

Zion I To Drop True Livin' on 4-19

Written by Robert ID1059

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Long heralded by critics as one of the finest home-grown products to emerge from the Bay Area's burgeoning and legendary underground rap hip-hop world, Zion I is set to release their third and best LP to date, True & Livin'.

True & Livin' --which features Talib Kweli, Gift of Gab, Del The Funky Homosapien, Aesop Rock and social activist Fred Hampton Jr.--will undoubtedly become one of the most important and talked about independent releases of the year. And for good reason: True & Livin' is a musical amalgamation of rap, soul, jazz and blues, which runs the gamut from saxophone soaked reflections of life in ghetto America, to synthesized, upbeat, socially conscious anthems to acoustic guitar-driven southern blues ballads. And in a marked break from their previous two albums, True & Livin' is full of serious subject matter, tackling issues like relationships, social injustice and perhaps, most striking, whether the love of hip-hop is really worth the struggle to make music and survive doing it.

"Since the album is coming out on our label," explains MC Zion, "it is the exact record we wanted to make. We didn't cater to a particular fan-base or any aspect of the industry."

In another break, Zion I has opted for a combination of live instruments coupled with a stunning array of sample-driven, soul and funk heavy beats, as opposed to their trademark drum-and-bass driven soundscapes.

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“This is the type of production that I have always wanted to do,” explains Amp Live, Zion I’s producer. “For production on True & Livin’ I used gritty samples, live music and bangin’ ass drums, topped off with a little electro sauce. It really all came together perfectly on this record.”

The result is a beautiful, organic and at times downright moving sonic odyssey—enough to make even the shallowest listener contemplate, dance or get up off the proverbial couch and take to the streets.

Of course, making beautiful, provocative music is nothing new for the Oakland-based MC Zion and Amp Live, who exploded onto the national hip-hop scene in 2000 with their debut LP *Mind Over Matter*. The record melded hip-hop with drum & bass and jazz elements and is now viewed by many as an indie classic.

In 2003, the group dropped their much anticipated follow-up, *Deep Water Slang*, which garnered both *Source* and *VIBE* award nominations for ‘Best Independent Album of the Year,’ and pushed the group on tours and live appearances with the likes of Kool Keith, Lyrics Born, Del The Funky Homosapien, De La Soul, Jurassic 5, Mos Def and The Roots (Zion I has also been a mainstay on the MTV 2/Mountain Dew Circuit Breakout tour the last two years.)

Sure enough, through *True & Livin’*, Zion I has proved defiantly, once and for all, that it’s impossible to underrate MC Zion’s sharp poetics and Amp Live’s varied and original production; that it’s impossible to dismiss the group as simply ‘underground hip-hop; that it’s impossible to

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ignore their musical call to arms.... That this is good, soul-healing music. Period.

In support of their new record Zion I has scheduled a worldwide tour which will include stops in Japan, US, Canada, Germany, France, Netherlands and the UK.

True & Livin' drops April 19, 2005.

Check out their web site for more information. <http://www.zioncrew.com/>