

THE ROOTS

RISE AND FALL



PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT

128

The Pow Wow

(J. SIMMONS, R. NICHOLS, T. TROTTER, A. THOMPSON)

129

Rising Down featuring Mos Def & Styles P

(T. TROTTER, K. JENKINS, A. THOMPSON, D. SMITH, D. STYLES, M. FARMER) (BMI/ASCAP)

Hello hello hello hello... // Every anywhere heights plains peaks or valleys // Entrances exits vestibules and alleys // Winding roads that test the firm nerve // fortune or fatal behind the blind curve // The engine oil purr, lights flash to a blur // speed work through the earth make your motor go scurr // tonight at noon watch a bad moon rising // identities in crisis and conflict diamonds // blindin staring at lights till they cryin // bone gristle popping from continuous grindin // grapes of wrath in a shapely glass // ingredients influential on your ways and acts // zero tolerance to raise the tax // it don't matter how your gates is latched // you aint safe from the danger jack // made it way before they made the map // or a GPS this is DEF leader // I know where I'm goin even when its dark and being led down that road // Hello hello hello hello... // you don't see that somethings wrong earth's spinnin outta control // Hello hello hello hello... // Everything's for sale even souls someone get God on the phone // Hello hello hello hello... // Northside nigga Southside // Hello hello hello hello... // shits poppin off Worldwide // Hello hello hello hello... // Between the greenhouse gases and earth spinnin off its axis // got mother nature doin back flips the natural disasters // its like 80 degrees in Alaska you in trouble if u not an Onasis // it aint hard to tell that the conditions is drastic // just turn on the telly check for the news flashin // how you want it bagged paper or plastic? // lost in translation or just lost in traffic? // yo I dont wanna floss I done lost my passion // and I ain't trying to climb yo i lost my traction // they makin me break my contents under pressure // do not shake I'm workin while the boss relaxin // here come Mr. tax man he leavin a fraction give me back some // matter fact next paycheck it's like that son // I'll fuck around and have to hurt a few men // They probably chalk it up as a disturbing new trend hello // I know where I'm goin even when its dark and being led down that road // Hello hello hello hello... // you don't see that somethings wrong earth's spinnin outta control // Hello hello hello hello... // Everything's for sale even souls someone get God on the phone // Hello hello hello hello... // Northside nigga Southside // Hello hello hello hello... // shits poppin off Worldwide // Hello hello hello hello... // Should I say hello or should I say that hell is low // And my nigga are niggero I'm an African American // They sell drugs in the hood but the man he move the medicine // He'll prescribe you augmen for everything // a little stuffy nose tell you get some Claritin // you know I'm hip to it and its hard to claim the land // when my great great great grands were shipped to it // look at technology they call it downloading // I call it downsizing somebody follow me // Does a computer chip have an astrology // When it fuck up could it give you an apology // Could it // Should I say hello or should I say goodbye // Try to understand how smart and how hood am I, it don't matter though // until we learn that the world don't turn right, we all oughtta' scarter though // I know where I'm goin even when its dark and being led down that road // Hello hello hello hello... // you don't see that somethings wrong earth's spinnin outta control // Hello hello hello hello... // Everything's for sale even souls someone get God on the phone // Hello hello hello hello...

Produced by Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson

Recorded by Steve Mandel at A House Called Quest, Philadelphia, PA

and by Jon Smeltz at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA

Mos Def vocal engineer: Jan Fairchild

Mixed by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Mix assistant: Tim Sturges

Mos Def appears courtesy of Drown Records

Contains an interpolation from the composition "Nothing Is The Same" written by Mark Farmer and published by Storybook Music (BMI) and Cram Renaff c/o MCS America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Get Busy featuring Dice Raw & Peedi Peedi

(B. REYNOLDS, K. JENKINS, P. ZAYAS, T. TROTTER, C. PATIERNO, B. MCKENNA, V. DAVIS, J. ROPER, C. RIO)

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Look my squad's half mandrill half Mandela // my band bout seventy strong just like fela // yeah part melly mel part van halen // and we represent illadel where they still rebellin // a yo sicko show like mike moore's // my city aint nothing like yours // slippin into darkness like WAR, nightcraw // with the lights off, you see a lot of life loss for the white horse // regardless, the charges makin us all targets // all on the red carpet, guns from the black market // ay who got the politicians in they back pocket? // pimp slap pump that gimmie that profit // when you make contact gimmie that gossip // if you break contract you'll be that hostage // they getting busy in the city it's raw // better deadbolt the door it aint safe no more // Southside get busy ya'll Northside get busy ya'll Westside get busy ya'll Worldwide get busy ya'll // Approach with caution be cautious when talking to bosses // I feel I've been through a metamorphosis // I'm mutated by unknown forces // the feelin of course is something thats hard to describe // I'm half dead never felt more alive // reborn removed the gold coins from my eyes // I've been down but now i'm back up // bout to act up boy you better back up // when you see me set up shop know to pack up // I crack up when a rapper gets slapped up // number one reason ya'll should give rap up // Dice it's mine, I got it all wrapped up // I'm kindda W.E.B. Dubois meets Heavy D and the boys // smooth as a Rolls Royce built like a tank smoking on gank // I'm walking through the Guggenheim Raw Life Black Ink // Southside get busy ya'll Northside get busy ya'll Westside get busy ya'll Worldwide get busy ya'll // Now on your mark get set // go cop everything you ever heard by P. Crack Dice Raw and Black // fuck the internet buy a baseball bat break a bootlegger leg // all I listen to is vets, your fresh of the step // I come directly at your OG neck // I'm used to the one two check not the one two step // um strapped I'll leave every car among you wet // now lets GO! you know i'm politically incorrect // at the show I start it with a can I get a ho and the hoes go retarded // the popo tape off the stage for caution, its badlands north philly get it in! // its crack man, used to backspin now I spend stacks in sack's // and uncle sam tryin to tax all my hard earned raps // damn! we makin yin, pesos, euros, we representin'.. // Southside get busy ya'll Northside get busy ya'll Westside get busy ya'll Worldwide get busy ya'll

Produced by The Roots & Ritz Reynolds

Recorded by Ritz Reynolds at Far-n-Low Studios, Philadelphia, PA

and by Jon Smeltz at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA

Drums recorded by Steve Mandel at A House Called Quest, Philadelphia, PA

Mixed by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Mix assistant: Tim Sturges

Contains excerpts from the "Pee Wee Dance" written by Vincent Davis, Joel Roper and Chuck Rio and published by A Little More Music, Inc. (ASCAP)/Vintertainment Publishing (ASCAP)/EMI Longitude Music (BMI)/Universal Music Careers (BMI).

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@ 15

(T. TROTTER) (BMI)

The name of the brother the blame // Is quite plain it's not the rain // But a brother who don't claim or // Aim to be a preacher or ordained // I have black thoughts therefore // My name's the same, no question // My ability in a studio facility // As I utilize my God given utility // On time I get behind and push // Along rhyme of mine // Which I design...the mind // Leave MC's blind with amnesia // Chop em into salad and my // Name ain't Caesar // Think twice before you approach // Get benched by the coach // Like eggs you're poached // I wrote murder // Also you can say it's murder he wrote // You think I'm hell sent // So you repent to the pope // Don't walk when the sign says not to // And don't talk when Black Thought's about to // When I say maestro // And bro starts to play it, // If you got a rhyme in your mind // Then don't say it // Save it for the weaker // Pack your portable speaker // And utilize the treads on your sneaker // Take your sorry...back and // Forget about rappin // Forget you ever saw me // And forget this ever happened // Cause you might have nightmares // Of MC's being slain // And I'll be the blame // When you go insane

75 Bars (Black's Reconstruction)

(T. TROTTER, A. THOMPSON) (BMI)

I'm from the land of the straight razor face beard niggaz // with hammers on their waist, yeah ta waste weird niggaz // and erase scared niggaz, them snake head niggaz // the take care o' niggaz who don't break bread wit us // niggaz make dead niggaz, and hate black niggaz brown niggaz high yellow niggaz and them red niggaz // no tellin when that buller comin be prepared niggaz // cause when it do its comin land sea and air niggaz // that's everywhere niggaz am I the mutherfucking legendary? yeah niggaz // make it very clear niggaz, been looking at y'all in my rearview // mirror niggaz, wanna be a millionaire I'm already there niggaz // I'm a debonaire nigga, a bear taking more than my share // Looka here yeah I know it aint fair nigga, neither is a bald eagle wit a hair trigger // haystack try to find a needle up in there nigga leave u up in there nigga // show me the puppet that don't need a puppeteer nigga shed another tear nigga // I'm the field with a shield and a spear nigga, // I'm in your girl with her heels in the air nigga // I am such a rare nigga, You in a battle telling me you not ready // like u figured imma bare wit cha! I don't care nigga! // you now listenin to the sounds of the money makin jam trillionaires nigga // gentlemen of an extraordinary league, you never see me blowin on no ordinary weed // what I'm smoking ain't a product of no ordinary seed, your boy is heavy treed // I'm feelin merry as a Tyler Perry scene mad monetary gangrene // We tried to launder the cash, it never came clean // So now I'm in the story with all them cats before me // in smoke perigatory for doin the same thing // And them niggaz aint change, them niggaz can't change // your moms shake her head say it's such a dang shame // the train to the bus and then another dang plane? // my stage and my government they ain't the same name // I'm a rockstar loving it my wallet chain hang // I'm a rider they was sayin', I'm a modern day kang. // My definition I can finally explain, cold smooth like that dude Sean Connery was playin // I just gotta be the man I'm the father figure and // when I spit it its something like a psychology exam, // if you stand where I stood you can probably understand how that mic feelin' like a million dollars in my hand // it's the silence of the lambs, go and cop another gram ta twist with your zanny, percocet percodan what's your networking plan? // you better look alive cause them niggaz outside looking desperate again nigga // and the blunts and liquor killin my lungs and liver // the athsmatic drug addict I function wit it // I put a rapper in a hole where the dunce was sittin for spittin a played out pattern that once was hittin // I got news for you all, let me show you how to ball // See the legendary fall? I aint heard of that // Y'all niggaz is of the wall like Arsenio Hall // I'm a put you right back where the dirt is at // 450 farenheit pon the thermostat // somebody stalkin' like da white jawn Bernadette // but she's not an earner yet, she couldn't put in no work for Nat Burner yet // the black micriphone murder vet, I'm in a class of my own // if I got beef with you you're the last one to know, I arrive on time I'm never fashionable you late I'm already internationable // I done twirled Berlin banged in Beijing // you never seen nothing can't say the same // tell somebody Black Thought yeah you know the name ring // so give him the game ring, for bringin' what them niggaz can't bring // my hustle is long my muscle is strong my man put the paper in the duffle I'm gone // y'all still a light year from the level I'm on // just a pawn stepping right into the head of the storm // you've been warned, I will blow you niggaz into centigrade // I'm a rebel, renegade must stay paid

Produced by Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson

Recorded by Steve Mandel at A House Called Quest, Philadelphia, PA

and by Monrez Roberts at The Studio, Philadelphia, PA

Mixed by "Questlove" & Steve Mandel at A House Called Quest, Philadelphia, PA

Sousaphone: Dame "Tuba Gooding Jr." Bryson

Drums: "Questlove"

Lead Vocals: Black Thought

Becoming Unwritten

(T. TROTTER, K. JENKINS, A. THOMPSON, T. JAMAL, R. MATEEN, K. MATEEN, R. MATEEN) (BMI)

Produced by The Roots, Tahir Jamal, Radji Mateen & Khari Mateen

Recorded by John Stahl at The Studio, Philadelphia, PA; Jon Smeltz at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA

and by Steve Mandel at A House Called Quest, Philadelphia, PA

Mixed by Questlove and Steve Mandel at A House Called Quest, Philadelphia, PA

Lead Vocals: Black Thought

Atmospheric Vocals: Mercedes Martinez

Criminal featuring Truck North & Saigon

(T. TROTTER, K. MATEEN, K. JENKINS, J. MILLER, B. CARENARD) (BM1)

Monday they predict the storm, Tuesday they predict the bang // Wednesday they cover the crash, And I can see it's all about cash // And they got the nerve to hunt down my ass and treat me like a criminal // Monday they predict the storm, Tuesday they predict the bang // Wednesday they cover the crash, And I can see it's all about cash // And they got the nerve to hunt down my ass and treat me like a criminal // Look it is what it is because of what it was // I did what I did cause it does what it does // I don't put nothing above what I am - what I love // My family my blood my city and my hood // Harer for the greater good I'm back from Hollywood // And I ain't changed a lick though I know I probably should // But what I'm doin' is not a good look I never did it by the good book // As a lifetime crook all the petty crime took a toll on me // I look around and my homies is gettin' old on me // But still something got a hold on me maybe its fate // If it's comin' yo I'm willin' to wait // I'm not runnin' I done ran through the muck // I done scrambled and such // I done robbed and odd jobbed and gambled enough // Till I'm put up in hand cuffs and pissin' in a cup // If its a god I don't know if he listenin' or what // Monday they predict the storm, Tuesday they predict the bang // Wednesday they cover the crash, And I can see it's all about cash // And they got the nerve to hunt down my ass and treat me like a criminal // Monday they predict the storm, Tuesday they predict the bang // Wednesday they cover the crash, And I can see it's all about cash // And they got the nerve to hunt down my ass and treat me like a criminal // Yeah it is what it is and that's how it go // You're treated like a criminal if crime is all you know // You're greeted like a nigga if a nigga's all you show // A public enemy that's in the eye of the scope // My city like a island where you can't find a boat // Have you wishin' for a raft and prayin' that hope floats // some real ethnic cleansing goin' down no soap // Who lookin for a chair and some real strong rope // Just to end it all here screaming fuck the mayor // he see the faces at the bottom of the well quite clear // They act like I'm something to fear, trapped in urban warfare // pullin' triggers at a college career, can't ignore the call of the wild that's drawing him near // tried to make fast money last lost some years, tried to laugh it off still couldn't lose the tears, to the rules i will not adhere, break the law YEAH. // Monday they predict the storm, Tuesday they predict the bang // Wednesday they cover the crash, And I can see it's all about cash // And they got the nerve to hunt down my ass and treat me like a criminal // Monday they predict the storm, Tuesday they predict the bang // Wednesday they cover the crash, And I can see it's all about cash // And they got the nerve to hunt down my ass and treat me like a criminal // who wanna challenge mine? // I'm sick as St. Valentine. // I did the violent crime it's why I got this style of rhyme. // seek repentance for spittin' them sentences that's senseless. // experience is the difference you can't convince this. // in a crime sense, niggas is infants. I'm like a senior citizen, // still living but gettin' benefits put emphasis on hitting my nemesis in high percentages, // crooked ass cops is the reason for my belligerence, // and it gets deeper than that, // remember nights I used to sleep with the gat and a package of crack under my sneaker strap. // D's sneak attacked. // arraignment it took a week for that. // bear the rap, witches sayin' look he think he the mack. // fuck y'all, niggas who thinkin they might try us, watch us insight riots flip cars and light fires. // we already been knocked scrutinized plus, // cops rush to brutalize us America is polluted by lust, // who could i trust? // if i can't trust you ...then i might touch you. // if I ain't got love for you then FUCK you. // Monday they predict the storm, Tuesday they predict the bang // Wednesday they cover the crash, And I can see it's all about cash // And they got the nerve to hunt down my ass and treat me like a criminal // Monday they predict the storm, Tuesday they predict the bang // Wednesday they cover the crash, And I can see it's all about cash and they got the nerve to hunt down my ass and treat me like a criminal

Produced by The Roots & Khari Mateen

Recorded by Khari Mateen at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA; by Jon Smeltz at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA

and by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Mixed by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Mix assistant: Tim Sturges

Lead Vocals: Black Thought, Truck North, Saigon

Chorus Vocals: Kevin Hanson

Atmospheric Vocals: Mercedes Martinez

Saigon appears courtesy of Atlantic Recording Corporation

I Will Not Apologize featuring Porn & Dice Raw

(T. TROTTER, K. JENKINS, G. SPEARMAN, R. NICHOLS, F. KUTI) (BMI)

I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize // it's for all of my peoples who understand and truly recognize, some won't get it for that I won't apologize // I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize // it's for all of my peoples who understand and truly recognize, some won't get it for that I won't apologize // I'm so sick cause I'm infected but but I don't need a medic need a liquid anesthetic let me show you how I get it I don't got it but I bet it I don't worry I don't sweat it you can bitch you can dead it you can take it there like Fedex nothing sweet diabetic big dog can't per it pack an L then I wet it then I fill it till it's pregnant take the high back face it everybody got a favorite I embrace it like I date it but my grandma think I chase it like oh yeah I told her that her baby movin' slower cause the world is on his shoulders then I woke up out that coma and got right back at it with a little black mattie lay you down craftmattie them I'm gone black magic to the hideout you don't wanna gamble with the devil especially when I'm chewy blueys got me on another level cause my teacher think I'm slow but my momma think I'm special but even she know comin' back like an echo. // I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize // it's for all of my peoples who understand and truly recognize, some won't get it for that I won't apologize // For the statements I'm about to make I will not apologize // niggaz talk a lot of shit really need to stop the lies // jewels rented cars rented homie that aint authentic // actin' tough on TV but to me you seem a little timid // don't blame the nigga blame America its all business // actin' like a monkey is the only way to sell tickets shit I can dig it, niggas gossip silly digits // white kids buy it its a riot when we talking about pimpin' // or sippin' on Old English brew or whatever they think we do // Spraying double Uzis cause you know they think we live in zoos // the problem is with this everyone seems to be real confused // the niggaz on the streets to the old people that watch the news // and watch BET and the crazy shit they see // they associate with you do the same shit to me // when you look at me you see just a nigga from the projects // but can't understand this niggaz mind set still // I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize // it's for all of my peoples who understand and truly recognize, some won't get it for that I won't apologize // I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize // it's for all of my peoples who understand and truly recognize, some won't get it for that I won't apologize // Yo a revolution's what it's smellin' like, it aint gon be televised // governments is hellified, takin' cake and sellin' pies // I ain't got a crust or crumb to get some I'd be well obliged // murder is comodified, felon for the second time // never was I into chasing trouble I was followed by it, // facing trouble with no alibi I had to swallow pride // vilified, victimized, penalized, criticized // ran into some people thas surprised I was still alive // look into my daughter's eyes wonder how can I provide // got to get from A to B but how can I afford to drive? // messed around - tried to get a job and wasn't qualified // had to see a pal of mine got to get the lightning rod // now I'm in the black impala looking for the dollar sign // palms get to itchin' man I gotta get the calamine // 'fore I fall behind guess the grind'll be my 9 to 5 // I will not be conquered by it, I will not apologize // I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize // it's for all of my peoples who understand and truly recognize, some won't get it for that I won't apologize // I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize I will not apologize // it's for all of my peoples who understand and truly recognize some won't get it for that I won't apologize

Produced by The Roots & Richard Nichols

Recorded by Jon Smeltz at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA; Steve Mandel at A House Called Quest, Philadelphia, PA

and by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Mixed by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Recording and mix assistant: Tim Sturges

Lead Vocals: Black Thought, Porn, Dice Raw

Chorus Vocals: Dice Raw & Talib Kweli

Contains excerpts from the composition and sound recording "Mr. Grammaticologylism Is The Boss" written by Fela Kuti and published by FKO Music. Performed by Fela Kuti. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

I Can't Help It featuring Malik B., Porn, Mercedes Martinez & Dice Raw

(T. TROTTER, K. JENKINS, M. SMART, G. SPEARMAN, R. NICHOLS, A. THOMPSON, P. MARTINEZ) (BMI)

I can't... I, I, I can't help it... I, I, I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... // I, I, I can't help it... I, I, I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... // Live wit it that's how I survive wit it // Talk jive wit it then take a dive wit it // connive wit it, depart and arrive wit it // harsh thrive that's why its part I wit it // I did it, make rhymes in five minutes // Mind of a dentist, crimes of a menace // Press rewind see what you find in my image // Take you niggaz back to the line of a scrimmage // Riq you know we pull a freak wit the flow // Talks cheap that's why we speak with the dough // Ill techniques yo im sleek with the flow // It's cold outside niggaz sleep wit the snow // I tweak in a low tone freak wit the ozone // I can't help hiding my secrets that's so known // I only do what I got to cause its possible // And climbing over whatever is known as the obstacle // I, I, I can't help it... I, I, I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... // I, I, I can't help it... I, I, I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... // I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... // I can't help it maybe I'm selfish // Maybe the way I'm runnin' is becoming health risk // All I can see is smoke through tortoise shell calz // 650's I'm feelin like I'm makin a sales pitch // my head already so heavy its makin' the scales tip // I got my own pressure and got everyone else's // I'm rehabilitated still feelin' rebellious // Candidate of heart failure more pills than Elvis // In a layer cake half chocolate half velvet // I'm listenin' to some Harold Melvin // I got too many options there are so many toxins // Yo, really ain't no telling what we killin' ourselves wit // I lit a cigarette and inhaled it... // I'm thinking of some rhymes more iller than a threatening ailment // I'm on some bomb threat in the mail shit // because of all the things I dealt wit nigga I can't help it // I, I, I can't help it... I, I, I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... // I never said I'm ready to die but I accept it // Never said I'm ready for war but I'm protected // I don't even know when its comin' but I expect it // Lost all feelings of hope and now I'm left wit // nervous conditions addictions in addition to vixens // done mixed in wit the wrong crowd // my life is on a flight that's goin down // my mother had an abortion for the wrong child // was a time I felt love that's gone now // been replaced by purple rains and storm clouds // misery love misery so why make friends? // lets make some enemies // I know I gotta habit that wasn't meant for me // now I'm in a marriage that wasn't meant to be // I'm lost in the world you find mentally // the case, the cause, cage penalties. // I, I, I can't help it... I, I, I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... // I, I, I can't help it... I, I, I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it... I can't help it...

Produced by The Roots & Richard Nichols

Recorded by Jon Smeltz at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA

Mixed by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Mix assistant: Tim Sturges

Lead Vocals: Black Thought, Malik B., Porn

Chorus Vocals: Mercedes Martinez & Dice Raw

Singing Man featuring Porn, Truck North & Dice Raw

(T. TROTTER, K. JENKINS, J. MILLER, G. SPEARMAN, K. MATEEN, A. THOMPSON) (BMI)

Days of livin' fast moons of misery // You gotta song you wanna sing for me // Sing a song singin' man, Sing a song singin' man // Sing another song singin' man, Sing another song singin' man // Sing a song for me sing a song for me // Look I'm so twisted so so twisted // One life to live and I'm willing risk it // Terror that the world has never known existed // Left so many clues now how could they miss it? // Sadistic, ballistic find a word and pick it // Long as it means the world is on my shit list // Walking time bomb my mind is on tick tick // Countdown's on its too late to nix it // I'm so anxious so so anxious // The one's I hate barely know what my name is // Have no clue that I'm armed and dangerous // Willing to spill my blood to be famous // Willing to spill my blood to make changes // Look for a suicide note to explain this heinous // Aching to break from my anguish // sounds insane, you speakin my language // Days of livin' fast moons of misery // You gotta song you wanna sing for me // Sing a song singin' man, Sing a song singin' man // Sing another song singin' man, Sing another song singin' man // Sing a song for me sing a song for me // One for the crescent two for the cross three for the blessing // Four for the lost kid kid holding a weapon // Walk like a corpse in the face of transgression // Military issued Kalashnikov, or machete or a pitch fork // He killin cause he feel he got nothing to live for // In a war takin heads from men like Charles Taylor // And never see the undisclosed foreign arms dealer // 13-year-old killer he look 35 // He changed his name to lil no man survive // When he smoke that leak shorty believe he can fly // He loot and terrorize and shoot between the eyes // Who the blame it's a shame the youth was demonized // Wishin' he could rearrange the truth to see the lies // Then he wouldn't have to raise his barrel to target you // His heart can't get through the years of scar tissue // Days of livin' fast moons of misery // You gotta song you wanna sing for me // Sing a song singin' man, Sing a song singin' man // Sing another song singin' man, Sing another song singin' man // Sing a song for me sing a song for me // What you're witnessin' is true dedication // Charged by the call and the cause of a nation // Countdown minutes away from detonation // A lifetime of prep work this is the culmination // My manner seems patient // Inner rage lies so deep I can taste it // Let's sacrifice lives pass the first sensation // To paradise I fly delusions are lighting up the midday sky // The last days of mine spent in extreme secrecy // Wolves dressed like sheep occur more frequently // Too much faith to be scared the petrified been fled // Those who live fear of death might as well be dead // Towers of the occupiers will soon fall // Martyr or mass murderer that's your call // Mass transit or a mall who can watch them all // In the name of the merciful sing me a song // Days of livin' fast moons of misery // You gotta song you wanna sing for me // Sing a song singin' man, Sing a song singin' man // Sing another song singin' man, Sing another song singin' man // Sing a song for me sing a song for me Sing a song for me sing a song for me Sing a song for me sing a song for me...

Produced by The Roots & Khari Mateen

Recorded by Jon Smeltz at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA

and by Steve Mandel at A House Called Quest, Philadelphia, PA

Mixed by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Mix assistant: Tim Sturges

Lead Vocals: Black Thought, Porn, Truck North

Chorus Vocals: Dice Raw

Atmospheric Vocals: Mercedes Martinez

Unwritten featuring Mercedes Martinez

(T. TROTTER, K. JENKINS, A. THOMPSON, T. JAMAL, R. MATEEN, K. MATEEN, R. MATEEN) (BMI)

When I think about the good times I think about yesterday // You can ask me about the future I don't know what to say // Tomorrow's story is unknown so listen // It's almost anyone's guess unwritten // When I think about the good times I think about yesterday // You can ask me about the future I don't know what to say // It's almost anyone's guess // Yo it was a cold night not cold like the winter // just cold like a energy was in the air I generally don't like // The driver had to dip so he left me in the whip // Turned around said you know you on your own right? // I'm the zone like there's pictures on the wall of my own life // Just like a drive-in only it's live and it's a montage of the places I've been // My sixth sense taste the problem // the suspense had my heart racing throbbin // Just like a young punk // with a taped revolver pointed at the driver of a car face to rob him // The cigarettes chase the vodka // the nigga just chased the dream but wont chase the monster // the son wont face the father // the gun wont erase the drama // why you wait till your time's up?

Produced by The Roots, Tahir Jamal, Radji Mareen & Khari Mateen

Recorded by John Stahl at The Studio, Philadelphia, PA; Jon Smeltz at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA

and by Steve Mandel at A House Called Quest, Philadelphia, PA

Mixed by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Mix assistant: Tim Surges

Lead Vocals: Black Thought

Chorus Vocals: Mercedes Martinez

Lost Desire featuring Malik B. & Talib Kweli

(T. TROTTER, M. SMART, T. GREENE, K. JENKINS, K. MATEEN) (BMI/COPYRIGHT CONTROL)

It's the love in your heart, over the pain in your mind, no one cares what the truth is cause their fortune is built on lies, // it's the love in your heart, over the pain in your mind, no one cares what the truth is, cause their fortune is built on lies // I'm exhausted but I never ever forfeit // y'all just bullshit while I knock a nigga off quick // Y'all start speaking in tongues and start reaching for guns // M-ilitant will put this heat in your lungs // this street n the slums the weak and the scum // the local class always show you what a heathen become // the seasons are done and reasons are none // people dying bullets flying cause they squeezing for fun // it's sort of a nightmare that's right there // they hopin' that somebody in the hood just might care // with all this protesting and rallying, death toll tallying // foul smells around them pails in the alley n // corner filled with teddy bears cause they killed a child again // they sing about murder so it aint a song of Solomon // get off the choir witcha soft attire // niggaz out here don't give a fuck cause they lost desire // It's the love in your heart, over the pain in your mind, no one cares what the truth is, cause their fortune is built on lies // Yeah, my city full of, // heartbreakers and stargazers who puff garsh-vegas til they gone with the wind like Clark Gable, // breathing like Darth Vader, // believing in dark angels, // yeah we got flags but they not star spangled, // we not patriotic our heros are not them, // ghetto griots like rims, // you stop- they still spin tall tales at the bar witnessed after dark and we still stompin in chicken and broc timbs and listen to Rakim wonder where the God been for rilla the enemy scheming and plottin. // they fear us, // fear itself personified, // paying homage to homicide prayin to the dollar sign. // this idol warship, // the rebel forces bodies found at the foundation of the fortress, // this is a war we expect some losses and we comin for the heads of the bosses. // It's the love in your heart, over the pain in your mind, no one cares what the truth is, cause their fortune is built on lies, // it's the love in your heart, over the pain in your mind, no one cares what the truth is, cause their fortune is built on lies. // Yo we on some casualties of war shit, what you stand for kid? // we in the city where they definitely lost it // you open your eyelids and get capped in the ribs // your funeral they have your 12th grade portrait // pretty corpse and casket pale shade orchids // said he 19 and left a self made fortune and left tre orphans // now he in a box with the same chain and watch that never came off him // a shame what it cost him, where he come from it aint nothing // it's a everyday thang thats a problem, there's chambers revolving // bustin like Russian roulette with a full set, that change what the odds is // flames in the masjid people held hostage, everyday a struggle trying to get up out the mosh pit // homicide for profit, tell me how we not sick, this shit is outta control they can't stop it! // It's the love in your heart, over the pain in your mind, no one cares what the truth is, cause their fortune is built on lies, its the love...

Produced by The Roots & Khari Mateen

Recorded by Jon Smeltz at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA; Khari Mateen at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA

and by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Mixed by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Recording & mix assistant: Tim Surges

Lead Vocals: Black Thought, Malik B., Talib Kweli

Chorus Vocals: Questlove

Talib Kweli appears courtesy of Blacksmith Music/Warner Bros. Records

The Show featuring Common & Dice Raw

(T. TROTTER, L. LYNN JR., T. JAMAL, A. THOMPSON, K. JENKINS) (BMI)

The show the show it must go on, the show the show it must go on // I cant stop, I wont stop, I ill not, I will rock the show // The show it must go on, the show the show it must go on // I cant stop, I wont stop, I ill not, I will rock the show // And I'm still the one // Am I a poet or a prophet or a stone to build upon? // And what's the reason I still perform // Feedin my children on how I'm gonna hustle from dusk till dawn? // ...where all the love and the trust is gone // My eyes wider than a baby that just was born // Fightin a war they ain't pay me enough to join // Behind a phrase they was crazy enough to coin // You kiddin me? the pursuit of happiness, life liberty // And all types of necessities they not giving me // I put my body in jeopardy cause I'm committed // Even though they try to stifle your man's creativity? // They got hopes and plans of gettin' rid of me // I hit em like Ethiopia hit up Italy // Swift as the bullet that killed King and Kennedy // You know the battle is on for infinity man // The show the show it must go on, the show the show it must go on // I cant stop, I wont stop, I ill not, I will rock the show // The show it must go on, the show the show it must go on // I cant stop, I wont stop, I ill not, I will rock the show // I remember the show like dougie when people quiet was ugly. // yellin' get money now I'm showin wit dummy. // Still doin' shows where the spots be bummy. // roaches in the dressing room im thinking of a better room, // maybe the upper where my people wont suffer, // the leather gets tougher, // we drive like a trucker through the night, // for every wrong makin two rights, // and use mics to reach new heights the blue lights ...follow, // I guess its the scent of Chicago, // that make em wanna mess with my tomorrow, // in these borrowed days the rhyme and the mind it pays. // the world is a show you define your stage, // one two ...its live so you cant undo. // no sleep cause then your dreams won't come true. // and every one is like a broad that we run through each venue. // this aint gone stop so we just gone continue. // The show the show it must go on, the show the show it must go on // I cant stop, I wont stop, I ill not, I will rock the show // The show it must go on, the show the show it must go on // I cant stop, I wont stop, I ill not, I will rock the show // The Ernest Hemingway of B-boy poems // They can never take the pen away I'm Leroy Jones // Pushin a black Yukon gold in a new time zone // Diggin on every nuance wit two eyes closed // The life I chose more of a mission // I make a crowd convulse and act on impulse and intuition // I've seen the future listen believe the superstition // I keep spittin until its a truce or crucifixion // I'm at home in the pressure zone weakness is never shown // Let alone I'm a man made of mere flesh and bone // I cant help that my heartbeat is a metronome // and I've acquired a taste thats upper echelon // Lyrical professional, maniac megalomaniac // Plate in my head that spin the way the record go // and break it down like it was the walls of Jhericho // If they don't know by now they'll probably never know

Produced by The Roots & Tahir Jamal

Recorded by Jon Smeltz at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA; Steve Mandel at A House Called Quest, Philadelphia, PA
and by Anthony Kilhoffer at Paramount Studios, Los Angeles, CA

Mixed by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Mix assistant: Tim Sturges

Lead Vocals: Black Thought & Common

Chorus Vocals: Dice Raw

Atmospheric Vocals: Mercedes Martinez

Common appears courtesy of Geffen Records

Rising Up featuring Wale & Chrisette Michele

(T. TROTTER, O. POLARIN, K. JENKINS) (BMI/COPYRIGHT CONTROL)

Yesterday I saw a B-girl crying, yesterday I saw a B-girl crying I walked up and asked what's wrong, she told me that the radio's been playing the same song all day long... so I told her I got something you've been waiting for, I got something you've been waiting for // Yesterday I saw a B-girl crying, I walked up and asked what's wrong, she told me that the radio's been playing the same song all day long... // So get your glass lift it up in the toast position // We getting paper like John Travolta get it // Cause we focused wit it we supposed to get it // You know me and my whole squad we so committed // We not the kids coolin out on the sofa wit it // We about to dominate the globe like Oprah did it // We getting paper like John Travolta nigga // Well I'm a downtown shoota who that? // The crown ruler is back // He congruent to the shape of a mack // Look how I do it yo I'm takin you back // This how you rise down to the foundation how sacred is that? // I'm from the number one place on the map // The generational gap with yet another sensational track // And we don't stress for nothing I just press the button // It's as simple as just makin' it hap // To all the frauds stop fakin relax // And to the broads if you cakin' // Then clap then shake it without breakin your back // I know the world been waitin' for that you been aching fa that // Cause what they playin on the station is wack // And I'm a legend in the flesh that dress to impress // The best is that which I accept and nothing less // My stacks is grotesque my squad is so fresh // You know its Black Thought and your boy the Bro Quest, But... // Yesterday I saw a B-girl crying, yesterday I saw a B-girl crying I walked up and asked what's wrong, she told me that the radio's been playing the same song all day long... // So get your glass lift it up and in toast position // We getting paper like John Travolta get it // Cause we focused wit it we supposed to get it // You know me and my whole squad we so committed // We got the kids coolin out on the sofa wit it // We about to dominate the globe like Oprah did it // You getting paper like John Travolta nigga so lets go... // Hip-Hop ain't dead cause the pulse is in us // I got the everclear flow they mimosa wit it // We are the hope of the culture they posed to listen // And I'm posed ta pivot like I'm a forward in the league, I'm oden wit it // yet dont owe them niggaz nottin but potent lyrics // But if you ain't gotta dance they revoke your spinnin' // So good rappers ain't eatin' they Olsen twininn' // but im so committed, they have grown familiar // With the counterfit hitters they so so wit it but they a Sosa wit it. // they Mark McGwire wit the writtin I'm Rodriguez // on the road to riches this is the fork im hittin' // this is the trial and error era no co defendant // I push the seed every time like I'm Cody wit it // I said they one hit wonders pneumonia to us // I don't know you niggas hit the road my nigga // Yesterday I saw a B-girl crying, yesterday I saw a B-girl crying I walked up and asked what's wrong, she told me that the radio's been playing the same song all day long... // So get your glass lift it up and in toast position // We getting paper like John Travolta get it // Cause we focused wit it we supposed to get it // You know me and my whole squad we so committed // We got the kids coolin out on the sofa wit it // We about to dominate the globe like Oprah did it // You getting paper like John Travolta nigga so lets go... // where my grimey figures at? look lively addressing the captain // show me where your first impression is at // And where your dedication to the true profession is at // How you laugh answer me what kind of question is that // I'll show you where my rare essence is at the adolescence of rap // The real muscle in the message of that // my name trouble I'm a blessin to rap // and you can check my stats cause worldwide they attesting to that // so nigga listen you can probably learn a lesson perhaps // how I'm like Bobby DeNiro Joe Pesci and them cats am I the unsung hero oh yes if you askin anybody that's aware of the classics // they'll tell you I'm a legend in the flesh that dress to impress // The best is that which I accept and nothing less // My stacks is grotesque my squad? so fresh // You know its Black Thought and your boy the BroQuest, But... // Yesterday I saw a B-girl crying, yesterday I saw a B-girl crying I walked up and asked what's wrong, she told me that the radio's been playing the same song all day long... // So get your glass lift it up in the toast position // We getting paper like John Travolta get it // Cause we focused wit it we supposed to get it // You know me and my whole squad we so committed // We not the kids coolin out on the sofa wit it // We about to dominate the globe like Oprah did it // We getting paper like John Travolta nigga! so lets go...

Produced by Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson & James Poyser

Recorded by Steve Mandel at A House Called Quest, Philadelphia, PA

and by Jon Smeltz at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA

Mixed by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Mix assistant: Tim Sturges

Lead Vocals: Black Thought & Wale

Chorus Vocals: Chrisette Michele & Questlove

Birthday Girl featuring Patrick Stump

(T. TROTTER, A. THOMPSON, S. CLARK) (BMI/COPYRIGHT CONTROL)

What is it we wanna do now // that I'm allowed to be alone with you // birthday girl its your birthday // wherever you wanna go // now you old enough to go and see the R rated show now R rated show // Yo she said she was a magazine editor named Janine // backstage in high heels and painted on jeans // probably had the most devious eyes I'd ever seen // told me she was 22 she was only 17, // she had something to hide // she snuck in from outside // and got everybody gassed like the car // I drive with all that grown lady ass and her far out vibe // she said she came to see them roots boys fall out live but listen. // What is it we wanna do now // that I'm allowed to be alone with you // birthday girl its your birthday // wherever you wanna go // now you old enough to go and see the R rated show now R rated show // You see them girls look good but they brain's not ready // I talk to a woman her mind is more steady // probably something in the way they designed that's mo steady // I just let you inside cause the line was so heavy // but I should have known better cause now I feel like Americas // underbelly R Kelly gutter smut peddlers // internet predators chat room irregulars // that's not my twist you tryin to send me to the therapist miss // What is it we wanna do now // that I'm allowed to be alone with you // birthday girl its your birthday // wherever you wanna go // now you old enough to go and see the R rated show now R rated show // Now she talking cheddar cheese grits, stewed tomato, fried fish // cause she heard its my dish trying to be my sidekick, // all the people all around thinkin she was my chick // saying damn that girl thick but she aint no 26! // looking at me like I'm up to something on the funny tip // like I ever really been the one to try to honey drip, // its your birthday so let me know the gift you wanna get // in fact blow out the candles on the cake and make a wish for me // They cant really seem to look away // so they tried asking her to stay fake ID you wont get turned away // you look lovely tonight // now you're old enough to buy a gun // so many better ways of having fun // right now I can only think of one // you look lovely tonight // What is it we wanna do // now that I'm allowed to be alone with you // birthday girl its your birthday // wherever you wanna go // now you old enough to go and see the R rated show now R rated show

Produced by Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, Shane Clark & Richard Nichols

Recorded by Jon Smeltz at The Boom Room, Philadelphia, PA

and by Shane Clark at "The Cramped Apt.," Philadelphia, PA

Drums recorded by Steve Mandel at "A House Called Quest," Philadelphia, PA

Patrick Stump vocals recorded by Russ Elevado at Avatar, New York, NY

Mixed by Jason Goldstein at Battery Studios, New York, NY

Mix assistant: Tim Sturges

Vocals: Black Thought, Patrick Stump, Shane Clark, Kelli Scarr, Mercedes Martinez

Midnight Notes According To Questlove
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
12:08 AM

The Pow Wow

Once upon a time in 1994....

Most artists like to do the self congratulatory thing once they reach a milestone (10 albums--and yes *The Roots Come Alive* and *Homegrown Vol. 1 and Vol. 2* are unique enough to count as new albums thankyouveddymuch) but to let this opportunity pass us by without giving you a peek into the near hell that was the group about to get dropped some 7 months before our national debut *Do You Want More?!!!!* got released would be criminal if we didn't show you all aspects of what it took to get "here".

For all you liner note junkies out there, Brian Coleman's *Rakim Told Me* and its followup *Check The Technique* are HEAVILY recommended for their thorough insight on the process of many a rap classic that never contained liner notes. *DYWM?!!!!* was the focus of the latter book. In separate interviews both Tariq and I contradicted each other on what we like to refer to as the "North Carolina Incident". Not that I was there--(label wouldn't spring for a 15 passenger van, so in our leased Land Cruiser Jeep the "bare essential roots" (this was before all press was left up to me) went to do some promo in a few southern cities.

With drab results.

Record stores didn't have any promos or customers waiting to meet us (let alone any knowledge of who The Roots were--surprise surprise), and nightclub dancefloors cleared like the Red Sea when our avant guard sounding "Distortion To Static" came on. The optimism and excitement that we had from the time we got signed until the time we turned the masters into the label were starting to wane. For the first time ever we were hearing words like "marketing" and "angle" and "radio friendly" and "too arty"--yeah it was an eye opener. I guess in our heads we really thought "if it was new and good and quality, then people would embrace us" --I mean they did before right?--(naïve thinking on our behalf) sure PE's *Nation Of Millions* was "good"--but there was an undeniable marketing angle behind that record--not just "oh the beats are dope." De La Soul's *3 Feet High And Rising* was "good." But there was an undeniable marketing angle that made that album work when it came out. Their success had absolutely nothing to do with how incredible their wordplay was. So the results of this 7 day near middle passage promo tour trek down south for Tariq and Malik proved to be THE straw that broke the camel's back.

So reading Tariq's interview dismissing the whole "NC incident" as an overexaggeration on my end made me take matters in my own hands.

I was gonna find "that damn conversation" if it was the last thing I was gonna do.

It took me 8 months but I scoured through about 200 cassettes to search for this very conversation you are hearing between Tariq, our manager Richard Nichols, his former partner Joe "A.J. Shine" Simmons (crucial college radio figure and Philly's version of Stretch and Bobbito or Sway and Teck) and Me.

This argument was pretty much the four frustrated heads of this undefinable beast.

Joe was the buffer for the label and the good cop. Rich was the Bullhorned smart cop. Tariq was all kinds of angered (which resulted in a curse out so vicious to the label that we nearly got dropped) and me the historian getting this all on tape for I knew in my head that one day we would sit in our millllllion dollar penthouse apartment lighting cigars with our \$500 dollar bills and scoff "about the time in which that poor record label truly didn't understand (or care to understand) us."

Ahhhhh the more things change.....

So Riq is mad,
Joe is really mad,
and Rich is losing his cotdamn mind
and I'm getting all of this...

Checkmate.

Rising Down featuring Mos Def & Styles P

Right off the bat we knew that this album was going to take a Noah's Ark "2 of every animal" approach. Most people kinda expressed a "gasp" when we told them that Styles and Mos would be on the same track, being as though maybe 7 to 8 years ago this pairing probably wouldn't have went down. This goes to show you how the apartheid system of the late 90's has affected hip hop.

3 MC's from diverse background covering every corner of concern: From the pharmaceutical drug business, to the environment and the abuse of the land, to surveillance. It felt like a solid start although initially there was a time when I envisioned this piece actually CLOSING the album.

Quiet as it's kept, a system developed when it came to working on tracks for this album.

This is a prime example of a backfire.

The track I really wanted them to focus on was actually the track I created BEFORE this one: (which would be "Rising Up" the original opener) but for some reason (peep the "Up" liner notes) they gravitated to this track and ignored my intended grabber!

So this is an example of overthinking a scenario only to discover that something you don't even give a half hour's thought to winds up winning every time.

So it was back to the drawing board for "Rising Up"....

To be continued...

Get Busy featuring Dice Raw & Peedi Peedi

I remember our manager Rich using a reverse psychology on Philly producer Ritz at our home studio in Philly when listening to his beat tape (why do we still use the word "tape?" lol) for material to recreate for this album.

Ritz was frighteningly determined to find something easily adaptable to our style. If I recall correctly I think this was the second to last track of the selection after a bunch of harsh "nah's" from our assembly line of "I'm STILL giving my two cents" crew in the boom boom room of our home studio. This was during the first 4 months of recording. Its sound really pushed us over the edge as far as the sonic quality that we were looking for: A synth filled song that we could replay that felt borderline like a rock song but still kept a neo "Boom Bap" feel (most people use a bounce factor as a testing ground, but in the eyes of the average classic hip hop connoisseur, if you don't need a chiropractor after your listening experience then you need to go back to the drawing board), add on to it our undervalued hermano en rima Peedi Peedi (lemme end the speculation here....there is an open door for whenever P wants but he is not "the fifth beatle" just yet)--and the most funkiest perfect precise DJ of all time, The Magnificent Jazzy Jeff (former partner of....wait was his name?) and the cipher is complete.

Let us not forget to applaud Dice for his priceless "W.E.B./Heavy D" reference. Hands down his best line since DYWM's?!!!!!! "I leave niggas missing in action like the dads in the projects."

75 Bars (Black's Reconstruction)

In the fall of 1987 two complete opposites meshed together their love of hip hop culture and music. They pretty much became obsessed with dreams of "making it" in an environment in which signing record deals and touring the world before you graduated high school was rather "normal" (there were 5 artists that got major label deals before graduating high school at creative & performing arts in Philadelphia) what makes this story even funnier is that the label we dreamed of calling home while doodling fake album cover in our notebooks happens to now be the very label that owns this product that you're reading.

During our formative stages Riq always kept this Radio Shack cassette recorder on his person to document the rhymes that he wrote that week.

Besides playing drums for my father the only two other jobs I ever held down for more than 6 months was a fast food cook (a job I quit the morning Public Enemy's *Nation Of Millions* came out for listening to that album 7 hours a day in the park was a FAR better experience than say cutting onions and dipping them in batter). The other job was an insurance salesman at a telemarketing firm. A job that enabled me to make my own hours and help pay for our demo that couldn't quite seem to get made the first 7 years of us being a group.

The idea of us being a band never set in and with my dad's 5000+ records at my disposal (and it being the late 80's) we pretty much followed the route of "the traditional rap group". And "15" pretty much gives you an idea of how we prepped songs: Tariq would spit on cassette and then I'd have a reference as to how the music should go (to show you how influential the sound of the Bomb Squad was --P.E.'s production team-- for this one verse I'd probably have about 30 samples cu'd up and ready to go at the house of Bill Jolly, the go to cat with a studio AND video game in his basement studio at a staggering 50 bucks an hour which means that it took about 3 months just to get ONE song done. (sheesh Bill!)

Of course putting this demo of Tariq spitting in 88 and then some 20 years later in 2008 seemed to be the most natural thing to do to demonstrate how far he has come.

Although this is more of a lyrical exercise in the vein of the Kane/G-rap battle tree from which Tariq is clearly a branch, this was also a curious head scratcher from those who have boxed the group as "political" to come of with a firestorm of "niggas".

By the time the "15th Letter" had a 2 part hip hop witch hunt due to the perception that hip hop had allowed Imus to freely use whatever words he saw "rappers and Spike Lee" use I personally had it up to *here*. Journalists and politicians were once again having a field day, and not enough microphones were in front of eloquent mouths to offer an explanation of solution. The best way to counter attack the "showdown at the O down" in my opinion was to use your resources to show America what real hip hop was supposed to be about. I mean I am not one to tell someone how to run their production...but it's like why couldn't she use that show for good? I mean really O....really?!?

Instead all labeled "rap" got branded with a scarlet letter as the wickedness responsible for the ills of society.

Not even using that unfortunate situation as an excuse for us to hold our nuts. But sometimes you get angry as f#\$%. And you wind up venting on the very things you love.

I remember watching poor Common being forced to carry the world on his stuttering shoulders and getting angrier and angrier by the minute.

Why?

America didn't realize that black entertainment has been a thin line minstrel show since its "legal" inception in the early 1900's. And the mainstream media embracing of that image really wasn't helping matters all that much either. Why couldn't Talib Kweli be a guest on that particular show to demonstrate or even converse (yes I know I know!...but I'm still hip hop yo) what is RIGHT about hip hop? What about David Banner? or Killer Mike? Two men who have always been outspoken in the politics of the hip hop game?---

Whatever the case....

It was either kick the tv over ("sheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeit"....and that's word to Clay Davis) or go to the studio and creatively vent.

I chose the latter. Riq had already spit the lyrics in one take and went home. Pretty much it was me and Tuba Gooding in the studio.

Yes a tuba.

Becoming Unwritten

Because "75" was going to be an album opener much in the vein of "Table Of Contents" from *Things Fall Apart* in the original sequence every song that seemed to follow that number only paled in comparison and we didn't have another song that could withstand its power the way that *Tipping Point's* "Boom" held up to "Web". So Rich suggested we use this song as a "chaser" to calm down the listener's experience from the previous song so that its true followup "Criminal" wouldn't be dwarfed in comparison.

Much in the vein of the title track, I put my ass into making an improved version of "Unwritten"---our short semi "Panic" sequel from *Illadelph Halflife*.

But I wound up overdoing it.

The original track was too sparse and I thought "it could use some drama" due to its murky and dark short narrative, so I wound up doing 4 sets of drum takes forward and backwards and sideways---and wound up using all 4 takes.

What I wound up doing was teaching myself a lesson: Unless you're working on a Bomb Squad production for the 20th anniversary followup to "Millions" then the rule of "100% Power!" need not apply. Sometimes as a musician you have to play the back and supplement your main subject.

In other words: You could wind up distracting the listener from the main focus of the song (the head scratching plot) if you oversaturate the song with too much ingredients.

But not being one who will let something go to waste, we decided to pull a "Tarantino" and unintentionally give the plot away by revealing the end before we reveal the beginning some 5 songs later.

We know...it's a mean trick....but sue us.

Criminal featuring **Truck North & Saigon**

The idea: Remember The Game's remix for "One Blood" in which he had a gazillion MC's spittin' a hot 16?

Well such was the idea for this song in which we wanted to expose the double standard justice system in which prison sentences are harsher for those of color than not.

Because everyone was vying for position for the 2nd and 3rd spot we kinda thought we should do something stupid and just overextend the song with crazy verses.

The wish list wound up with Lupe, Q-Tip, Saigon, Blu, Phonte of Little Brother, and everyone's favorite best kept secret of the moment Blu.

But one by one the foundation started tearing apart at the seams with a death in the family here and pneumonia there and then our worst enemy time....-oh and a larger budget) kinda put that idea in check.

Keeping our promise to him since the last go round, we told our favorite MC Saigon that if the opportunity came about, we'd try another song (before his untimely death, The Roots were the proud owners of the Dilla track "Workinginir" with Sai on the assist)

Truck is a graduate of Philly's Temple University (a fact that does us proud) and came to us via Kamal (he was a childhood friend of Mal's younger brother John and somehow migrated to our side of the fence though the years being an observer to suddenly being THEE MAN.

The voice you hear on the chorus is none other than our go to guy Kevin Hanson (the awkward white guitar cat on both Chappelle and Jay-Z movies)

I'm saving the best for last. Khari Ferari, founding member of the Philly neo art rock collective known as Nouveau Riche. Khari has been around us since the age age of 9. (His father has been in our extended family since our *Halflife* days.

He wasn't a musical prodigy back then, just some kid that constantly slept on the floors in my living room in front of my tv from playing Playstation day after day after year.....

I had no clue he even played the cello or was even musically inclined in the first place.

Actually the one cat from our camp that first nurtured Khari's talent was longtime Roots/Grand Negaz associate Kelo. Who basically showed Khari the ropes to the world of production (sorta like he had shown me back in 1995) teaching him how to record and track instruments. Of course he got so good at it we started letting him take the helm mid *Game Theory*. Since then he has just scored his first film (*Explicit Ills* with Rosario Dawson, Naomi Harris, and someone named Black Thought) and of course you can find out more about Khari via his day job with his band mates Dice Raw and Nikki Jean called Nouveau Riche.

The cool contrast of this performance is Kirk's multiple guitar lines overlapping each other creating a hypnotic effect so incredible that I called this track "vertigo" cause every time we played the instrumental we would watch people just sit in a hypnotic head nodded state.

I Will Not Apologize featuring Porn & Dice Raw

Because of all of the associated Afrobeat projects we done in concert and on wax (fela tribute gigs, the spirit of the *Like Water For Chocolate* album for Common, et al) I think the idea of us doing an Afrobeat song had flown right over our heads....

....Until we realized that we never done an Afrobeat song in our entire history.

Because this particular fela song came from what sounded like a low res mixtape courtesy of our manager Dixpop (the name alone makes okayplayers shiver) the challenge before us was to recreate that entire loop (HISSSSSSSSSS) and all.

Which turned out rather nightmarish because in this world, the most simplistic task is the one thing that is hard as hell to execute.

Premature press record reviews call this the BET bashing song but really, it's a song about standing your ground. Whether in the right or the wrong.

Porn first came to our attention via another *Illadelph* veteran Hansoul (remember "imagination" from 91?) Hans (whom we met on the set of Boys to Men's "Morownphilly" video) is secretly the reason why Riq was obsessed with freestyling off the top for we watched Hans on many an occasion rhyme for like a half hour straight without stutter had a couple of indy followup 12 inches that featured the most craziest voice I ever heard on wax. Sort of a precursor to Freeway's "crying/whining" style that we been DYING to use but pretty much never ever got to utilize on our past efforts. He did however make his debut doing the hook on *Game Theory's* "In The Music".

We decided to show 3 angles of defiance from a perspective of a Philadelphian. Porn (trying to make sense of Philadelphia's long time syrup embrace), Dice (trying to make sense of hipster white kids embracing neo media minstrelsy and the pressures of not cashing in stereotypes) and Riq Geez getting his "feed mines" by any means when the going gets tough. The final touch of Kweli's vocals on the background give it a final middle finger umph!

I Can't Help It featuring Malik B., Porn, Mercedes Martinez & Dice Raw

My opinion as to why all these songs are strong is because half of them were created with the thought of them being the opening song position.

"My mother had an abortion for the wrong child..."

That is some cold ass shit to say....

When Porn uttered that line I had a vision for this song to be the album opener (this was looooong before we had half the songs that we have now).

Just see it...like I did.

I saw this as some sort of confessional in which you have 3 figures do some deep self examining of addiction.

Malik's entire verse is so underhanded that it could borderline be seen as part response to our "Water" and/or the unofficial 4th verse to "Apologize" ("I can't help hiding my secrets that's so known")

The last confessional as song that hit me this hard was Phil Collins' "In The Air Tonight." A song similar in its foreshadowing feeling of darkness about to occur. Which is precisely why I wait a full 3 minutes and 47 seconds before the drums come crashing down like a flood with orchestral strings like fire from the sky (similar to the crashing of Phil's own drums) Because of the in demand schedule of our main guy Larry Gold, we relied on our two man operation of James Poyser (who arranged the orchestral parts) and our one man orchestra Lamount Caldwell (the sax player from our *Game Theory* tour) it took about 3 days for us to record all of Lamount's every part note by note by note one at a time to get the full feeling of an orchestra.

Of course I was reluctant to take this out the album opening slot because the emotional climax at the end makes which to me makes a great opener but I think the new position still makes it a rush without compromising the vision.

Singing Man featuring Porn, Truck North & Dice Raw

We were in North Carolina headed north to do "yet another college show somewhere in Virginia" when we were just informed that a campus shooting had just occurred at Virginia Tech and instead we would be headed home.

This won't mark the first time that a tragic event and our recording schedule has gone neck and neck: 9/11 might as well have been the motivation behind Phrenology's drug induced "Water" and "Something In the Way Of Things" being as though both were recorded late Sept of 2001 some 15+ blocks away from the World Trade Center.

CNN was constantly on during any and all coverage of Katrina whilst the *Game Theory* sessions were going on.

And this latest tragedy somehow let us know that Columbine wasn't just an isolated one trick pony.

The trick was: How can you comment on a situation in a UNIQUE manner without falling for the cliché elements that most "never been in their shoes" narratives give you?

Well step number one was do the song in first person.

A first for The Roots.

Whenever a rapper gets caught with their pants down and the conservative press shoves a mic in their face, I'm flustered with embarrassment. For starters the whole "I'm just a character" thing seemed like an excuse to me.

But then again I noticed that all of our narratives came from a safe distance to assure the listener that while we will talk about what is going on we won't get that close to it. It was always from a safe distance "project window" perspective. With the commentator who tells you "what THEY doin'"--or the opposing authority figure showing you the perils of such a dangerous life choice.

It woulda been easy to just been a one person campus shooter tale...but then how can you tell a story and appear not to be the advocate (most people can misread a story and come up with their own interpretation)---I mean these people have families and we have to be sensitive to them right?

But you also paint a picture with your story and show drama too...

So the solution was to broaden the canvas and tell the story of the world. Verse one is the campus shooter, Verse two is the story of a child soldier in Africa (or South Central?) forced to fight in an army (or gang?) at a young age, and the last being a story we've heard too much about in the news over the past 4 years: The suicide bomber.

That way you can see 3 different scenes and see the insides of their minds on a surface so as not to condone or glorify it (if we were to do 3 verses about this particular subject)---and you get the full spectrum of their mindset.

Initially (as with him on "I Can't Help It") Dice's background vocals were just mere demos that would soon be replaced by a singer of our choice. But one of the symptoms of "demoitis" is you get accustomed to hearing things done a certain way. And even though they were attempted....most of our prospects couldn't even come close to matching the smoky vibe that Dice's crooning provides. So thus it was a keeper.

Unwritten featuring Mercedes Martinez

(See 133's "Becoming Unwritten")

The Jazzyfarnastees' Mercedes Martinez could sing "One In A Million" by Guns N' Roses and it could still give you that downy fresh feeling despite its offensive lyrics.

Aside from Riq's untimely demise (if you didn't figure it out from the preview)---the sound of her sweet voice singing the most depressing shit ever is chilling...

I mean "when I think about the good times....I think about yesterday" has to be the saddest shit we ever committed to tape since Jermaine Palmer had to break some very bad news to Riq about a loved lone on Illadelph's "the hypnotic".

And the fact that its sweet deadpan delivery is done without an ounce of overdramatization almost makes it that much more haunting.

But Philadelphia and its neighboring Camden, NJ are the murder capitals of the USA....and just because we are The Roots don't mean jack shit.

None is unscathed.

We mixed this song coming into the new year of 2008 pretty much when you know who retired as the company head of this label. Which really somehow brought the lighthearted side of us out by making the "you know you on your own right?....." Our little inside joke to the point that at the last minute we added the pregnant pause for our own lil' inside joke comic effect....but it still comes off haunting to the untrained ear.

Lost Desire featuring Malik B. & Talib Kweli

For such an angry song with visuals like vigils with "corners filled with teddy bears" and a coffin of a well accessorized fallen teenagers the making of this song was actually quite hilarious:

Enter Talib Kweli.

You need to understand the process that is a system in which we call it "the Motown assembly line"

The reason I feel as though as a group we are able to make great material time and time again is because you just can't limit The Roots to the 7 members you see onstage nor its two "5th Beatle" manager or even its 8+ "2 cents" staff that somehow always manages to get a say. Or even the motley crew of 10 cats hanging in the boom boom room all but ready to flag some shit not to their liking--or the 5000+ regular Okayplayers that frequent our site (I call em our fanbase, my manager Rich calls em couch potato A&Rs)---whatever the case....this is not the average recording situation in which you think some shit is fresh and the next thing you know you released some subpar material....

This is you working on some shit days in a row without sleep nor shower knowing that when you present your final product to "the jury" they better nod that head or we might have to have a fair one and meet "after school" (for the record I think we kept the near fist fights down to a record 3 this time around)

But some people aren't used to that anal retentive scrutiny:

Talib Kweli really swore he was done his verse when he submitted it to us the first time around.

None nodded.

Then it became a drawing straws scenario of "well who is gonna tell him?"---(our manager Rich won that one)

Talib was truly insulted when we told him his delivery was rather...subpar.

"I think its fine"

Well....(shoulder shrug)

This ain't the first time we were ready to drop a song off the playlist due to indifference of parties that refused to rerecord a part that they swore was the shiznit. (Me included...I wish a mofo WOODOULD tell me my drums ain't T-I-T-E right!)....so we played reverse psychology with them...

Told them we had a change of heart and it probably won't make the record....(But one not to burn a bridge)...we'll call him about another song perhaps....

He called "bullshit!" and the next thing we know a day later Kweli is in the booth giving us his most angriest delivery ever. I mean you can hear his eyebrows crunching and his sneering at us on the studio couch with arms folder---but that is what this song called for....a middle finger. You can't talk about streetcorner nihilism (ESPECIALLY when Philly corners will make the set of The Wire look like Epcot center) and not sound like you ain't walking around a little edgy already.

The other humorous moment came courtesy of me bitching about the Dice Raw sung chorus. I couldn't really understand it and it was headscratching. I was pretty much ready to drop it...and then boom now mofos are like "well if you don't dig it....YOU DO IT!! negro"

So this pretty much marks the first time in 10 years I've been in front of a mic for a Roots project on a real song (I don't count "Din Da Da" or the various interludes you heard my voice on) after that I was ready to concur ALL the choruses (well I got away with "Rising Up" and the rest will never ever see the light of day muahahahaha)

The Show featuring Common & Dice Raw

When journalists asked "why did we fill this entire record to the brim with cameos?", we explained that we applied the "Moses" theory to "Things Fall Apart"....so we decided to apply the "Noah" theory to this record.

Mid *Illadelph Halflife* we kinda saw that there was no particular success in the music biz without some sort of context or reference point for ANY artist. I mean you know A Tribe Called Quest but you also know that they are associated with the Jungle Brothers and De La Soul. You know the Motown Family is The Temptations and The Four Tops and The Miracles. you associate the sound of Philadelphia with The O'Jays The 3 Degrees and Archie Bell and the drells the G.O.O.D. family with Kanye and John Legend and so on....no one group or artist can isolate themselves and expect an audience to absorb them.

Surprisingly in 1997 we told our label this very theory and their response was to sign any and every left to center act to the label.

Which probably explains why 2000 seems like a likely year for us and our peers to breakout to our first taste of (relative) success.

This time around there were 3 groups in our Noah "2 of every animal theory": the OG squad (remember when Mos and Kwe were rookies?), the unexpected squad (Saigon and Styles come to mind) and the newjacks (Chrisette, Wale, Porn, Truck)

We used Noah because obviously this marketplace has been flooded to near tsunami levels and some people need shelter from the rain (Don't believe me? Check soundscan).

Because the original configuration of this album was in reverse (this was initially the second song on the album) "The Show" almost serves as a manifesto to that of "Proceed". A declaration if you will. That despite none of us knowing the future of hip hop, selling hip hop, The Roots or even our personal lives...."The Show" (or Life?) must go on. That is why we used a near military marching band scenario to be the backdrop.

Obviously we had to tap into Chitown's kang to get his two cents in---an opportunity we damn near missed for this fool is triple threat status now and had to record this in between shooting. Making this the very last thing recorded for this album. We are however grateful that he did stick to his word and was there for us when we needed him.

Now about charging us \$3,000.00....Really Rash?...Really?!?!?

(Jokes)

Rising Up featuring Wale & Chrisette Michele

The second to last day of the *Game Theory* tour was in one of our favorite spots in Washington DC, the Capitol Center (same place Eddie Murphy shot "Delirious" and Chris Rock shot "Bring The Pain"). This was a personal achievement for all of us because DC in some ways is our biggest market. And to sell out a 6,000 seater? Wowzers!

New York is cool but you never wanna wear out your welcome by doing too many shows for the hardest audience to please. And Philadelphia is just a plain ol' nightmare, for you got guest list issues up the arse (and just about everybody feels like they are deserving of "list love")...and then you gotta deal with performing in front of people that have known you since 4th grade. So that whole coming to America "his momma name him Ahmir imma call him Ahmir....I don't know no "tuest" I know Ahmir!"

Which makes DC rather weird because that is the market that we will play 8-10 times a year. Which means we REALLY have to step up our live show game up.

Our last show there March of 2007 I hid in the audience and watched opener Chuck Brown burn the audience something stooooopid. It was so cool watching the older black heads get they Grateful Deadhead dance on (Chappelle shoulda been there to observe that) and college newbies who never had a go go experience were sitting there with mouths open like "black people have jam bands too?"---the night was hypnotic.

Hypnotic enough for me to high tail it home the next night and start work on this track.

I been waiting for cons and cons to work on a go go track but no previous Roots album sonically allowed me to do so.

But of course we wanted to do a fresh approach to it. For all the go go stuff my DC based business manager Shawn Gee collected over the years were slower and grittier. I wanted jazz progressions that a big band would use but I wanted the drums all over the place too (A first for me on Roots albums discounting "Water") and loud ass drums.

Sensing that the crew was gonna front on me I needed a trick to "get em"---so I pretty much started hiding the songs I wanted them to accept on demo mix cds with 5 songs on em and of course the other 4 I would make "waaaay inferior" to the track I wanted them to like. I would always stick my intended song as track number 3...so that it would appear larger than life.

Which of course backfired for they ignored this track and embraced what I called "humdrum" (you know it as this album's counterpart "Rising Down")---so I had to readjust some parts....remix stuff....re do parts and cross my fingers.

This time they took to it.

Of course I gotta talk about my two favorite rookies Chris and Wale.

The first day we stepped in the office of Def Jam pres-o-dent Jay insisted we work with their new signee Chrisette. And the next thing I knew--come *Reasonable Doubt* 10th anniversary show live at Radio City Music Hall in June 2006. Of course we knew that we were destined to work on "something"---(lemme also add that she is allergic to picking up the phone so it took 2 years to make this go down).

Of course Wale, the pride of Nigeria, has been DC's best kept secret for some time. And it was on a plane trip to Japan that I got both his (100 Miles & Runnin') and his fellow Allido labelmate Rhymefest's superb "Man In The Mirror" mixtape to keep me from going apeshit on the plane ride there. And man....hearing a DC MC just murdering shit up and down AND he a youngin? Man oh man! And he embraces go go culture?!?!?!?

Getting him down really make this a no brainer.

Of course Wale INSISTED that we call this diet go go for it makes allusions to it but not all the way.

Of course we added one final ingredient to the mix to semi legitimize this stew:

Enter Go Go Mickey of DC's own rare essence

Whom was somewhat head scratching a lil' when we played him the unorthodox song....but we explained that we were trying to cross genres and his percussion flavor would help make it more tasty.

Birthday Girl featuring Patrick Stump

The entire story in points.

1. This song was made back in Sept 2003 when we had the infamous scrip club jam sessions built to "motivate" us to come to the studio.
2. Dice Raw first took a liking to it soonthereafter and demo'd an idea but it pretty much just wound up in the "limbo" section of our hard drives that most of The Roots wind up on.

3. Fast forward about 4 years later when someone mentions that "Shane song that Dice was singing over...."

4. Searches....and hmmmms

(New Scene)

1. Standing in the lobby of hotel in LA and this white kid starts talking about how dope he thinks Dilla is....

2. (Kirk whispers to me "don't flag him like a Stan Ahmir....he plays with Fall Out Boy")

3. Invited Pat to the 2nd annual "Twas The Night Before The Grammys" party. He sings Prince's "Kiss"in front of Prince (!!!!!)

(Cut To...)

1. A year later we get a call that Pat would like to do rwas again.

We do "She's a Bad Mama Jama" by Carl Carlton. This time we get to do more talking and jamming (this time we have rehearsals for our invited guests--) and socializing (him and FOB let me tag along to The Police press conference/show to watch those cats play for the first time in 25 years) We talked of working in the studio in the future.

2. Which wound up being about a month later. He had ideas and I had ideas. and at the last minute he sang "Birthday"

(Cut To...)

(Unspoken Politics)

(And More Unspoken Politics)

(Eh You Gotta Log On Okayplayer To Uh...Get Uh....)

Anywho...If you got this on iTunes...

Then you uh...like the song

We still like it....

But it didn't fit.

Or did it?

Fin
7:03 AM

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