

The Madness of Marv

Marv Ellis goes underwater

Underwater Not Underground, the new album by Genus Pro member Marv Ellis (aka Garrick Bushek), represents something much more than just another underground rap record.

Born and raised here, Marv considers himself the "Unofficial Ambassador of Eugene." When his parents split, he lived with his mother and attended Sheldon High School during the week and then commuted to his father's place in West Eugene for weekends. While his experiences between these two drastically different socio-economic regions of the city shaped his perspectives of class and race, and in turn informed the angle of his music, Marv says his ennui is taking over. It soon may be time to move on.

"When you see the same car in the same driveway for 20 years it starts to feel like *Groundhog Day*" he says with a hint of jest. "But it's hard to 'blow it up big' in Eugene, and I'm going to have to go soon," he adds in a more serious tone.

Underwater Not Underground marks a coming of age for Marv both spiritually and stylistically. On it, he croons, rhymes in Spanish, fuses live instrumentation with programmed beats and cracks open highly sophisticated subject matter (track six, "Lo Siento," finds Marv apologizing to Latin American people for U.S. immigration policy).

"I spent about nine months on it, like obsessively. 'Til the point my girlfriend was getting mad at me. But it is everything that I wanted it to be," he says.

By experimenting with the various players on the album, Marv connected with different musicians from here and Portland, which allowed him to piece together a cohesive live band that he began playing shows with last year. His Imaginary Friends, as he's labeled them, comprise a cellist, fiddler, bassist, percussionist, slide guitarist, drummer and bass player. Promoters looking for a livelier sound soon caught on and Marv and Friends began lining up bigger gigs

between Eugene and Portland.

While all of this has awakened him to the potential of taking his music career to greater heights, he's careful not to completely uproot his spirit. The album's title not only references Marv's aversion to the label of "underground" rap, it also affirms his identity here in the Northwest. He says the "underwater" part of the title is a reference to the incessant rainfall in the region and the different effects it can have on a person's personality – the first track, "Water Torture," alludes to the pain the rain can bring, while the album's closer, "The Rain," references the epiphany it can also evoke.

For now, Ellis is still in town, and he has a thoughtful new solo album to drop on the Eugene massive, even if it may be one of his last as our "Unofficial Ambassador."

EW

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