

Dialektric Blue: The Hip Hop Generals



Dialektric Blue: Outspoken and Upmost.

It's not everyday you meet an intelligent rapper, who is funny, well-versed on global issues and just a real fun person to chill with. Now imagine having two of these guys together and giving them artistic skill that goes beyond what some of the best international acts have on offer. Ladies and gentlemen, I present, Zimbabwe's own equivalent of Method Man and Redman - wait a second, they're even doper than the Def Squad generals - our very own Outspoken and Upmost, collectively known as Dialektric Blue!

The duo has become a respected tour de force in local Hip Hop circles and have started making their mark internationally, always pushing their act to the next level. The Zimbo Jam's new Hip Hop writer, Black Bird, spoke to the boys and this is what she found out from them:

On becoming a crew

Soon after completing high school we met at Solid Ridge Studios in Marlborough (On Point's joint, now called 'Stingy & Selfish Studios') where Outspoken (aka Out) was not only rapping but also making beats.

When Upmost came through Out realised that he was a real tight emcee. At that time Upmost had

to pay for studio time, but Out devised a way for him to come through and record for free - by forming a crew with him.

Together with Katt and V Styles, they formed Project Soldiers. Soon the crew split up and after a performance by Up and Out at Miss Harare Junior and a number of joint studio sessions at Vainsbridge Studios, they discovered that they were a self sufficient two-man crew. All the time spent together also meant that they became friends more than anything else.

Dialektric Who?

Dialektric Blue is a name that represents an energy, electric, that is balanced with calmness, blue. The way the name sounds and whatever feelings or thoughts it gives you, is what our name is about.

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Their comedic style

Well, we are just being ourselves. What sets us apart from other emcees is our realness because we are not trying to be like other rappers who are busy rapping about being gangsters. We would be taking up too

much space if we weren't different.

Other rappers on the Harare scene

In as much as there are real rappers, there are also fake rappers. We as Dialektric Blue are just doing 'us' and we hope other cats are being true to themselves and doing 'them'. You hear some emcees talking about hustling and pushing bimas, well then they should stick to doing that if that's what they really are about.

Outspoken's solo career

More opportunities for Out, means more opportunities for Dialektric Blue. I was happy for my homie. Would it have been better if none of us had blown up and we remained unheard and unseen emcees? Peeps were trying their hardest to use Outspoken's success to cause a division between us and split up the crew. However, what did touch me was how people were starting to gauge my performance based on the fact that I wasn't as popular as Out.

Outspoken adds...

In fact I think the whole Zim hip-hop scene always misinterprets the value of an emcee because as far as I am concerned cats only started realising that I was 'hot' after I went to perform in the States, now that's what I call fake. Someone who really appreciates what you do is the kind of person who will stop you in the road to give you props for some lines you say in a track, not for going on tour!

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With regards to the Upmost issue, these peeps out there don't know what Dialektric Blue's long term plans and goals are. This is just the beginning and what is happening in my

solo career is just the tip of the iceberg. The reason I work with Upmost is because we are in the same league. I'm not better than him, in fact I think he is a way doper emcee than myself.

Where on earth is all their recorded material?

We have worked at various studios and at one spot we did over 60 tracks but it never materialised into anything. So instead of being hungry emcees and hanging onto our material we give it away as reference material. Right now our focus is on doing shows.

The album!

We have two projects due for release in 2010. The first is The Release Point and the second one is a theatrical musical called The Domestic Workers Rebellion Project (Note from Black Bird: This will include the hilariously controversial song, "I Love My Baas, I Love My Madam"). However, we don't want to be rushed because we want to make a product that will last and make us some real money.

Why they ditched The Circle

Out: Well, I work full time so I am tired most of the time. I also travel out of the country a lot so I'm not even here most of the time. I often plan on going to The Circle but something always comes up then I can't make it. Besides, after all the battling is over what comes next? The Circle kind of limits what you can perform because it is too orientated towards battles and not performances.

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Up: I go to The Circle once in a while just to watch and when you don't want to perform cats think that you are fronting and thinking you too good for them. But it ain't like that, sometimes you

just want to watch others do their thing. I have also found that the content performed at The Circle is very crude and blingish, making some of us who don't rap about that stuff feel very out of place.

The style of hip-hop on show at The Circle isn't really our style of hip-hop so we wouldn't want to impose our ideology on others, so we prefer the Mashoko platform as it is more in line with who we are.

The Zim Hip Hop industry

Firstly, do we even have enough material to call it an industry? In our opinion there is no industry and we all need to lay the ground work for it to exist. We are getting there because there are so many studios, there's The Circle, Mashoko, The Lounge in Bulawayo and TV shows like Chuckies Heart Of The Rhythm which promote Zim Hip Hop. At one time when Metaphysics came he suggested that we start a network of everyone in the game (rappers, producers, graphic designers, dancers, etc) but no-one actually took up the idea. That kind of thing would help the industry too.

Advice to kids who want to take up the rap game

Well it depends on why you want to do it. If you are coming into Hip Hop for the passion then that's cool, but if you are coming into it for the money then you're wasting your time.

On female attention

Up: Well Outspoken seems to get a lot of attention for some reason or other.

Out: If we do get attention, maybe we don't notice it. I guess it's cause we are not mainstream rappers.

Black Bird: Thank you boys, I wish you guys all the best and I know ya'll are gonna go down in history! - **The Zimbo Jam**

Narratives of Hope: It Starts with us

A new title is now available from Weaver Press. **It Starts Within Us** is the product of a group of Zimbabwean NGOs who sought to discover their relevance in promoting development. They named this exercise 'Makadii-Linjani', or 'How are you doing?' and engaged with communities to discover if their development partners had benefited from their intervention - or not.

This important book not only documents stories of change but interrogates the process of evaluation, allow-

ing members of marginalized communities to speak for themselves, and providing the reader with a 'narrative of hope'. We discover how the need to change and develop begins with the harsh realities of poverty - exacerbated in Zimbabwe in the past decade by the effects of an economic, social, and political crisis of debilitating proportions.

For more information and to buy a copy of **Narratives of Hope** contact Weaver Press via their web site: www.weaverpresszimbabwe.com - **Kubatana**

Lifetime achievement award

HARARE - On August 24, the Centre for Applied Social Sciences in Zimbabwe (CASS), will award Zephaniah Phiri, the subject of *****The Water Harvester** by Mary Witoszynsky, a lifetime achievement award for his commitment to community programmes in agricultural innovation and water conservation and management on his farm in Msipane.

Small scale farming is not really in fashion at the moment; food production it is argued, would better be done on a bigger, more efficient scale. In Zimbabwe, where Phiri lives and works,

the take-over and break up of large, commercial farms has been attacked for its disastrous effects on national food production.

Zephaniah Phiri's story is a challenge to this prevailing mood. It is the story of a man who has spent much of his life developing new ways to harvest rainfall and preserve his soil. While the Zvishavane Water Project, of which Phiri is the founder, has received international attention and funding, its founder has remained loyal to his small-scale background. As a boy, he says that he was not aware of poverty. His family had enough

to eat and were happy. This kind of innocence and optimism runs through his tale. Ambition has led him not to make bigger and better projects but to find ways for more people to learn of his 'water planting' ideas.

Phiri was imprisoned and tortured for years, for helping Zimbabwe's freedom fighters, and later set up one of Zimbabwe's first indigenous NGOs, the Zvishavane Water Project, through which he broadened his range of innovations and his contact with farmers both in Zimbabwe and further afield. - **The New Agriculturalist**

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