

Planet Asia Taking Hip Hop Back to the Golden Era of Rap

Written by Robert ID3657

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As hip hop culture progresses into its fourth decade, several hip hop artists long for the Golden Era of rap. Rappers of this time (the mid and late 1980s) strove to be the best lyricist and typically accented their wardrobes by wearing hefty gold chains, as evidenced by such MCs as Rakim, Big Daddy Kane and Slick Rick. Consider Planet Asia a torchbearer for the rebirth of the Golden Era.

The veteran Fresno, California rapper's latest hip hop opus, Planet Asia as "Medallions" Jewelry Box Sessions: The Album, will be released on his own Gold Chain Music label and reflects the innovative, lyrically advanced, thought-provoking and sonically diverse music typical of the Golden Era of rap. "Everything that I put together, they are all like jewels," Planet Asia (aka Jason Green) explains, referencing terminology used during the Golden Era to describe lyrics that contained meaning. "Everybody that participated are like precious stones. They've all got their own shine on my album, so they're like their own piece of jewelry."

With this throwback mentality, it makes perfect sense that Jewelry Box Sessions: The Album contains "Comin' Home." The musically bright and rich song produced by Leggo is an autobiographical trip for Planet Asia, who looks back at his formative years. "That's a song about coming back to where I'm from," he says. "I'm going back to the same spots where I used to kick it at and everything that made me who I am today."

Who Planet Asia is today is a rapper who is lyrically advanced in the tradition of East Coast hip hop and rap while being raised on the gang-infested West Coast. His duality is reflected on the hard-hitting "Havin' Thangs." Produced by Da Riffs, the cut contains pounding drums and an intense piano section, making it a perfect backdrop for Planet Asia's boast-filled raps. "It's a perfect street single," Planet Asia explains. "It has a West Coast feel to it, but it also has the East Coast bounce. It's easy to mix with other songs and it has a big sound."

Planet Asia then takes it back to a raw sound on "Street Hop." Produced by Jake One, this cut is a mid-tempo banger that showcases Planet Asia's verbal dexterity. With an emphasis on clever, vivid wordplay, the song perfectly represents the style of rap Planet Asia represents. "Street hop is what I actually do and no emphasis has been put on that type of music yet," he says. "You've got backpacker music, gangster rap and Down South rap, but what about street hop? What about the people who can rhyme real well that the gangsters listen to and the backpackers listen to?"

That's my new version of hip-hop."

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Planet Asia has been fresh since he emerged in the late 1990s as one of California's most promising rhymer. He released a string of acclaimed solo albums, including *The Last Stand* and *The Grand Opening*, and also teamed with Rasco to form the supergroup *Cali Agents*. Throughout each of these releases, Planet Asia's confident delivery, booming voice, and diverse subject matter made him an in-demand rhymer who has collaborated with artists such as Ghostface Killah, Linkin Park, Will.I.Am, and the Dub Pistols. Planet Asia also earned a Grammy nomination thanks to his collaboration with Mystic on the song "W," a tribute to West Coast living.

Now, Planet Asia combines all of his various interests and backgrounds into Planet Asia as "Medallions" *Jewelry Box Sessions: The Album*. Like his music and the "Medallions" pseudonym, the name Gold Chain Music was created with a distinct purpose. "I call my label Gold Chain Music because it represents the Golden Era," he says. "It's not necessarily about jewelry, but jewelry just symbolizes what is going on inside your mind.

So Gold Chain Music represents a chain of artists from the Golden Era.

Anybody that's down with me or in my circle, it means that you understand the culture and the history of the music."

Now, with Planet Asia as "Medallions" and *Jewelry Box Sessions: The Album*, the prolific rapper is in full control of his music, his label and his direction. "I'm more comfortable now," he says. "It's easier to write songs now. It comes out like water now."

And with a few jewels.

Find the first single from Planet Asia as "Medallions" *Jewelry Box Sessions: The Album – Havin' Thangs* & make sure to vote for it on MTVU at <http://www.mtvu.com/music/freshmen/>

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