

Is Hip-Hop Ready For A Rock Star

Written by Keith ID1438

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In these turbulent times of war, trashy reality TV, divided blue and red states, and cardboard politically correct censors, there is one man who can rise above the madness. There is a force willing to fight for the underdog and the downtrodden. There's an individual who takes pride in being a role model for millions of kids in need of guidance in a violent and sex-obsessed world gone out of control.

Unfortunately, that man is Bizarre.

What else can be said for the weirdest member of Detroit's notorious platinum plus hip-hop rap crew D12 (Dirty Dozen). Indeed, in past lyrical outbursts, Bizarre has boasted of engaging in S&M orgies with midgets, bumping off (late) comic actor John Candy, and mistakenly picking up transvestites in a drug-induced haze while recklessly wheeling a Harley Davidson.

Having delivered his brand of demented comic relief meets sicko lyrical brilliance on D12's SoundScan-topping releases *Devil's Night* (2001) and *D12 World* (2004), Bizarre is once again poised to piss off the status quo with *Hannicap Circus*, his solo debut on Redhead Records/Arsenal Entertainment/Sanctuary Urban. And while such a seemingly disturbing album title is bound to stir protest among P.C. enforcers, Bizarre maintains there's a more conceptual meaning behind the madness. "I came up with the title because I really felt like most musicians that I've been around are fucking weird," says the matter-of-fact rotund emcee. "I know I have my little weird ways, so I consider myself a special artist. I'm a guy that chews paper, wears a shower cap in public, pops Vicodin pills and goes fishing. There's not a lot of entertainment out there...everything is so hardcore, shoot 'em up bang bang. I'm here to lighten up the hip-hop game."

Hannicap Circus finds Bizarre stepping out from the motley crew safety net of D12 members, fellow rap artists Eminem, Kon Artis, Swift, Kuniva and Proof. And according to the hip-hop wildman, it's about damn time. His public fistfights for control over the Dirty Dozen against "leader" Marshall Mathers have become legendary in music industry circles ("Marshall was just asking to be punched out," riffs Bizarre.) The ongoing rivalry picks up from where D12's 2004 hit "My Band" left off on his first single "Rock Star." On the fast-paced Slim Shady produced track, Bizarre proclaims his dominance as an artist who has exceeded the likes of Elvis, The Osmonds, and Kiss combined. Who could argue? "I'm the man, the lead singer of the band, on stage for thousands of fans/I used to be a dancer for Hammer, if you look you can see me in the camera," Bizarre flips in his trademark husky flow.

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On “Bad Day,” an hilarious reworking of Ice Cube’s 1992 West Coast classic “It Was A Good Day,” Bizarre is backed by hip-hop producing legend Erick Sermon and unleashes a witty dose of off-centered story-telling. “I gotta go because I got on flip-flops, if I slow down then my feet will drop/Had to stop at the red light, everybody laughing at my yellow dirt bike,” says the dejected rapper. The brazen “Gospel Weed” (producer TK) proves that nothing is sacred in the warped mind of Bizarre. And the x-rated R&B fueled “Porno Bitches,” produced by D12’s Mr. Porter and featuring fellow comedic rhymers Devin tha Dude and Outkast’s own Big Boi, finds the deranged emcee claiming, “I love porn, but niggas be hating/R. Kelly ain’t got nothing on the shit I be making.”

In keeping with Bizarre’s unpredictable showmanship, Hannicap Circus’ maddening diverse range of collaborations, from stic.man of the politically conscious group Dead Prez to fellow offbeat Detroit emcee King Gordy, more than makes sense. But it’s the autobiographical coming-of-age tale “Hip Hop” (Hi Tek) and the heartfelt family dedication “Coming Home” (Raphael Saadiq) that’s sure to surprise longtime Bizarre followers. “Whenever I leave, I know it still hurt,” he testifies over the latter soulful track that also features fellow D12 spitter Kuniva. The song, which conveys Bizarre’s pain of leaving his wife and kids behind for the pitfalls of the road, is a side of the man, born Rufus Johnson, rarely visualized in his music. The self-described “eccentric family man,” who now calls Atlanta home, says he wanted to use Hannicap Circus to show there’s another side to his wildman persona.

“A lot of the shit on Hannicap Circus was made for weed smokers,” Bizarre freely admits. “But when I’m not rapping, I’m in Atlanta or Michigan fishing with my homeboys. I try to stay as normal as possible to keep myself grounded around my family. When D12 goes on tour it’s so wild. I like to go home and take the trash out to remind myself who I am.”

For Bizarre, hip-hop remains a vital fix for the wide-eyed ‘80s kid who worshiped rap royalty EMPD and KRS-One. Raised by his mother in a strict but loving Jehovah’s Witness household, young Rufus spent most of his early childhood shuttling back and forth from Texas to Detroit. By age 10, writing rhymes had become an obsession. Talent shows were an outlet well suited for the quirky, imaginative kid from Detroit’s 7 Mile. However, at 18, an independent Bizarre moved out of the religious constraints of home to follow his dream of a recording deal.

What followed is hip-hop history: The life-altering, early ‘90s meeting with Motown freestyle king Proof and a lyrical white kid named Eminem; the daily struggles to be heard in a city not known for having a burgeoning hip-hop scene; the legendary rap battles for rhyme supremacy at the

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now iconic Hip Hop Shop; the untimely shooting death of beloved member Bugz. No one ever said it would ever be easy.

“Everybody knew who the dopest emcees in Detroit were,” he confidently recalls of his early battle-rap days. “Once we found the chemistry was so sweet we just decided to leave the other groups we were in and make D12 the main focus. But during that time we went through a lot of shit. I ended up sometimes sleeping in my car just trying to be put on.”

Following Bizarre’s 1998 solo contract with independent Detroit label Federation Records which produced his aptly-titled underground assault *Attack Of The Weirdos*, D12 set their sights on bum rushing the national hip-hop stage. And a high profile Eminem recording deal with West Coast rap godfather Dr. Dre was just the opening D12 needed, as the crew eventually signed to Shady Records. Yet even after massive album sales, sold-out tours, and the pre-requisite spoils of partying and drugs, Bizarre wanted more.

He told his managers Max Gousse and Jeremy Geffen of his aspirations of becoming bigger than Young MC. A 2005 meeting with the Mathew Knowles-headed Sanctuary Urban Records Group was set. The perplexed yet impressed label promptly signed Bizarre through Geffen and Gousse’s Arsenal Entertainment and the four went on to executive produce *Hannicap Circus*. “With this album, I’m focusing on me,” he suggests with superstar swagger. “We had more control of what we are doing, with this deal. It was like, ‘Do I want to go to a large conglomerate label and sit around four years or do I want to go to a smaller label like Sanctuary and be the biggest thing that walks through the door?’”

And there’s more ahead. This summer Bizarre and D12 are going out on the blockbuster *Anger Management 3 Tour* with 50 Cent, G-Unit, Eminem and Lil’ Jon & the East Side Boyz. With the release of *Hannicap Circus* Bizarre is set to begin his reign as the only emcee that matters. “Hip-Hop will always be in my blood,” the stout rhymer proclaims with a laugh. “But now I got all the hoes and I’m doing all the shows, making all the money...I’m a rock star now!”

Bizarre Media Player is available here: <http://bizarresworld.com/player.html>

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