

Hip-Hop Rap MC Talib Kweli Inks Warner Deal

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The critically acclaimed Brooklyn born hip-hop rap MC Talib Kweli Greene, aka Talib Kweli, has been added to the artist roster of Warner Bros. Records.

In addition, Warner Bros. has signed an exclusive deal with Kweli and his partner Corey Smyth to market, promote, and distribute new artists the pair signs to their label Blacksmith Music Corp. The first release on Blacksmith/WBR will be a new solo album from South African-born female rapper Jean Grae.

"We are excited about the cutting-edge thought process that WBR presents in the marketplace," Smyth says. "Kweli is a touring artist, who is on the road 150 to 200 days a year, which is not the norm in hip-hop. I feel that [WBR CEO] Tom Whalley and his staff understand that, and they will think outside the box when it comes to how we will market, promote and sell Kweli, Jean Grae, and future Blacksmith artists. We are looking forward to making this a true success and money-making venture for all."

Whalley is equally pleased about Kweli and Blacksmith joining the fold. "Talib's personal integrity and lyrical gifts have made him one of the most respected figures in rap," Whalley says. "He is a vanguard artist with a reputation for bringing quality to everything he does. We are thrilled that Talib and Smyth have decided to bring their vision to our company."

Considered hip-hop's premier scholarly MC, Kweli first made a name for himself in the late '90s by rapping alongside Mos Def as part of the alternative hip-hop group Black Star, which rejected mainstream rap's embrace of violence and bling in favor of addressing issues of black consciousness and self-love. Kweli and Black Star's label Rawkus helped usher in a golden age of socially aware DIY hip-hop that still influences young artists today. Kweli has also released two well-received solo albums, 2002's "Quality," which featured production by a then-unknown Kanye West, and 2004's "The Beautiful Struggle," which addressed such issues as the plight of AIDS-infected orphans in Sierra Leone.

Both Kweli and Grae are currently at work on their first Blacksmith/WBR CDs with release dates planned for Spring 2006.