

Hip-Hop Entrepreneur Pres Dupri Ignites Virgin Urban

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In just less than a year in existence, Virgin Records' Urban Music division has staged a massive growth spurt, scoring repeatedly on the top of airplay and sales charts over the course of the last several months. In all, five Virgin singles are currently active on the Urban and Rhythmic/Crossover charts, staking a market share claim that rivals such traditional leaders as Def Jam and Jive/Zomba in the current listings.

With a Number One Urban hit and Top 10 airplay in Rhythmic/Crossover, "I Think They Like Me," taken from the very first So So Def/Virgin album release (the Southern hip-hop multi-artist collection "Jermaine Dupri Presents...Young, Fly and Flashy, Vol. 1"), Atlanta-based 'snap' music groundbreakers DEM FRANCHIZE BOYZ have followed up quickly with a new Top 10 hit, "Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It," and their own album "On Top of Our Game," which is expected to make an impressive chart debut following its nationwide release today.

DFB were quickly joined in the Urban top 5 by the PURPLE RIBBON ALL-STARs' hip-hop single "Kryptonite." A second track from the Purple Ribbon All-Stars compilation album, "Got Purp? Vol. 2," "Body Rock," is rising up the Urban airplay chart currently. New South/Purple Ribbon/Virgin artist BUBBA SPARXXX has made a booming chart return in advance of his third album release, "The Charm," in stores April 4. The single "Ms. New Booty," featuring The Ying Yang Twins and Mr. ColliPark, zoomed directly into the Rhythmic Crossover top 10 in late January.

The label's surge is to continue through the year, as Jamaican dancehall king BEENIE MAN is completing a new album due out on July 18th, while Jermaine Dupri has been in the studio in Los Angeles with superstar JANET JACKSON, preparing her upcoming album, set for release later this year.

Jermaine Dupri said: "In today's music business climate, none of us can waste any time setting up the conditions for success. I'm proud of the way our artists and producers, along with the creative and marketing staff of Virgin, all contributed to creating cutting-edge product -- and then took it so aggressively to the marketplace, to both the core and crossover audience. I knew that Virgin could become much more than a contender in Urban music, and we are all going to show the industry just how hot one label can get in the weeks and months ahead."