

## Bronx Hip-Hop Rapper Fat Joe Stays Focused

Written by NiKKi ID1531

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If NY hip-hop rap artist Fat Joe wanted to sell records he would play up the sentiments of the beef track "My Fo Fo," his gun-wielding response to 50 Cent's "Piggy Bank" attacks on him from earlier this year. Fat Joe would start trash-talking about other rap and hip-hop artists. He would conjure up the memory of his deceased pal NY rap legend Big Pun.

That's not Fat Joe's style, though. The Bronx rapper (whose full name is Joseph Cartagena) prefers to lean back and let the music speak for itself. With "Get It Poppin'," a collaboration with Nelly, already climbing the charts as the album's second hit, his music is making a pretty good argument to back his self-proclaimed reign as hip-hop's "King of New York."

"I just want to put out hot songs," Joe said, calling from a break on his recent tour with rapper Nelly. "I'm not into battle rapping. I never had any misunderstandings ever."

After 50 Cent verbally attacked him for his involvement on Ja Rule's hit "New York," Fat Joe said he was set to just leave the beef alone. "It was a publicity stunt, and I was used and abused like he thought I was some cheap whore," Joe said. "But I had no problems with this gentleman, and I tried to ignore it. The support I got from fans was overwhelming."

Then, his son Ryan heard "Piggy Bank" and asked his dad to fight back. "Nobody wants to hear anyone talking crazy about their father," Joe said. "So I did the song, and I still wasn't sure if I was going to put the record out. When I played it for him, he was so happy, so I decided to release it."

Rapping to "Flintstones"

"My Fo Fo" is a blistering reply to 50 Cent, claiming the top-selling rapper's songs all sound the same, that he's a police informant, and that he's jealous of others' success. "He's the fakest thug you ever seen," Joe raps to the rhythm of the theme from "The Flintstones."

Joe said that regardless of how 50 responds, "My Fo Fo" is the only song he will dedicate to the

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beef. "I'm answering him once and that's it," he said. "He's a rap bully, and he's gonna keep it coming, but I've answered him, and I've had enough. I'm gonna keep it moving."

"All or Nothing" shows how Fat Joe is moving forward, cobbling together a variety of styles and a bunch of hits into a cohesive album. "It's taken a lot of work, but I think it turned out really, really well," Joe said. "I'm happy with it. It has everything that I felt for the current climate. It has songs that are for the core audience. It has songs that will cross over to the clubs. It has songs that could be one of the summer's smashes."

"So Much More," another smooth Fat Joe performance produced by Cool & Dre, has already become a radio hit. "Everybody Get Up," which smashes together phrasing from Public Enemy's "911 Is a Joke" and Marvin Gaye's "Sexual Healing" over a typically cool Timbaland beat, will likely follow it. On "Listen Baby," producer Swizz Beatz lets Joe go to town over a sample from Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell's "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" to create a poppier sound that fits well with Joe's recent duet with Jennifer Lopez, "Hold U Down," which also appears on "All or Nothing."

The album also has its harder moments, though. "Temptation" is a bruising tale of murder and treachery told in two parts, while "Safe 2 Say," produced by Just Blaze, takes the lead sample from Public Enemy's "Don't Believe the Hype" and welds it to a woozy guitar solo to give Joe a tougher backdrop for his rhymes.

Summer anthem of '05?

Given the right circumstances, any of those songs could be this year's summer anthem, the way Fat Joe and Terror Squad's "Lean Back" dominated the radio and the clubs last year. "You never expect it to be huge or big when you're creating a song," Joe said. "I never thought I'd be seeing grandmas and little kids leaning back. Now, you see people at weddings and sweet 16 parties all leaning back. It was "Lean Back" mania for a while there."

Fat Joe said he hopes to recreate that kind of reaction through hard work and touring. Having recently wrapped up the Nelly tour and gone out on his own promotional tour, he is one of the rap artists chosen by Legendary Parliament-Funkadelic's Bootsy Collins to mix it up with rockers Red Hot Chili Peppers, Garbage and 311 at the inaugural AmsterJam, billed as the

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biggest mash-up concert ever, at Randalls Island on Aug. 20.

"With that stuff, I never forget that I'm one lucky dude," he said.