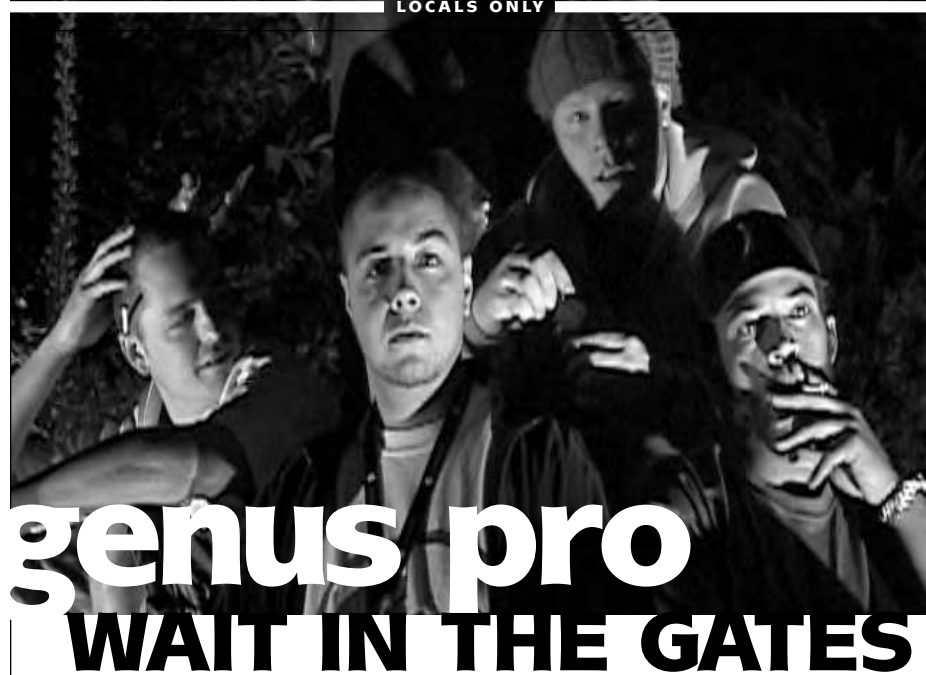




A FOLLOW-UP TO THEIR SOLD-OUT DEBUT • By Steven Sawada

It caught me off guard — the line from the song “What the Deal” off Genus Pro’s newest release, *Extract*. MC Garrick Bushek (aka Marv Ellis) raps, “Eugene is the city where we live. Jeff Ray told us to blow it up real big!” That’s how the new Genus Pro album begins: reppin’ Eugene right out of the gates.

Liquidating 1,000 CDs doesn’t sound like much in rap terms. In the commercial rap industry, where a hustler can sell one million records within a year of leaving the streets, it’s miniscule. Granted, Lil Jon worked for years before receiving any kind of nationwide recognition, but his new album sold more than two million records in nine weeks! For an upstart group of DIY, Oregon-based MCs like Genus Pro, moving 1,000 CDs represents something great.

From their initial pressing, Genus Pro sold approximately 650 copies of their debut album *Grow*. The other 350 were given to friends and sent to record labels and media as promotional material. Not only did the group recoup their costs, they did something that few local musicians accomplish: They made money.

That profit, along with money from private investors, has funded the production and release of their forthcoming album, *Extract*. Whereas *Grow* was co-produced by the Corbin brothers for Raging Family productions, Genus Pro took on the task of recording and producing their new album solely on their own. Bushek, with fellow MCs Aaron Noble (aka Elea’Zar) and Matthew Sunderland (aka Metric) recorded the album in the basement of the West 11th home that they all share. Sunderland produced the beats for the album.

Although the predominant sound throughout *Extract* is the farthest thing from a slick, super-produced major label blockbuster, he says that the group’s sessions went unhindered in their modest yet highly capable sound lab. “It’s not what you have but how you use it,” Sunderland says. “We can make just as macking of music here in our studio as you can in any studio. You can go into a 10-million-dollar Pro Tools studio and still make shit. We have our tools and we’re pretty much maxing out the way you can use them.”

To help promote the album’s debut at the end of July, the group will release a line of “Genus Pro” herbal extracts through the Yellow Emperor company. Sunderland says the extracts will focus on different things such as energy and memory. “Basically, we’re promoting a healthy, all-natural line of herbal extracts through a partnership with Yellow Emperor, and it’s gonna go hand in hand with the promotion of our record,” Sunderland says. “They’re going to use our name and they’re going to let us pick all the colors and funky packages.”

Also to help promote the release of *Extract*, Genus Pro is working on securing a tour with the Project Blowed crew, which consists of (among others) Aceyalone, Abstract Rude, Busdriver and Mikah 9. At this point in time, the details are still in the works, but it may include up to 10 dates.

Now, having listened to eight of the 18 tracks on the soon-to-be-released album, I must say that the year-long wait for another Genus album was not in vain. Sunderland and the group pump a steady stream of robust and funky beats throughout. Head-bobbing rhythms are matched with well-timed samples (I swear “Cool Out” sounds a little like “Beat It,” and “Realm of Genus” features a disembodied MJ howl, or I could be going through MJ withdrawal) and a slightly polished, almost G-Funk style sound. “Realm of Genus” best showcases the vocal talent of Elea’Zar, Metric and Marv Ellis, each member’s unique style and flow.

Keep an eye out for the album, as well as a record release party, at the end of July. Tentative plans also include a vinyl pressing of *Extract*, as well as a re-pressing of *Grow* to fill all the back orders from the group’s website. ■

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