

MONSTERS IN THE CLOSET/Swollen Members

Battle Axe Records

Mad Child and Prevail along with Moka Only, Nelly Furtado, DJs Babu and Revolution, a host of producers and Sarah McLachlan—OK, just a sample of her cut “Ice Cream”—assemble to put together a transitional album that teeters on the edge of mass appeal. They serve up 20 cuts for you to pick from. All are great for backpackers—some are good enough to hit a mix show or mixtape—especially the McLachlan sampled “Long Way Down.” battleaxerecords.com



NIGHT HAWKS/Cage and Camu Tao

Eastern Conference Records

This is an “ode to the NYPD” album. If the streets don’t have a good-cop story, they do now. Backed by label-mate producer Mighty Mi, Cage and Camu introduce you to shady cops, drugs, stolen cars and car chases...dope rhymes and excellent production. “COP” yourself a copy today. EasternConferenceRecords.com

EASTERN CONFERENCE ALL STARS III/Various Artists

Eastern Conference Records

Tame One, Copywrite, Cage, Smut Peddlers, High & Mighty, Kool G Rap, Weathermen and Eminem. Indie all-stars is a fair description. Whoever did the production on “5 Left in the Clip” is doing it right. The other 15 tracks hold their own, especially the original “Last Hit” that features the “8 Mile” super-duper-star Eminem rocking his 1999 Slim Shady style of flow. EasternConferenceRecords.com

MOTIVATE MOVEMENT: ASIATIC/Various Artists

Motivate Movement

Oakland (Vinroc, Oakland Faders). Los Angeles (Immortal Fader Fyters, Black Eyed Peas Family, Styles of Beyond). San Francisco (Hidden Masters, Psychokinetics). New Jersey (Organic Thoughts). Bronx (La Bruja). Vallejo (Groundbasics). Chicago (Pacifics). Portland (Chazz Rokk). Union City (Evil Lurks). All cities represented and they represented well. What’s so good about this compilation? The fact that those that put it

down for this disc are all of Asian or Pacific Islander decent has been done. But it’s the sound, culture and preservation of hip hop coming from these artists that ring bells for me. Motivatemovement.com

ECLECTICURBANFLOW/Noly

Kamikaze Records

This one should trip you out. With a voice similar in style to a whispery Jon B—and about as distinct an introduction—comes Noly. He’s opened for Ginuwine & Sole and performed for Tyrese. Forget that he’s opened for Ginuwine & Sole and performed for Tyrese. Forget that he’s Filipino—the guy is dope and can blow with the best of them. He’s not your typical Filipino talent-night crooner. Something about his style and music leaps past ethnicity and he’s got 12 tracks to prove that he’s got soul.

Kamikazerecords.com; Nolyonline.com

REQUIRED INTERVIEW
MUSIQ SOULCHILD

Musiq Soulchild IS a soulchild. Philly-raised Musiq was exposed to a lot of soul that, ultimately, molded him into the multi-platinum neo-soul artist he is today. But his success barely fazes him. He doesn’t rock ice and white-on-white AIs. Instead he rocks turquoise



and '70s tees. He’s a nice guy with a kind smile, which he uses to command a top-notch seven-man stage show—he incorporates a DJ, a drummer, a bassist, a keyboardist, a guitarist and two back-up singers.

I was at a recent show in North Carolina and Musiq’s band was on point—pumping out flawless riffs from many of his radio hits—hits that get over 30 spins a day. When Musiq sang “Girl Next Door” with back-up singer Trina Ferebee the crowd went nuts. The single girls in the audience were so into the show that they started hating.

As Musiq performed his heart-wrenching “Half Crazy” the air was so still, it was like nobody was breathing. The highlight was about 20-min. jam session that could only be considered nothing less than super fly, as it morphed itself into “Caught Up.” And, of course, Musiq’s latest ultimate love song, “Best Friend,” had the crowd swaying like a gently rolling sea. By the end of the set, his shirt had changed color and was 3 lb heavier in water weight. Use your imagination.

After the show I got a chance to talk to the Def Soul artist. I met up with him at his dressing room. Musiq was very polite and had an air of calm and peace about him. There were tons of fans waiting backstage to get autographs, so I cut my interview short—plus Musiq’s bodyguard, Doom is a little bit bigger than me.

What car do you drive? What would you like? I got a Jeep Cherokee, but I have eclectic tastes—I like the VW bus and stuff like that, ya know. What do I like? I like the 2003 Range Rover, all black.

Why are you so badass? And what do eat to make you that way? That’s how my momma made me. I just try to be the best at what I do—I’m not claiming I am the best, but I just try to do my best. I try and push myself. Sometimes I can be really hard on myself. At the same time I’m also my best friend. I try to be as original as I can. Although, I might be inspired by someone or something—and I’ll use that inspiration—I still try to be as original as possible. I know I have an audience to entertain and I’m very conscious of what they want. But at the same time I am conscious of what I want. It’s a lot of juggling back and fourth in the end it really turns out right.

I don’t have a good diet! I am working on it. I eat my protein—my chicken, sometimes I eat some beef. Ya know, nothing wrong with some beef every now and then. I take my vitamins. I drink a whole lot of water. And eat my fruits and vegetables. I just try to keep myself healthy.

If you could bring back any artist from the dead to work with who would it be? Donny Hathaway—yes lord! Can I pick another one? Marvin Gaye.