campus.

Radio Personality Frankie Crocker Dies

Veteran radio broadcaster and program director Frankie Crocker died on October 21 from pancreatic cancer. His age was uncertain.

Mr. Crocker was hospitalized for four weeks in the Miami hospital where he died. The Associated Press reported that he hid his illness from his family and friends.

Mr. Crocker, the Chief Rocker as he called himself, enjoyed a long and prosperous career. He played a major role in pushing New York City's WBLS-FM to the number one spot among 18 to 34 year olds twice in the last three decades.

The Buffalo native is also credited with coining the phrase, "urban contemporary" in the 1970's, a label that is still prevalent today.

In the mid-1970's, Mr. Crocker was

indicted in Newark on charges stemming from a payola scandal. He was charged with making false statements before a federal grand jury when he denied that he received money from record companies to promote and play their records. He was convicted, but the conviction was later overturned.

Most recently, Mr. Crocker worked on a gospel radio show in California and on a Saturday night countdown show on New York's KISS-FM. Throughout his broadcast career, Mr. Crocker was also employed by stations in Los Angeles, St. Louis and Chicago.

Mr. Crocker's career also included emceeing at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, becoming a V.J. on VH-1 and hosting the TV show, "Solid Gold."

He is survived by his 82-year-old mother, Frances Crocker.