

REQUIRED AUDIO

HEARD BEFORE THE HERD

TEXT BY JOEL MARASIGAN

The Grind Date De La Soul

With a successful self-owned SpitKicker tour (spitkicker.com), a couple Apple computer gigs, world tours, the design of a limited-edition Nike called the “De La Dunk,” eight



albums in 15 years (the last one was 2001's *AOI: Bionix*), they're back. And they're back with an album that shows why they've made it this far. *The Grind Date* steps away from their Art Official Intelligence concept album trilogy and just gets back to good ole hip hop music. It includes guests like Flavor Flav, Common, Spike Lee, MF Doom, Ghostface, Carl Thomas, and soundscapes from Slum Village's JayDee, Dave West and Madlib. De La Soul points out they want longevity and not a “flash in the pan” through “Much More.” It comes down to the fact that they love for hip hop culture and it shows. Pos said, “I'd like to think De La Soul is like incense that's burning slow and even. By the time it has fizzled out, it has left a great aroma.” —spitkickers.com

Palm Trees and Gangstas Thedjstrong and Kurupt

Hosted by Los Angeles' Kurupt, Palm Trees and Gangstas helps to re-introduce the West Coast's finest. The 32 tracks feature: Butch Cassidy, E40, Eazy E, Erule, The Game, Jayo Felony, Krondon, Emcee Eiht, Outlawz, Phil Da Agony, Planet Asia, Relativez, Spice 1, Too \$Hort, Trey Dee and WC. There are also some out-of-towners like Twista, Lloyd Banks and Sleepy Brown. Thanks to folks like Thedjstrong, the West is about to tweak mixtapes left coast style. —thedjstrong.com



Play Your Position Vol. 2 Dow Jones

Strong Arm Steady's own Krondon hosts this mixtape and shows exactly what's hitting on the streets out West. This is a no-slackin' tape that includes a cast of artist tracks from the likes of 213, Nore, Bad Azz, DPG-Unit, Eclipse, G-Unit, Ice Cube, Lil Scrappy (f/ DJ Quik), Memphis Bleek, Missy, Mobb Deep (f/ Nate Dogg), Strong Arm Steady (Phil Da Agony, Xzibit and Krondon), Planet Asia, Sly Boogie, The Game, Trina, Twista, Xzibit, Young Buck, and ZnuFFstar (f/ Fabolous). —thedjstrong.com

Metal Fingers Presents... Special Herbs Vol. 7,8

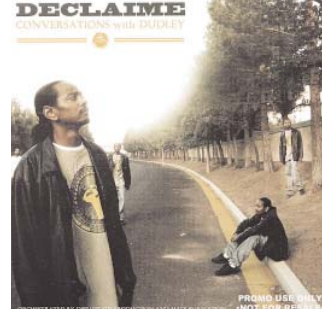
Metal Fingers
MF, the holder of a boulder, money folder. Hey, wasn't it KRS who said that one? Mister mysterio himself, MF, has come out with another one



in his Special Herbs series. If you already heard volumes 1 and 2 and then later volumes 4, 5, and 6, you know what to expect from the current volumes 7 and 8. But what happened to volume 3? The Special Herbs series is among my favorites. It's nothing but beats. With volumes 7 and 8 MF brings more rare loops and his funky drum programming. It's so simple, yet so good. In my humble opinion he even gets away with simply looping that Doobie Brothers melody on “Mandrake.” Special Herbs Vol. 7, 8 is the kind of album you can pop in your player, let run, and just drift off into your preferred altered state. Personally, the altered state I chose is sex. Beat lovers out there, this one's for you. —Michael Cruz

Da Fishmarket Chali 2na

Da Fishmarket has everything you need to fill up on fresh tracks. 2na's solo features Supernatural, Dilated Peoples, Swollen Members, Roots Manuva, Linkin Park, and of course Jurasik 5. Atypical J5 beat stylings and more and more of 2na (one of the more distinguishable voices in hip hop) make this album a surefire headphone banger. If you have the car system to handle the nice beat production, bump it and share the music with your neighbors alongside you.



Conversation with Dudley Declaime

Dudley Perkins (Declaime) has one of the best raw voices out there. It combines the musical mash-up of beat-makers OHNO and Madlib with emcees Lil' Dap of Group Home and Philly's Grand Agent. And we can't forget the lyrical compatriots Medaphoar and Wildchild. *Conversation with Dudley* moves slightly above par. Listen to this album on your walkman while stomping through the city. —upabove.com