

# 'I Phantom' boasts diverse, solid beats

CD review

**Helen Schumacher**  
Pulse Reporter

Since its inception, the Definitive Jux label has reigned as the high king of intelligent, talent-driven hip-hop. And with Mr. Lif's first full-length release on the label, the rule continues.

For those who are choking on the flashy images of Cadillac Escalades and platinum jewelry, the release "I Phantom" is a welcome departure from the consumer-driven rap MTV delights in shoving down the public's collective throat.

"I Phantom" chronicles the struggle of a man to survive in a rapidly decaying world. The album starts with a dream sequence in which the main character dies while robbing a store and is resurrected by hip-hop. His alarm goes off, and it is time for work, with the bulk of the album focusing on temptation of capitalism's fruit. The consequence is the loss of his family through divorce, neglect and suicide.

On "Live From the Plantation," Mr. Lif raps "We are all being murdered by a similar process / whether you work at the candy store or slave at the office / the purpose of our life is just to serve the economy / they misinform our minds to paint a picture of harmony."

The story climaxes with a nuclear holocaust — not the kind of subject matter veejays are likely to be prosti-



tuting during a "Spring Break in Cancun" broadcast.

But it's not the politically caustic message that supports the album. It is Mr. Lif's tight lyricism and the solid, diverse beats provided, in part, by

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Definitive Jux founder El-P that make "I Phantom" worth repeated listenings. Aesop Rock and Insight also contribute to the album.

Overall, "I Phantom" is meaty hip-hop — with more head-bobbing satisfaction than the usual mainstream fare.

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## Bond

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female "M," Bond's boss.

In many ways, "Tomorrow Never Dies," and "The World Is Not Enough," the other two Brosnan-led Bond flicks that followed "GoldenEye," are mundane exercises. These films have further pronounced that the character's name and formula are the only thing required to appeal to the masses and make a successful (read: profitable) flick.

Whether "Die Another Day," will continue to follow the set, formulaic trends remain to be seen. There are a few positive things indicating otherwise, however. Three years have lapsed between Friday's release and "The World is Not Enough," the last entry into the series.

This is the second-longest gap between releases in the Bond series, and perhaps it gave the writer, director and producers sufficient time to create a more quality product. Also, Oscar-award winning actress Halle Berry stars as Jinx, a female, Bond-like counterpart — so much so that producers have even discussed the possibility of her having her own spin-off film series.

Sadly, this will be the first official Bond flick not to include "Q," played timelessly by the late-actor Desmond Llewelyn. John Cleese, who appeared in the last film as "R," has been promoted to the new "Q."

Brosnan has signed on to play Bond for another film after "Die Another Day."

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