

Ain't No Nigga Like..Dame Dash/ Hip-Hop Chronicles: A Blog by Russell Simmons

Sitting in the audience last night at the crowded 37th Street Arts Theater in NYC, I witnessed another great Damon Dash contribution, one that takes hip-hop culture to another significant level of accomplishment.

Sony Entertainment and Damon Dash produced the "Hip-Hop Monologues: Inside the Life and Mind of Jim Jones." It's a fantastic show that portrays the evolution of hip-hop through the life of Jim Jones.

I have to say: Damon Dash is a hip-hop genius who should never be underestimated. I have watched Dame's growth, development and entrepreneurship over the years, not from a distance, but through first hand observation. He was one of the creative forces behind Roc-A-Fella Records, the architect of Rocawear Fashions, he made significant, culturally relevant movies with Dash Films and has made other creative cultural statements through Dash Enterprises. And another great note... He spent a small fortune developing a major talent and women's brand through supporting his wife to the hilt !!

In our early days, Lyor Cohen and I used to shout at Damon. And Damon would shout back. Then we would hug and go handle our business That was our way of communicating. Eventually, Lyor got older and I did more yoga and we both stopped shouting so much . Dame eventually made a few bad choices and a few things went sour. We know haters love a man who's been hot to catch a lil cold. Hate spreads. But like Tony Montana said "Two Quaaludes And they gonna love him again."

So haters, it really doesn't matter about your blogs from the

sidelines. Dame's gonna help heat the economy again!! But if he got hit by a truck today remember this: Dame's a giver by nature. That's why he has already received so much. He was the business leader, the Architect, and one of the creative forces that built Roc-A-Fella Records into an empire. I remember that it was Damon who came to my office, after we signed Jay-Z to be on The Nutty Professor soundtrack, with a bag of cash ready to put his money where his mouth was. :-). But the record "Ain't No Nigga..." didn't need his cash (hit from The Nutty Professor). It was a masterpiece and so was his artist. Jay-Z: the greatest rapper of all time. I saw countless displays of vision and faith all the way up to and beyond his struggle to convince everyone, when no one else believed him, of the artistry and the genius of Kanye West.

In order to succeed in this business you need to have both a business sense and great creative instincts (The latter is intuitive and cannot be learned). Damon has, once again, proven that he is a great innovator with amazing vision. So now he is helping Jim Jones in a powerful manner that combines their collective experiences around being born and raised in Harlem by taking the culture to the 37th Street Theater, off-Broadway in New York City, with a live hip-hop band, dance, multimedia and the dynamics of theatrical stage presentations focusing on the struggles of life through the lens of hip-hop. I have two pieces of advice: 1) respect Dame's gangster 2) go see the play immediately.