

## Hip-Hop Interview with Bay Area Rap Boss Celly Cel

Written by Robert ID2503

Monday, 10 April 2006 07:27 -

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With the surge in the west coast hip-hop 'hyphy' movement and the west coast artists finally being recognized for their talents, we had to speak to one of the legends of rap music from the Bay Area; Celly Cel.

Celly Cel is more than a hip-hop or rap artist, he is an entrepreneur. Besides being known as the Bay Area Rap Boss he is also the owner of his own record label Realside Records.

On April 4th Celly Cel dropped his 6th solo album titled 'Slaps, Straps & Baseball Hats'. Known in the hip-hop community for his 'real talk' and his ability to be fan friendly, we decided to sit down and ask about the new album, the mood in the Bay Area now and of course the Hyphy Movement.

This interview was done on the 5th of April, the day after Celly's album dropped. Knowing how busy he was with the album releasing, we would like to thank Celly for taking time to do the interview and letting us spend as much time as we needed talking to him. He is truly a class act and we wish the best for him.

ThugLifeArmy – Thanks for taking time to talk to us, it has been awhile since we've talked.

Celly Cel – Yeah man just running around here trying to get everything ready for the new release. I've been in the studio and what not; in and out the gym – ya know the usual.

ThugLifeArmy – Well it seems the Bay area is blowin up right now with the whole 'hyphy' movement. Being that you are the Bay Area rap boss and Vallejo, CA is the home of Celly Cel, E40 and Mac Dre; can you explain what 'Hyphy' really is about?

Celly Cel – The 'Hyphy' movement is basically what we have been doing the whole time out here. It's like a lifestyle, it's like an energy where we just come out 'going dumb' is what we call it. It's like jumping around, dancing; we're opening the doors on the cars. We're letting the cars ride in neutral while we are standing on the side; walking alongside the cars. We're standing on

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top of the cars, dancing man; it's just like a life style. Hyper is really the word, but we just put the 'hyphy' on it. Everybody just comes out and goes crazy, goes stupid and get down to the music – basically act a fool. So that's the 'hyphy' movement.

ThugLifeArmy – So is it like a west side version of southern 'crunk'?

Celly Cel – Exactly, that's a good analysis right there. It's like the west coast version of 'crunk', but at the same time I think we got a little bit more energy with ours. Cause ours we just go dumb. We just dancing all over the place and we're jumping on the cars, and in 'Crunk' they are not really doing all that. We take it to a different level, but it is similar to the 'Crunk' you could say that.

ThugLifeArmy – Your album dropped yesterday (April 4th). What kind of feedback have you been getting?

Celly Cel – I'm getting a lot of good feedback. A lot of positive responses, everybody is hitting me up saying that they like the album, how the album is slappin. Some people are saying it is my best album ever, so I have been getting a lot of good feedback man – and I'm loving it man. I got a good feeling about this.

ThugLifeArmy – Are you getting air play in Cali?

Celly Cel – Yeah, I am getting some play out here on a few radio stations, and doing a few live interviews at the stations and getting some of these songs played, so it's going good right now. I am feeling good about the whole project right now.

ThugLifeArmy – Who all do you have on the album?

Celly Cel – On this album I got guest appearances by The Game, Lil Flip, Mistah F.A.B., Turf Talk, Luni Colenoe, Malika from MTV's 'Making the Band', and my group the Hillside Stranglaz

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and another one of my artists DC and Sean T. Sean T does a lot of production for a lot of Bay Area artists, he is a rapper/producer. He has done production for everybody from E-40 to Mac Dre to myself. So this is real big man.

ThugLifeArmy – Was there anyone ya wanted on this album that maybe because of scheduling conflicts ya couldn't get?

Celly Cel – Yeah actually I wanted to get down with Messy Marv on this one, and also I wanted to reach out to somebody else out of LA; cause I usually try to do something with somebody out of LA to. I mean I got The Game but I kinda wanted to get 2 people this time. I usually try to get 2 but I wasn't able to do that, but it's all good cause I just leave the door open for future projects and it creates more hype; cause people like to see those collaborations.

ThugLifeArmy – Which track is your personal favorite?

Celly Cel – I got to say right now that 'Bay Classics'. That's like a combination of Bay songs. I wanted to do a song to rep for the Bay and I was thinking let me go ahead and take an old school Bay song and just rip it. And then I was like – let me just put a whole bunch of different Bay Classics together, as many as I can get in there, and then just rip that. Then it came out real good and I have been getting a lot of good feedback that everyone is loving the song. It's got everything in there from Digital Underground to Tupac (2Pac), to E-40, to the Loonies – it's big. Everybody's liking that song.

ThugLifeArmy – Do any of the tracks have that G-Funk flavor that a lot of your music has?

Celly Cel – Yeah cause I wanted to do it even though we are on this 'hyphy' movement, and I'm backing the 'Hyphy' Movement 110% because basically it's just the lifestyle out here in the Bay Area; you can't help but be a part of it. But at the same time I wanted to stay true to me and true to my fans as far as I just didn't want to do this big 360 and switch up my whole vibe – and then people looking like 'what happened' – 'why did Celly do that?' So basically I just wanted to switch it up and be versatile with it. Give them some Hyphy music, give them some of the G-Funk music that I've been doing and ya know just hit em from every angle possible and that's what I did. I think the album is real versatile; it has a little bit of everything on it.

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ThugLifeArmy – Would you say it is an all around album? Are there tracks for everybody from gangsta to street to the ladies? I've heard the track Shake Sumthin, that's a tuff joint.

Celly Cel – Yeah, yeah a nice little club / hyphy song. But there is definitely something for everybody. I got something for the streets, the people that are out there on the 'block' kicking it, drinking, smoking what ever their doing. I got something that will just make you stop and think. Ya know it be like 'that's deep right there, I went thru that' or some of my peoples went thru that. Then of course I got the songs for the ladies, ya know I got to take care of them; cause they ride with Celly too. So I am just hitting it from every angle man, like I always do I always do I try to keep it well rounded. I just don't want to have an album going in one direction, I like to just mix it all up and have something for everybody, and I was able to do that once again.

ThugLifeArmy – On Bay Classics you throw out a shout out to Tupac (2Pac), Makaveli and the other fallen souljahs. Are things cooling down out on the west coast? First the Mac Dre murder and then everyone was a little nervous when the Tookie Williams murder was taking place. Everyone really didn't know what to expect from the fall out of Tookie's execution, so are things like pretty calm out there now?

Celly Cel – Yeah it's a little calm right now but I mean you never really know out here cause it's just wild out here man; at the same time it can be cool but at any minute some bull shit could jump off. For now everybody is just trying to get their money and come together and just blow up the whole west coast. That is what we should have been doing. I think the focus is more on that; everybody wants to get behind us and push this as far as it can go. That's the best thing about it; we are trying to keep it positive and get this money and have us have good success with all the music at the same time.

ThugLifeArmy – On that track you also say 'everybody wants to be like us', that seems to be so true recently. How do you see the Bay and west as a whole coming thru this sudden notice of the Bay and the other talent in the west?

Celly Cel – I think it is a beautiful thing man because like I said we've been here. A lot of people say we are back but to me we never left. It's just where people were looking. They were looking in other places. They weren't looking here. They knew we was here but at the same time, for some strange reason people don't want to give us the exposure that deserve. Like we talked

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before and in our last interview we talked about how there is no real west coast artist who ever touched the cover of the Source or the Vibe, ya know. And things like that, I mean it's out there, it's not a secret. We all know there are none of us on TRL, they might give us MTV2 – but they don't give us TRL. So things like that man and it's obvious that for some reason they don't want us to shine. I don't know if it's like fallout from when we lost Biggie and Pac (2Pac), and maybe they feel like maybe it's our fault for all that – the west coast's fault for all that – I don't know. But for some reason it's like 'ok they out of the loop now – let's keep them out'. And I feel like that's the mentality, but we are just trying to just kick the door down and let them know we aren't going nowhere. We here ya know? And yeah we lost the greatest rapper of all time. We lost the KING of the west coast: Tupac (2Pac) but at the same time you can't just say 'ok Pac gone the west is gone', we riding for Tupac, you know what I'm saying? We are going to continue his legacy, and we are here. We need to kick these doors down and let them know 'Ya'all are going to pay attention to us... we aren't going nowhere'. Like it or not we're here and sooner or later they are going to have to focus on us and that is what's happening now and it's a beautiful man – we have to take advantage of that.

ThugLifeArmy – [I have added that track \(Bay Classics\) to this interview, really like that. Who did the production on Bay Classics?](#)

Celly Cel – This dude out here named Prohezak. He's from the Bay area, East Palo Alto in the Bay. He done that. He did production for me before. He does some production for E-40, he did some stuff for Daz out there in LA, he's been doing his thing.

ThugLifeArmy – Who did the rest of the production?

Celly Cel – I have production from this up and coming producer who is real hot around here named Gotti. This is like his first album he actually got on. He sent me some tracks and to me if the beats are hot .their slappin – I'm going to get on them. I don't care who the producer is if it's hot I want it. So he sent me some tracks and I felt it. We probably did like 6 songs together. And then I got down with Sean T. Like I said before he has done production for everybody from E-40 to Mac Dre to myself; anybody around the Bay - Keek tha Sneak. Everybody out here got Sean T beats on there so I got down with Sean T of course. I got down with the JMC Mob they are out of LA. They work with Raz B, formally of B2K, they are part of his production team; I got a track from them. And my boi Hobo Tone out of Kansas City, I got a track from him. And my boi Versatyle he is an up and comer. He came up with Mike Mosley, trying to work with him from time to time. Mike Mosley is like the first producer with the Sik Wit It camp when Sik Wit It first came out, Mike Mosley was a big part of that. So Versatile kinda worked with him, and he got a lot of heat to. A few up and comers and a few veterans; just trying to keep it going man, see

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what I can do with it.

ThugLifeArmy – It is good to see the Bay blowing up now especially since this is being referred to as the Year of Tupac (2Pac) with the 10th anniversary of his death approaching and a lot of things going on in tribute to him; and Pac had a lot of love for the Bay. When you think of Tupac what's the strongest memory that comes to mind?

Celly Cel – I remember we were out, we were at Spice 1's video shoot in Oakland and Pac was there. Pac walked up to me and he said 'when I heard your song 'Bailin" Thru My Hood' I had to go find the producer who did that'. He said 'Man I play that song all day, every day'. I mean that was big, because I'm sitting up here like 'I play Tupac music all day every day, and for him to come and tell me that he is riding around listening to me; I mean that was just the biggest compliment that anybody could have ever gave me; and I'll never forget that. And I always tell people that ya know. Any time they ask 'do you know Pac'? I kicked it with him many times but just what he said – what he told me right there it was just big for me; cause I wasn't expecting that. I will always cherish that moment.

ThugLifeArmy – Besides from 'maturing' as an artist how has your talent changed over the years.

Celly Cel – I would say confidence in what I'm writing and my delivery when I go into the sound booth. Before I'd be rappin and as you go along you get better but everybody don't get the confidence. It's almost like a 'cockiness' like you know, when it comes out it is going to come out right; it is going to come out just how you planned it. And being able to take risks, just to go out there and just write – what ever you want to write. Cause before, when you first start your worried about what people think. Ya know I want to write this and that - then like naw they might not like that or they might not want to hear that. Then it gets to a point like now, man I write whatever I feel like writing and the way I am going to say it – I mean they are either going to love it or their not, but at the same time having the confidence to go in there and just put my thoughts down and let the world know what I'm thinking – without even second guessing it. That all comes with being in the business for so long.

ThugLifeArmy – This is what your 7th or 8th album?

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Celly Cel – Actually as solo albums this is number 6. A lot of people think I got more records because I've been in the game so long but I was spreading the albums out. I dropped one like every two years. I wasn't coming like every year. So I actually got the Heat 4 To Azz album. I got the Killa Kali album. I got the "G" Files. I got Deep Conversation. And I got It"z Real Out Here and the new one that is out right now Slaps, Straps & Baseball Hats is number 6.

ThugLifeArmy – How big a catalog would you say you have built in your career? How many tracks.

Celly Cel – Actually I also got a Best Of Celly Cel out there. I got a compilation called Live From the Ghetto. I got a group album I did with Spice 1 and Jayo Felony called the Criminalz. So all that together I got a good solid catalog and also the things I'm getting ready to put out to this year. Plus the DVD called 'Rap Life Behind the Scenes. I got a few things; catalog is looking real good – steadily building.

ThugLifeArmy – You are known for being a 'real' type dude. You keep everything real it seems, do you think being real has hurt or helped your career?

Celly Cel – I think it helps. I think it helps a lot because I got fans that say they have been with me from day one and that's the reason why; because they say they can relate to my music. They say the messages in my music is like them looking in the mirror at themselves, looking at their own life. It's like 'how can he know what I'm going thru?' It's like I touch them, ya know what I'm saying. I touch them in a way where they say they can take my first album and play it today and just let the whole thing play, not take it out as if it just came out. That all comes from being real and being able to relate with people and telling them I know what's going on out here – cause I'm going thru it to. I just letting them know I'm just like ya'all. I come from where ya'all come from, I've been thru what ya'all been thru or I know people that have been thru what you have been thru. And being able to express that and they can grab on to that is what has given me my longevity and that's why I'm still able to put out records.

ThugLifeArmy – Have to mention I enjoyed the Celly Cel Rap Life Behind the Scenes DVD, how is it doing?

Celly Cel – It's doing kool but at the same time the company I was with, I was their first DVD

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they distributed so it is almost like it went under the radar. But it's still a good thing because I almost have part 2 together. Part 2 is really going to end up like Part 1 because this time I got an outlet where I can get it out everywhere; and this time everybody will be able to go out and get it.

ThugLifeArmy – Your group the Hillside Stranglaz, what are they doing now. Did they ever release their CD?

Celly Cel – Naw, we're still building the hype, and now we're ready. I am getting so many e-mails about when are the Stranglaz coming and there is so much anticipation built up – cause we have building this hype since like 2001. I put out a compilation called Live From the Ghetto, and I put a song from the Hillside Stranglaz on there and ever since then we have just been building it. We had intentions on dropping it before, but for what ever reason it didn't come out and to me it's a good thing. Because people keep asking and saying I can't wait I can't wait. We went in the lab and it's official the album is done. We did it and it is ready to come out and we are going to drop it in August of this year. The name of the album is Bad Influence; and for people who don't know the members of the Hillside Stranglaz are myself Celly Cel, my brother Mac Reese, and two of my other home boys from the Hillside of Vallejo – same home as me, 40 atter and the Click; one is named Da Enemy and there others name is Protégé: that's the group right there.

ThugLifeArmy – What's the buzz in Cali about the upcoming Ice Cube album and the Lil Eazy E album? Do you think those 2 drops will keep this 'west coast' hype moving in a positive direction?

Celly Cel – Definitely because first of all with Lil Eazy I mean everybody knows Eazy-E (Eric 'Eazy E' Wright founder of NWA and Ruthless Records) opened the door for all of us. If it wasn't for Eazy-E I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing and none of these independent artists would be doing what their doing. The doors to the west coast wouldn't be open; there wouldn't even be a door on the west coast if it wasn't for Eazy-E. So his son coming thru you have to bow down to him and pay homage to him. You have to go get his record, just because of the legacy that Eazy-E left. And if your out here and you don't get it there is something wrong. You don't know your history. So I am definitely going to get it first day it comes out. And as far as Ice Cube, ya know he also came in with Eazy-E and he just took it to another level. I have always liked Ice Cube music. Hopefully one day I can do a song with Ice Cube. I am definitely going to get both of them records when they come out. I think they will put the west coast on a whole other level. Like right now, like ya said they are already looking at us and then with those two records coming out it will be like icing on the cake.



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ThugLifeArmy – Any future things planned with Spice or WC or Mack 10?

Celly Cel – Definitely, I am definitely going to get Dub on this next record and me and Spice are definitely going to do a Criminalz Part 2, I don't know if we are going to get a third member or if just me and him are going to ride it out together, I don't know yet. And I definitely want to get down with Mack 10 again to, and like I said Ice Cube – so there's a lot of things I'm trying to do and I feel like I got a lot more music to make. So a lot of the people you named I'm sure, or I'm pretty positive that we are going to get down together. And also Xzibit. I just got off the phone with Xzibit the other day and me and Xzibit are going to do a song. I am just steady networking, trying to build this thing up and give the people what they want. They want to hear you get down with all these other artists, so I am trying to bring that to them.

ThugLifeArmy – That was my next question was about a "The Criminalz" or a Spice 1 album. If you can't get a third member are you just going to do a Celly – Spice 1 album?

Celly Cel – Exactly, if we do that we are still going to call it a Criminalz Part 2. So either we get a third member, if we ain't able to do that for what ever reason; then me and Spice are just going to go ahead and knock it out and it will be Criminalz Part 2. So we will get that ready, if we don't drop that this year definitely in the spring time 2007. But it is coming.

ThugLifeArmy – Have you done any collaborations or mixtapes lately?

Celly Cel – Naw, I haven't really got on the mixtapes. I had a few DJ's getting at me asking me to host them for them and get on them and what not. Eventually I will have something coming out. I kind da wanted to hold off and do a Realside Records mix tape with me and all my artists, and do it that way. So one way or the other I'm going to go ahead and slide one out there while it's still hot and everybody still want them.

ThugLifeArmy – Well the state of the Bay area looks great right now. Since you're the Boss of the Bay what is your outlook for the state of the Bay a year from now?

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Celly Cel – A year from now if we do it how we are suppose to do it we should be right back where we was before 2Pac (Tupac) left us and we should be in the game, and no doubt about it nobody can say anything about us except they did their thing and we respect that. If we do what happened before; and what that is I think a lot of people went in the studio and just slapped records together and just tried to just throw them out and make some quick money – and I think that really really hurt us. On top of us not being able to get the exposure we deserve then people just started not caring about their product. If we go in here and we give our 110% and we put out quality records ain't no stopping us. I think a year from now we will still be growing and we will start getting some of the respect we deserve. I don't think we will ever get the respect we deserve but I know we will get some of it; a lot of it. I don't think we will never get all of it because all media outlets are on the East Coast.

ThugLifeArmy – I have to say one thing we have to throw into that mix when we talk about 2Pac (Tupac) is we had Death Row Records then. And we don't have Death Row Records now so.

Celly Cel – Yeah that's true. So somebody else has to step up and be that Death Row. Somebody has to fill that void because we can't just let this fade away, it' to big. And like you said Death Row, the anticipation when Pac got out of prison and Pac signed with Death Row Records – the anticipation was so big because they already had Snoop and the Dogg Pound and Dr. Dre, and now Tupac coming ; I mean it was so big. And then all of the sudden Pac left and it was like all the air went out. And nobody stepped in and filled the void. And years went by and it's kinda like 'ok, what ya all going ta do'? 'Who ya all going to come up with'? What label is going to come in now? What artist is going to come in now? And because we don't have the media outlet to build hype it was almost a done deal. So now we basically have just kept fighting, biting and scratching and grinding it out to the point where people start paying attention again; and that's where we are at now. And now we have opportunities for one of these labels to fill that void or one of these artists to – well you can't fill Tupac's void but for somebody to blow up and be like that artist that stands out: cause you can't replace Pac but you can actually blow up and stand out. So we need somebody to come in and be that one. My mentality is why not me. So I am going to keep pushing like every other artist is and eventually like you said a year from now maybe it might be me, might be somebody else but I feel somebody out here will be shining and one of these labels will be shinning and we will get some of the respect we deserve.

ThugLifeArmy – With the west on the up swing now who do you see really making an impact besides E-40 and of course yourself that are coming out of the west and especially the Bay Area.

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Celly Cel – Out of the Bay, I think Messy Marv is making a lot of noise right now. He's got some good music and he has a tight flow; a lot of people like Messy ya know he's real. He comes with the streets and all that behind him so I think Messy is somebody to look out for.

ThugLifeArmy – What about Balance and Frontline?

Celly Cel – Yeah they tight. Before I was just taking it to a - I would say that is more like 'party' music and more kinda hip-hop' sih. And I think to get to that level where you just stand out amongst everyone else you have to be true to the streets, because the end of the day that's all we had. I mean when we first came into this game we weren't in the magazines, we weren't on the radio – it was word of mouth on the street to sell records. So at the end of the day you have to have the streets behind you.

ThugLifeArmy – If you were not blessed to be a rap artist, or the gift to be a lyricist what do you see Celly Cel doing today instead?

Celly Cel – I probably would be playing sports or if I wasn't playing sports I would probably be in the movies; which I am eventually try to do now; but that is something else I want to do. I have always had a love for movies. I always just wanted to watch movies all day, And then my father he use to do a lot of acting and he wrote plays and scripts, so I always had a love for that. So either one of the two is what I would have been doing. And like I say I am trying to get into that now – so be on the look out. Don't be surprised if you see me pop up in one of these movies or one of these TV shows or something. You might see me pop up somewhere within the next year.

ThugLifeArmy – So what can we look forward to from Celly Cel and Realside Records in the near future? Another DVD – shows, wedding plans what ya got going on.

Celly Cel – (Chuckles) Well right now like you say the new album is out there right now; "Slaps, Straps & Baseball Hats" opening the doors up for all of us. And then I'm coming right behind that with the Hillside Stranglaz 'Bad Influence' album. Then I'm dropping my fellow artist DC, he's from the Bay Area out of San Jose. He's coming after the Hillside Stranglaz. Then I am going to drop the Best of Celly Cel Part 2, I think it's about time to do that; cause Part 1 came out back in like '99. So it's about time for Part 2, and I am just going to put out the stuff – all the

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old Jive stuff that they didn't put on Part 1. None of the Realside stuff cause that will be separate when I do the Best of Celly Cel Part 3 that will be the Realside movement. So Part 2 will just be the Sik Wit It stuff. And then I also got a compilation called 'The Wild West' which is coming out this year. That features The Game, Too Short, Daz Dillinger, E-40, Suga Free, MC Eiht all kinds of people on there; that's going to be big. I also got a Dirty South one man, cause we also get a lot of luv in the south. So I got a Dirty South compilation coming out. It's not really a Dirty South comp; it's actually people from the west, from the south and from the mid-west and it's called The Gumbo Pot. I got people like Twista, Lil Jon, Devon the Dude, Silk the Shocker, Juvenile and I'm on there of course: E-40 is on there, Hillside Stranglaz are on there. Hobo Tone from the mid-west is on there. It's big, I am just trying to connect with everybody everywhere and do it big. Like I said we are getting luv from other places so I am trying to show the luv back. The DVD – Rap Life Part 2 will be out with like concert footage, in store autograph signings, me just kicking it; ya know in the club and kicking it on the block. Ya know just like your hanging out with Celly Cel, you see how I do it out here. And I got another DVD called Eye Candy that's coming. All these sexy ass beautiful women ya know with bikinis on and dropping it like it's hot. Ya know you all need to be on the look out for that. A lot of good things going on at Realside Records. I am actually going to go ahead and do it like I should have been doing it before, now I am just so motivated and focused and it is like it's all about product and not just throwing products out but putting quality product out; and that's what we are going to do. And remember if your not rollin with Realside Records, ya all ain't real.

ThugLifeArmy – Anything we failed to touch on or anything you need to get off ya chest? I noticed you didn't mention the 'wedding plans'

Celly Cel – (Laughs)

ThugLifeArmy – The only reason I asked was because after the last interview a lot of emails from the women wanting to know if you were married.

Celly Cel – (Chuckles) Naw, I'm not married and I'm not getting married no time soon.

ThugLifeArmy – So they should just head to Cali right?

Celly Cel – Yeah they might as well come on out. (both have a good chuckle)

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ThugLifeArmy – Any Shout outs?

Celly Cel – I just want to say man much luv to Rob for having me come thru and represent one more time. And much luv to everybody that's logged onto the web site. Ya all stay real. Ya all keep riding with us man – this is ThugLifeArmy.com man. Tupac left a legacy and you all got to respect that and know about it. If you don't know about it, read about it. Everything you need to know about him is right here in this site. And he was a real person man because I knew him personally man and he was real. That was a homie man, and he had luv and everybody needs to respect that and we need to bring this west coast back to where he wanted it at. We need to ride for him and all of us need to ride and blow it up and it's all luv – we got luv for everybody.

ThugLifeArmy – Well man I appreciate that. We will be watching the west and especially yourself, cause ya never disappoint us with anything you drop. I wish you all the best with the new album and let's keep this west side ride riding and the Bay area poppin.

Celly Cel – Appreciate that man. Thanks a lot.

ThugLifeArmy – Peace -

Celly Cel – Alright

Listen to "Bay Classics" [HERE](#)

For more info on Celly Cel visit his websites:

## Hip-Hop Interview with Bay Area Rap Boss Celly Cel

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