

Hip Hop By the Numbers by Venancio 'Doc GonZo' Gonzalez

Written by Venancio "Doc GonZo" Gonzalez ID4105
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Whether you loved him or could not stand him, the life and death of Tupac Shakur (2Pac) had an immense effect on the course and sound of Hip Hop music. The ferocity with which he lived, his uncompromising persona, and reflections on the human condition all lent to the vacuum felt after his passing. Indeed, the proof is in the doing, for here we are a decade later talking of his memory. In the void of Hip Hop's martyrs Big and Pac, many have vied to fill the gap. While many have tried, Twenty-One Nothing has produced a duo that is seriously contending in 2 Pac's memory.

Get it right, the name is Twelve Twenty-Three, a duo composed of Mr. Sylk and John-John, two San Antonio natives that have spent the last ten years experiencing the trials and tribulations that have made them such a prolific group.

Sylk, who is currently serving in the United States Army, met his counterpart John-John back in high school when they played ball together. After high school the rappers went in two directions that led them to the further most points in the globe, through life's obstacles, and back home to the Countdown with an insatiable hunger to espouse what they had learned. Full Circle, the group's debut album, is what they believe to be their definitional album, which has already sold three thousand copies.

From the collective experience of the two came the single "Wish I Knew", a melodic song that deals with hindsight and the desire to persevere, which has gained a lot of attention with its soulful hook and learned lyrics. Enter in Thug Life Army Records and Fontana/Universal who, while looking for tracks to line 'In the Shadow of an Icon', heard the single and thought it perfect for the record.

The album is a soundtrack in the spirit of the life of Tupac. All the songs and participating artists write about their own lives, struggles, and quest to make something better out of what was given them. The two disc album that went on sale for digital downloads December 14th this year, and will in stores nationwide Jan. 15th 08, features "Wish I Knew" and is just the tip of the iceberg of what this duo has in store for the world.

"I had just sent an email out to Thug Life Army Records telling them about what we had going on. They took a look, heard the track, and were like, "yo, that's got to go on the album," explains John-John.

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“And out of 800 submissions, when it came time to vote, our single was unanimously selected” adds Mr. Sylk, “We were always into 2 Pac. For us, Pac was the true definition of Hip Hop. He always followed his passions and we do the same. A lot of people have taken Hip Hop in questionable directions, so we want to reset the standard”.

That standard is pretty high, as the group has gone to work over the last year and a half maturing their buzz, making connections, performing and recording music. Their list of engagements has them busy well into the New Year. The team has recently recorded a fight song for a Roosevelt High School prep rally. The song entitled “Rough Rider” was featured on 98.5’s morning show.

“We like to do positive things for the kids” says John-John, “We performed at the Antioch Christian Academy and they asked us to come back right then and there”. Also in the streets they have opened for acts like Huey and Chingo Bling. They have gone out to Oklahoma to perform for Operation America Rising, a non-profit organization dedicated to supplying moral and material support to military members and their families.

A team on the rise, 1223 has been invited out to Washington D.C. to perform at Walter Reed Hospital for another charitable organization called Fisher House, whose goal is to support America's military in their time of need by meeting a humanitarian need beyond that normally provided by the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

“For us, and for me as a soldier, these are our best shows and the most fulfilling. I mean, when I was in Iraq, I appreciated everything that was being done on my behalf and it is really satisfying to be able to give some of that back” says Mr. Sylk.

This December you’ll find the duo doing an in-store at the Randolph Base Exchange to benefit the Soldier’s Angels Organization. 1223 has made an album for the G.I.’s and proceeds will be going to the organization that provides aide and comfort to the men and women of the armed forces. Their album will soon be available in all AAFES stores.

“We still out the trunk and on the grind though” John-John tells us. The group give much credit

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to their team of Veronica Fayerweather, Mandy Galeai, Jerod Douglas, Ebony Kurt, Frank Herring, Christina Boswell and Tunette Callis.

You can catch them on the web at www.myspace.com/1223music or www.myspace.com/inthesshadowofanicon

Keep your eye out for the 210 duo as you are sure to hear more about these cats in the very near future.

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