

Hip Hop Album Review In The Shadow of an Icon

Written by Rahim ID4347

Tuesday, 06 May 2008 00:56 -

Rahim of hip hop web site StreetHop.com has reviewed the hip hop / rap / R&B Tupac tribute cd 'In The Shadow of an Icon' from Thug Life Army Records.

While paying tribute to the late Tupac Shakur, In the Shadow of an Icon keeps its promise of showing fans that real hip-hop still exists, but you just have to know where to look. Thug Life Army Records has embarked on a monumental movement with this 2-Disc compilation CD, and has gone to great lengths to put together a distinctive album that hip hop fans all over the world can truly appreciate. The mission, a search throughout North America for bright and talented individuals who could use a helping-hand to get their music heard. The end result, a collection of the finest work the music industry has yet to hear.

The first thing I said to myself when hearing about this project was "Hey, it's another tribute album for Pac. What could possibly be good about this one?" Well, it looks like I spoke too soon. Judging a book by its cover never really helped anyone to begin with, and in my findings, this 29-track compilation CD is filled with up and down-beat tracks that anyone can easily be bopping their head to, not to mention that the whole vibe of the album can be described as something out of the vaults of Suge Knight's Death Row Records. The album also showcases a style of music that most 2Pac fans will recognize, while the music itself represents the same struggle in which 2Pac had fought hard for. There are a lot of talented artists on this album, and from the sound of it; I'm glad none of the artists give off too much of a mainstream feel to their music.

The last thing I want to hear is a compilation that doesn't have good taste. A mixture of flavor and good rhythm should be present in any compilation, as it is in this one; to mix and match different styles of music, but to also keep the theme in focus. While the music on this album definitely hits all the right spots, nobody likes a f*ck in the ear, and I'm happy to say that In the Shadow of an Icon keeps to itself in that department.

There are a number of tracks that really stood out to me, among others: "We Live and We Die" by Hustle and Creed; the flow, sound style, the hooks, the whole shebang, it has all of the elements that could potentially be a classic hip-hop track in the making. Ebony Burks hits the high-notes in her song "Choice", which clearly shows how this compilation chooses to explore the different styles of urban music, and not just one. It could be the fact that Ebony is the only female soloist on the album, or maybe it's how wild the guitar is playing in the background, or maybe even how the beat is just so laid back and mellow. Whatever it is, it has my vote.

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Coming from a fan who appreciates good music, I personally look at music as a way to express myself, especially when listening to music. How many of us really listen to what's being said in a song and understand its message? Sometimes one may look towards music to trigger certain emotions, or a feeling, at that moment. It's all about how you feel, so they say, and at times, this album responds to those feelings. Songs such as "Knowledge" by Boo Kapone, "Speed of Life" by K-Loron, "Breathe" by Kemo the Blaxican, to name a few, and the rather slept-on "No Half Steppin" by Big Dee and Sammy B, and "Revelation" by G-Luv are good examples of songs that express a feel of their own, and a whole different personality.

From beginning to end, this album has something to offer to everyone, especially to all of the urban listeners out there. What I like most about this album is that sound-value and quality isn't compromised, and an original tone from a time where Hip-Hop and R&B was much richer in sound than it is today is ever-present. Any Bob or Joanne can produce a record in today's day and age, but not many have aim to make a hit record that can preserve its flavor for even a few years down the road.

In his physical presence, 2Pac had accomplished what many say would take the average person a life-time to achieve, yet he did just that in a quarter of the human life span. In his absence, he will never be forgotten. In the Shadow of an Icon is an album that I recommend everyone should have in their CD collection. At first, I didn't know where this was coming from, but now I do see where this is going. And that's what is most important, is it not? To be able to see the big picture, before you even start painting it. I'm all for painting perfect pictures so I rate this album 4/5 stars for not giving me a good old fuck in the ear like some of the past tribute albums to Pac that are out there just to make a quick buck. Congratulations to Vice President RB Riddle and the rest of Thug Life Army Records for showing us that real hip-hop still exists, and on a job well done.

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