

BY JOEL MARASIGAN



## REQUIRED INTERVIEW

**TAK, RYU, VIN SKULLY, AND**

**CHEAPSHOT:**

**STYLES OF BEYOND**

**WWW.SPYTECHRECORDS.COM**

After three years, Styles of Beyond releases their sophomore album to *2000 Fold—Megadef*. Yeah, its been three years but don't think they haven't been busy. They've toured with Linkin Park, Beastie Boys, Nappy Roots, Lexicon, and Apathy. Ryu was featured on Crystal Method's hit "Name of the Game" and also toured with the group. He did a rap for a Gatorade commercial, chaching! The group even ended up on Tony Hawk Pro Skateboarder 2 and Knock Out Kings 2002. If that ain't enough you can catch them in Mark Wahlberg's film *The Corruptor*. Their debut took off so solidly—expect SOB's *Megadef* to do the same.

I got the chance to catch up with the trio before they dropped the album. Lucky for me...I know they'll have no time for me later in the year. I'm sure that the crew would agree that it must be nice to be sexy, hip hop stars.

*What's up with SOB nowadays?*

**Tak:** We just finished our new album *Megadef* which is set to hit stores September 9. The group is also getting ready to tour early October through January to support the record.

**Ryu:** Everything is up right now. We got *Megadef* coming on the 9th, working on the Bangers & Mash E.P. and the DVD that comes with it. SOB skate video's, touring, drinkin'... You know. Same soup just reheatin' it playboy *Flavor Crystals (Cheapshot & Vin Skully)*, who have you produced for so far?

**Cheapshot:** The focus of production has been on SpyTech lately...Styles of Beyond, Lexicon, and 4-Zone. SpyTech's setting up to have a HUGE year! But both of us have some side projects in the works. I did two beats for

the next Nappy Roots record, Vishiss—this new cat on Dreamworks, working on a Ziggy Marley remix. In the past I've done a Beastie Boy remix for "Looking down the barrel of a gun," Linkin Park's "Papercut" (along with Vin Skully), some cuts with Celph Titled, Apathy, Louis Logik, Sev Statik, Braille, Prophetix, Divine Styler, and Dizzy Dustin (Ugly Duckling).

*How did you hook up with the game manufacturers?*

**Cheapshot:** When we went on tour with Linkin Park, Joe Hahn introduced me to a few people at EA Sports. I took home their information and sent out some material when we got back and BOOM!! We got a track on Knockout Kings 2002. Through my man, Dieselboy, we hooked up a remix and landed "Subculture" on Amplitude 2. Tony Hawk 2 came from our ex-manager. We hope to continue landing these kinds of gigs, as it is one of the main sources of exposure of new music and artists to the masses of kids across the world!

*How long does it take to do a beat?*

Vin Skully: Just like everything else I do. Waaay too long. I have a tendency to work better under pressure so I always procrastinate.

**Cheapshot:** that's where Vin Skully and I are different. I do the majority of pre-production at home before I take it to the studio. Being in a relaxed situation I can knock out a beat anywhere from five minutes to an hour, depending on my mood.

*Your style on the new album Megadef is dope. Where do you get your inspiration?*

**Tak:** I get my inspiration from watching a lot of movies. I'm really big on dark, twisted independant flicks. When I'm inspired by a good movie, that's usually what triggers me to write.

**Ryu:** I get my inspiration from the beats mostly. And hearing other emcees that I think are dope. That just makes me step my game up. I'm also inspired by the challenge of makin' an album that I think is gonna kill people to hear it.

In my mind I can only think of all the other rappers kickin' themselves in the ass for not comin' as sick as us.

Vin Skully: I would say my inspiration mainly comes from the humungous void in underground hip hop.

*If there were no such thing as sample clearances, who would you take from?*

**Ryu:** Is there such a thing? I guess I would sample the same people we do now. I don't worry about clearance. Maybe I'm stupid but I dont think we have enough money for anybody to want to sue us. It would cost them more than what they'd get out of us. On top of that, I think the music comes first. We do want we want whenever we want to, and worry about money later.

**Cheapshot:** Like Ryu said, I see sample clearances as free reign at this time in my career. Honestly, if somebody tried to sue me they'd win a jar of mayonnaise and some used rubbers. To me, hip hop changed when people started getting scared of sample clearances. Since I have nothing to lose, I'm trying to bring that flavor back.

*What direction is SOB headed in?*

**Tak:** I feel we're bringing back the essence of what real music is. Where you can actually feel the charisma of the producer, as well as the lyricist together creating animation that you can picture

**Ryu:** Top of the moon. I think this will be our biggest year and album to date. And the future looks really tasty right about now. We've been through too much to turn back now.

*Of the four of you who is best at what?*

**Tak:** I feel that at the end of the day, it comes down to our efforts collectively, because it takes a little bit of each of us to make this happen.

**Ryu:** Takbir is the best emcee in the sense that he can adapt to any beat you throw at him and make any style sound like his. Vin Scully is the best at arrangement and bringin' a song to life. Cheapshot is the best at day-to-day operations, and of course the beats. He kinda ties the group together. I guess I'm best at...I don't know. I guess you gotta ask them.

**Cheapshot:** Ryu's the best-looking hardbody in the group. He's a born stunner! The man that women hate and men want to be. The only player in the field who's wedding ring is more icy than his wife's. An all around red-blooded, beer-guzzlin' American with the world eatin' out of his palm.

**Ryu:** Wow! Thanks cuuh

*Guys, When did you find hip hop?*

**Tak:** Since I can remember, I've lived in the surroundings of raw hip hop being that my brother Bilal was an early pioneer in the world of production for a lot of well known artists today (Ice Tee, Divine Styler, DJ Muggs, House of

# REQUIRED AUDIO

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Pain). But having such a raw passion for music "point blank" is why I'm doing it today.

**Ryu:** Well sir, I think it was the year 1984: Ronald Reagan was President and the Olympics came to Los Angeles. I was in my Grandmother's attic looking for something to slick my hair back with, when out of the corner of my eye was a bright yellow hat box with a sticker on it that read "HIP HOP. DO NOT OPEN TILL CHRISTMAS 1996" so I waited and waited and waited till one day I opened the little window on my holiday calendar and low and behold, it was Christmas Eve! The next morning I woke up and ran to that old hat box, and wouldn't you know it. Hip hop was inside and I began writing lyrics to 2000 fold that morning (views expressed in this interview concerning hip hop are Ryu's and are not necessarily shared by Spytech Records or confirmed by the temple of hip hop culture).

**Vin Skully:** I would say it the first time I got a CD player. I was listening to LL Cool J and I looked up and my mom was dancing in the kitchen. While it was quite embarrassing, I've never felt more alive, or more hip hop.

**Cheapshot:** I was about 12, wandering around the house in my normal Sunday duds—a pink tutu, and a hyper-color tee-shirt. The night before, my brother threw a house party and his DJ pal passed out with his equipment still on. Early the next morning I picked up the headphones and started fondling, uh...playing, some of his records—*Digital Underground*, *De La Soul*, etc. Instantly, I knew that hip hop was where I wanted to be and I never stopped since.

*Cheapshot, who would you set up for a battle?*

**Cheapshot:** You gotta understand, I don't take battles too seriously. When I go out to a show it's gotta be entertaining and different for me to stay. With that said, the *ultimate freestyle battle would be something like Corky from Life Goes On vs. Bill Gates*.

*Tak, who is the most underrated MC?*

**Tak:** Kid Frost.

*Ryu, how much did you get for doing the Gatorade commercial?*

**Ryu:** \$2,000,000...in Canadian looney's.

## SINGLES TO LOOK OUT FOR:

VISHISS / Spit Records

Just got this single from VISHISS. Two cuts, "Battle Rhymes" b/w "Killin' Spree," are incredible. With a little production help (not that it's needed, but the team-up worked well) from Dj Cheapshot of Styles of Beyond, he's bound to explode.

MUSIC, MAGIC, MYTH / The Last Emperor

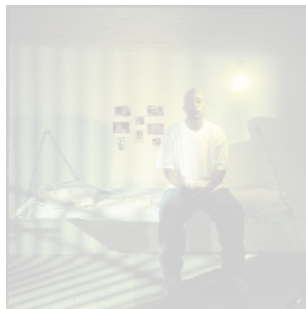
Jamal Grey, aka The Last Emperor, was signed to Aftermath, Interscope, and Rawkus—no albums. But that doesn't matter when Mos Def puts him among those that belong in the category "Greatest of all Time." As a matter of fact, he's backed by the best: Armand Van Helden puts it down on this album on "Strings;" The Beatminerz hit him off with production on "Meditation" and "Underground;" Daddy-O of Stetsasonic brings it back on "The Block Party;" Prince Paul makes his contribution on "The Great Pretender." Remember his underground classic, "Secret Wars"? Where he had super heroes battling rappers? Well, his part two has The Roc vs. The Fantastic Four, Fat Joe vs. King Pin, Biggie and Tupac vs. Juggernaut and Black Panther, and Eminem vs. Daredevil. It's gonna be good. His story telling skills are dope. I can't disagree with Mos. —www.Raptivism.com



NOW / Stark Reality

Stones Throw is re-releasing Stark Reality's rarely-heard gem "The Stark Reality Discovers Hoagy Carmichael's Music Shop" (AJP Records, 1970) for the first time, together with previously unreleased tracks on an anthology CD and double LP. Stark Reality's original album, a funky, jazzy, fuzz-toned cult classic, consists of very original interpretations of songs written by Hoagy Carmichael. They've been sampled by the likes of Large Professor, J-Live, and Madlib (on the upcoming MadVillain album). It's lately been dubbed the holy grail of psychedelic jazz-funk.

The previously-unreleased songs on the CD anthology will be released on vinyl later this year by Stones Throw's Now Again subsidiary, joined by other unreleased tracks on a double LP. —Stonesthrow.com



ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ / Rasco

Rarely do rappers get better. After the first album, sometimes the second, the average emcee's career is over and often becomes an insignificant footnote in hip-hop's unforgiving history. In the case of Bay Area emcee Rasco, his years honing skills, flow and lyrical versatility has not only resulted in his strongest album to date, but a memorable creation that will no doubt earn this veteran a newfound respect as one of rap's most complete emcees. With the release of *Escape From Alcatraz (Coup d'Etat)*, the raspy-voiced wordsmith has created what most rappers work their whole careers for: a seminal album that effortlessly fuses highly-personal, emotion-felt street verse with soulful, varied production. Lyrically, Rasco has also evolved, sometimes flipping his trademark, venomous battle raps for thoughtful, theme-driven poetics. Case in point: the pro-Black "You Got the Time," a high-pitched funk hook-on which Ras urges young, black men to keep persevering during difficult times. "The youngest of five with one brother / The only Father I ever had was my Mother," he spits powerfully.



CURB SERVIN'... THE MIXTAPE SESSIONS / Zion I

On the heels of the highly celebrated sophomore album, *Deep Water Slang Version 2.0*, the Bay Area-based hip hop pair Zion I dish up another collection of music with a bonus DVD, *Curb Servin'*. The collection, the second Live-Up/Raptivism release this year, features nine brand new tracks as well as vinyl-only (Can I just say unreleased?) remixes—all effortlessly mixed by the West Coast's Triple Threat Deejay, Vinroc. In addition to brand new cuts by the duo, the CD includes remixes of Zion I landmark joints like the Aceyalone collabo, "Cheeba Cheeba," featuring soulful rocker Martin Luther and a remix of "Critical" by the LA track

master Madlib. *Curb Servin'* contains debut singles from forthcoming Live-Up artists and up-and-coming lyricists Deuce Eclipse and MC Dust.