

KRS-1 Staying True

Written by Westside ID231

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Santa Cruz CA.'s liberal atmosphere traditionally draws revolutionary artists and speakers, which could explain why rapper / activist KRS-One has chosen to visit this small town for the third time in two years.

In his performance Sunday, the artist takes the Catalyst stage with opening acts Lyrics Born and the Serendipity Project.

But don't expect the 38-year-old artist to spout sexist rhymes. With a name that means "Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everything," this rapper has a clear political agenda.

More social justice preacher than commercial musician, KRS-One teaches his Temple of Hip Hop gospel from his musical pulpit, assuming his role as one of the more passionate and articulate artists ever to hit the charts.

KRS-One began his professional career in the mid-1980s with help from friend and fellow rapper Scott La Rock and their group Boogie Down Productions (BDP). After La Rock's death in 1987, KRS-One began to speak out against rap's traditionally misogynistic vocabulary, took a firm stance against violence and even promoted safe sex in BDP's 1999 album, "By All Means Necessary."

But four albums later, the group's positive politics fell out of fashion with gangsta rap's growing influence and their success began to wane.

Not one to give up on his goals, KRS-One continued to release solo albums throughout the 1990s and began to tour the university lecture circuit. A big supporter of higher education, KRS-One said in a Vibe Magazine interview, "You want to influence America, your ass better be in university."

According to KRS-One, "(hip-hop) is that course at the university that will tell you what to do with every other degree you've got." The artist may be pleased to know UC Santa Cruz is one step ahead with a hip-hop culture class taught by American Studies faculty member Tricia Rose and an appearance by Chuck D as part of the UCSC Lecture series.

In the past five years, KRS-One has released four records. After he educated the public on African-American culture and history in "KRS-One Presents: The Temple of Hip Hop Culture" (1999), the rapper explored religious and spiritual perspectives in the 2002 album, "Spiritually Minded."

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The artist is currently touring to promote his new album, "Keep Right" (2004). A collection of pumping political beats and soulful contemplative tracks, the album maintains KRS-One's tradition of combining politics and pleasure.

But while KRS-One may be the most famous artist playing the show, opening acts Lyrics Born and the Serendipity Project are far from inferior in talent.

Up-and-coming rapper Lyrics Born raced to the top of San Francisco Bay Area hip-hop charts with his 2003 release, "Later That Day." The Tokyo-born rapper began his professional career in the 1990s with his group Latyx on the Quannum label.

Since then, Born has continued to develop his relationship with the label as well as perform in collaboration with acclaimed hip-hop groups Blackalicious, Joyo Velarde and the Lifesavas.

The Serendipity Project has been renowned for socially conscious lyrics and funky, sophisticated, beats. Known for hosting monthly MC battles, the Santa Cruz group has shared the stage with the Pharcyde, Tha Liks, Fishbone, Z-Man, Soul Majestic, Dub Congress and Wisdom.

With the powers of KRS-One, Lyrics Born and the Serendipity Project combined, the Catalyst show will not only entertain and invigorate audiences but provide lessons in social consciousness and tolerance.

If You Can Go:

WHO: KRS-One.

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. doors open; 8 p.m. show Sunday.

WHERE: Catalyst, 1011 Pacific Ave., Santa Cruz.

TICKETS: \$18 in advance, \$20 at the door.

[Source](#)