

Kickmag Interview With Black Spade



While hip-hoppers argue over tight pants, the relevance of femcees, hip-hop's lifeforce, regionalism and realness Black Spade is in St.Louis making music he overheard someone call "ghetto clash." The March release of his debut album To Sir With Love disclosed a style of hip-hop built on a Kurzweil keyboard, shower singing and steady verses at the center. Critics would be quick to put him into an obscure hipster box (The Cool Kids, Jay Electronica) but his honesty and love of the form has translated to myriads of traditional hip-hop fans. A longtime Sidney Poitier fan he named the CD after one of the actor's biggest movie roles. When he is not attending shows and doing his own gigs he is working on the follow-up to Sir which he promises will not take nearly as long to finish. Spade spoke with Kickmag about the discovery of his art and how so many creative nobles have blessed his style that he refers to as "no style."

There was a time period between the break-up of Soul Tyde and the release of your album were you making music or were these tracks done a while ago?

Some of those tracks were already made I broke up with Soul Tyde and got back with them and was able to still knock a few songs out and after that umm it's really just making a gang of tracks and recording with a friend by the name of Kenautis uh still like putting it down that way as well.

How did you come up with your style of singing and rapping? You also have a penchant for funky keyboard basslines?

I knew I liked singing and I knew I liked rapping and I always

a lot of west coast cats kind of dibbed and dabbed at it so I just felt like you know man I just wanted to be that one that's on the same page with everything that's really how it came about. I really didn't want to see no styles I know I have to live in hip-hop with it but I ain't really know if it was a style or not I was just doing it because I wanted to do it and try to be the best I could be at it at that time.

Listen to "Evil Love" [Evil Love – Black Spade](#)

Who are your influences?

Of course the late J.Dilla, Stevie Wonder, I should of said Prince before all that Prince is like one of my favorite artists Gamble and Huff uh like new cats today I love to listen to Sa Ra I love to listen to J.Davey and Georgia Anne Muldrow just like funky stuff like Gang Funk he's like another cat I'm listening to. Pretty like much Common and Q-Tip is the reason I started rapping like rapping period Andre 3000 as well they do pretty much free spirit I guess that's their new title.

For some reason "Actioneer" sounds like The Time?

Well I like Prince Prince is the man Alexander Nevermind, Jamie Starr he's a producer, singer, he did it of rapping when he came out with the NPG. I'm a Prince head yeah that track if it sounds like The Time I was definitely trying to hit on some Prince-like stuff with it.

Tell me about ["Evil Love" I like the video](#).

Evil Love was just um hitting on how like somebody that's like they argue a bit a lot they really like always fight they always complaining and still together so it's like no matter what I guess they still together at the end of the day it's like they really like on the brink of breaking up but they don't but I guess eventually on down the line they break-up

but you wonder like all this stuff is going on they still sticking together and it was just evil though all the time and it's just man is that like evil love? It just came up with the title and with the beat was kind of there and it was breaking up at the same time it was kind of like losing itself a little bit so that's pretty much that and I just um decided to make a song about it. The French girl that was in it actually was some chick that I knew through a friend in New York and she was outside of a club and I just asked her what she was saying and she was like sure and I put it on and I was like I had somebody else translate what she was saying. I wanted her to break-up with me on the message stuff like that so I felt that was something Prince would do use like a French chick.

What about "Tale 32?"

Tale Of 32 is just this piece at the time it's like some say he's hot some say he's not. St.Louis is the hater capital I love St.Louis it is a hating city. If you're not Nelly or something like that then some people have different things to say. Then you got like these little white dudes that's really into hip-hop here that be trying to be critical be like dude sit down college gone to be over in a minute you gone forget all about it man it's crazy. That's where that song came from.

What is the hip-hop scene like there?

The hip-hop scene here is pretty much it's based on it's real small a lot of it comes from like certain colleges a lot of it comes from people that's been in it since '96 it's really small like our wonder years is probably like '93 to like '99 that was it but it leans more to like the down south stuff but I can't really say that because it's some cats doing some stuff like I'm doing that's down south and they have a scene you got your Jeezies and Chingys different stuff like that. The crazy thing is that I got thug cousins hood cats that I wouldn't think would buy the album it's still like the number one selling album in our record store called Vintage Vinyl.

It's been number one for quite some time plus a lot of people are like it ain't normally what I listen to but I love it. I wouldn't even think St.Louis would embrace it besides the normal people I deal with.

I see you recorded and produced under three different aliases what instruments do you play?

I play the Kurzweil 2000 I play keyboards I play a bit of guitar and then use the beat machine. Pretty much that's it running through like an old vintage ka mixer and then some of it's done over a friend's house by the name of Kenautis Smith. He was one of the producers like I did all the music for Soul Tyde and he was the one who was helping me do it as well. Soul Tyde it was like 25 of us it was like a collective it was singers, rappers and really like probably like The Love Movement album like I just knew I wanted a good vibe type of like just knew we wanted that sound for Soul Tyde or like a soulful sound because it was probably like '99 we actually capped out or maybe like '98 and we was just going to like these little concerts getting like good concerts in St.Louis Common then like Slum Village when I found out who Dilla was even when I was listening to him when I didn't know I was listening to him I was like yeah I need that sound that's the sound that I'm talking about good vibe sound so we made the music around that and being there wasn't nothing like that in St.Louis people like cling to it thought it was like good we were definitely like reaching different avenues but it never like really took off because of the idiots who ran it.

Why did you guys break -up?

The cats who brought it together that's like pretty much my whole being into it but towards the end they tended to get real labelly. They start taking stuff serious they wanted to be the artists and not the CEOs and they started acting like a real label get mad over like straight bullshit. And so it kind

of messed-up kicked me out I mean I left because a fellow-friend I co-trained they were like doing little stuff with him so I told them I would leave because it came more business than music and I think they was just jealous that we was just doing music and different stuff like that and they wasn't really involved. And it wasn't like that it was just us doing music letting the music guide us to bigger heights and doing different stuff they couldn't accept it so I left came back just for them to tell me I wasn't worth nothing and they took all the equipment that I had so I had to go get some more equipment it was crazy they're definitely paying for it now. I've always been solo but each time somebody came in Soul Tyde we pushed for more like a group but I've been trying to do an album since To Sir With Love has been in the making since '97. Each time I meet somebody or different things I'm like yeah I'm going to put the album out but it just always played the backburner so everytime switched the track around To Sir With Love the title has been changed so many times with different themes different revised lyrics but I always knew that was the title I wanted because I was flipping it off with a Sidney Poitier movie being that Sidney Poitier is one of my favorite actors I knew I wanted that because I like that movie.

Which brings me to my next question why the reference to the movie "To Sir With Love?"

It was strictly because that was one of my favorite movies and I like that title. I decided to use it for music and be like man I'm serving music with like love I'm like showing love for different types of styles of music that I have. And talking about love on it. I just liked that title.

What's the story behind "Revolutionary Bullshit?"

That would be Kareem we do like this little EP label and he's pretty much the first person that's on there that I did the music for his album for Bullets and Books. It's talking about

just revolution like partying talking about Bush of course different things it's a lot of racism in St.Louis and still for no reason like just dealing with different stuff it's conservative but at the same time it's segregated and it's like they're still on some white and black type shit meaning that if I go to a rock concert you got like 30 white motherfuckers looking at me jus because I'm at a rock concert. It's like come on chill out dude we invented the shit. I'm just an open dude when they look at me they're like 'this thug dude' I'm just like the black hipster in St.Louis but they get mad like just different type of stuff basically just the typical revolution stuff at the time Bush won again stuff like that I was real mad then the whole Tookie Williams thing and I know the brother did a lot of stuff in his time and this and that but I mean I don't know. And then the whole No Child Left Behind thing which ain't nothing really to help nobody because a child that ain't left behind what he is just gone pass until he ain't dumb?

What part of St.Louis are you from?

I'm from Pine Lawn it's like a county that's connected tot he city it's a county but they don't call it a county because it's hood. Growing up there started out beatboxing stuff like that and got to rapping after I heard "Bonita Applebaum" and "Breaker 1/9" those were the two cuts that made me start rapping. A Tribe Called Quest and seeing "Breaker 1/9" Common I've been on Common I haven't missed a show here yet.This new song with Pharrell I have to actually sit and listen to where he is trying to go this time with this album because I hope it ain't too bad but you can always get something from Common, Roots and Mos Def. I liked Finding Forever a lot of people thought it was rushed but I liked it. I like Electric Circus it wasn't misunderstood for me and the fact that you worked with Prince I loved Electric Circus I don't see anything wrong about it he had Omar on it? And Dilla was like dude wanted some of his wildest stuff that he wouldn't normally give him

so it was totally Common it wasn't Dilla. I listen to that on the daily that and One Day It Will All Make Sense. Look at Andre 3000 people are saying he's the man but he's been the man people love Andre 3000 he was doing his little weird thing he may have been inspired by her with the clothes who knows because Erykah is a different kind of person it's all for the good.

What about the "Genius In Me?"

It's talking about different cats that I've liked listening to growing up just tripping off different people like Dilla as well as like Prince that's my whole style. Just talking about when I was staying in New York at the time a friend of mine named Wale he's like J-Live's DJ I seen like Marley Marl walking through the crib to see that and just tripping off that I was like wowwww see Craig G and then Marley Marl it was crazy.

How did you end-up working with Nicolay?

Nicolay came through BBE I think it started with language I did this song "Lilo" and that was pretty much my introduction to BBE well Darien Brockington he sings a lot on a lot of Little

Brother's stuff we've always been cool because my last manager is good friends with his manager they went to school they like frat buddies and all that so I hooked-up with him and Darien was at the time going to bring an album out and I guess they let what's his name hear a lot of stuff from me and he hit me up and he was like 'I like what you do' we hooked up like that.

Who do you want to work with?

Uh well next lifetime Dilla, I wouldn't mind working with Prince man whoever I don't know because the minute you work with the people you want to work with you be like man it ain't

turn out to be what I wanted it to be and it was just good being a fan. I wouldn't mind having Common Sense on a verse of course Mos Def on a verse I wouldn't mind having Andre 3000 Q-Tip on the album as well but I'm going to try to get Bun B on this one song on the next album because Bun B is fresh he's from the south he does his thing I like Bun B.

Next album?

I'm working on it letting it flow like To Sir With Love but at a faster pace though I don't have any dates on it but definitely working on it getting it together now like the hard thing being the producer you always have beats to use but you critique it and you're like naaah. I want to try to use different producers like Flying Lotus the L.A. scene or whatever we'll see how that goes.

I just want to try to get some vinyl out because a lot of overseas cats still deal with vinyl and I know that was the one thing in London we went to a shop in London and we found one shop that actually sold it and it was selling but a lot of those shops over there still deal with vinyl. I wouldn't mind having an album on vinyl being that it seems like a lot of cats I don't know if they are going back to vinyl but it's funny how you can see the Radiohead album or the Coldplay album on vinyl. These stores are selling their vinyl before the CDs. Like the mom and pop store we got here Vintage Vinyl now like these artists like they're straight selling their albums like In Rainbows that album came out and of course they gave it away for free but tangible wise it came out on vinyl. They had a single on 7-inch then they let you wait a little longer before like the CD and their vinyl is sold out. People are starting to put their stuff back on vinyl 7-inch just cause I don't know why I hope it becomes a chain reaction they just bought Coldplay's whole album is on vinyl and the CD is not out. Oasis did the same thing I think.

Will there be any more videos for the album?

I'm going to try to I want to keep it with the same dude my homeboy works for like Sophia Coppola directors bureau or whatever he has a lot of stuff that he does there. I just like the way he do stuff I'm like a Wes Anderson head I like stuff like that I just like the way dude do videos he's a director but I like his style I want to try to keep him. He's got treatments for different songs we just got to get the money up a little bit at least.