



## ALT-RAP ART

Portland's Aesop Rock descends on Eugene with his latest, *The Impossible Kid*

New York-born Ian Matthias Bavitz, better known in the alt-rap world as **Aesop Rock**, is the epitome of a committed artist. Bavitz has been churning out music with mind-blowing word counts and sick rhythms for more than two decades, but there's something more to his style than hyping up a crowd. This guy is a sculptor; the beat is his foundation, which he cuts and molds with his lyrics to create a work of art.

After living in the Bay Area for a handful of years, Bavitz moved to Portland and hunkered down in a barn outside of town. There he created *The Impossible Kid*, released April 2016.

This isn't a "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" spiel, but Bavitz has put in some serious work to sustain his craft: The guy is eight albums deep and has released more than a dozen EPs. He's known for working with local visual artists to pull off some killer videos while also collaborating with fellow indie musicians like Rob Sonic and Kimya Dawson.

You can hear him layer the stages of his artistic evolution upon one another to create a stronger sound, more powerful lyrics and edgier themes each time he releases a new album.

"Everyday I think this ladder has to end at some point — there has to be a top rung," Bavitz tells *EW*. "But no matter what I do, there's always something else to find, and that's where the drive comes in."

Bavitz says his creative process has barely changed since his high school days of making four-track tapes in his room. "In a lot of ways, dedicating my life to being creative in a room by myself has ultimately rendered me dead inside," he says. "At the same time, I can't imagine being anything else."

As a veteran artist, he's had the opportunity to grow up with his music, which he says has been a slow-motion journey for better or for worse.

Artists have to fend for themselves, Bavitz explains, whether that means churning out a shit-ton of high quality work or prying yourself off of the couch because you need to pay bills. "Art and music are things we run towards because of the freedom of being independent and creative," he says. "You don't really consider the responsibility that comes with that task when you're imagining what it means to be a working artist."

Bavitz likens his craft to therapy: Making music is healing, but it's a type of work that needs constant attention. "I'm not the type of person that slows down to celebrate himself," he says. "Completing a solo project that I know I've worked my ass off on feels nice, and I get to exhale largely in the wake of each project."

And then it's right back to work.

*Catch Aesop Rock with fellow indie hip-hop artists Rob Sonic, DJ Zone and Homeboy Sandman 9 pm Friday, Nov. 25, at WOW Hall; \$18 adv., \$22 door.*

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