

Interscope's VP of Rap Promotions Kevin Black Interview

Written by Davey D ID3000

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Always Bet on Black: We Interview Interscope's VP of Rap Promotions Kevin Black By Davey D

He's a giant of a man who recently slimmed down via gastric bypass surgery, but nevertheless he's one who consistently does 'Big Things' both on and off the job.

As a VP of Rap Promotions Kevin Black is responsible for making sure the projects put out by artists like; 50 Cent, Game, Black Eyed Peas, Common, Young Buck, Mobb Deep, Lloyd Banks, Snoop Dogg, and Eminem just to name a few are blown up and made everyday staples in our collective musical diet.

Black who heads up a large promotions team in both LA and New York describes himself as 'a hog' when it comes to making sure that the artists he's working get top billing in all mediums that can expose them. Whether its radio, TV, print, mixtape circuit or the streets in general, Black will bring the ruckus to make sure his artists are hot. His take no holds barred, take no prisoners attitude is in stark contrast to the types of things he does behind the scenes which includes working with disadvantaged kids and supporting numerous community organizations 'like his new Blackboard Project' behind the scenes.

We sat down with KB to gain some insight as to some of the inner workings and politics behind what is now the largest label for Hip Hop music. During our conversation I was surprised to learn that Black is a Bronx native who grew up during Hip Hop's pioneering days and was a frequent visitor to many of the early nightclubs and hotspots that gave birth to Hip Hop. We talked at length how those early experiences influenced his day to day work. He attributes his hustling ethos to the 'create something out of nothing/ make a dollar out of 15 cent ' mentality that drove early Hip Hop.

We talked at length as to why major labels have not embraced Hip Hop's burgeoning underground scene where in many instances have artists who outdraw and even outsell their commercial brethren who are attached to major labels. We also spoke about the types of strategies one must use when pushing Hip Hop in the hood versus the burbs.

We talked at length about the politics behind commercial radio and how he navigates those

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waters. This led into a conversation about whether or not major labels had a lot to do with the public being subjected to hearing the same ten songs over and over again on commercial radio. Black placed much of the blame on radio which led to us debating as to what degree of influence major record labels really have. This of course led into a discussion about the type of presence and relationship Interscope has had with magazines like XXL and The Source.

We also got into a discussion about the beefs that exists between label mates 50 Cent and Game. KB explained the types of approaches him and promotion team take when working both their projects and what the ultimate bottom line is for dealing with that touchy scenario. One thing of note, KB insisted that Dr Dre is on Game's new album which is in sharp contrast to what 50 said in the latest issue of XXL where he said the Dr's advocate would have no Dr Dre production

Lastly we discussed as to what he attributed to some of the slow record sales behind highly anticipated projects by artists like Mobb Deep and Busta Rhymes. KB gave an assessment of where he sees the industry headed and how he and others are adjusting and what we can expect from future projects including Snoop's Blue Carpet treatment album and Dr Dre's Detox album.

This interview marks the start of our 'Behind the Grind' series where we will be presenting weekly profiles of industry movers and shakers so folks can get a better idea of how things or don't work within the music biz. We salute Kevin Black for his accomplishments and thank him for the time he spent sharing his insights and perspectives.

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