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Music

BY FELICIA L. SLIDER
OF THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Even if you don't a hummer for the summer, or a beep to jeep in, no matter what ride your spinnin' around town, you'll want to make sure that you pick up the hot to def, new project from MCA hip-hop artist Common, *Like Water For Chocolate*.

Why? Because this Chi-Town native's latest project has more tracks than a Toni Braxton weave. This MCA project has sweet beats, tasty tunes, and tracks layered with lyrics to lounge to. Maybe this is why Rashid Lynn, better known as Common calls his latest project *Like Water for Chocolate*.

Formerly known as Common Sense, the known penned solely as Common, is delivering the same hip in hop and rippin' up rap as he first did when he introduced himself in 1992. It was during 1992 when he asked on his first project "*Can I Borrow a Dollar*" (Relativity).

Also known for his infamous track "*I Used To Love H.E.R.*", this time around Common titles this, his fourth album *Like Water For Chocolate* under the same name of Laura Esquivel's best-selling novel and award-winning film. And with similar references, Common parallels many of his tracks on this most recent CD project in the name of the novels same adversity.

Commons three previous CD's "*Resurrection*," "*One Day It Will All Make Sense*," and "*Can I Borrow a Dollar*" were off the hook. But because Common is not your average or mainstream rapper with all the glitz, glamour and extra-hype (think Puff)...a lot of radio markets did not rotate Common on the regular, as well as some video channels.

Thus, Apple pie, USA slept on Common. But no worry mon'; the real heads who really enjoy hip-hop concept of keepin' an ear to the street (underground) and peepin'

upcoming artist by any means necessary enjoyed the benefits of Commons rise to success.

The 2000 release of *Like Water For Chocolate* was Executive Produced by Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson; known as the prodigy drummer for hip-hop's "The Roots". It's already rotating airwaves and ready for you to rock, shake, roll & bounce to. Not only has Common bounced to a new label (MCA), as well as inked

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an imprint deal (Madame Xenobia Music) with his business partner/manager Derek Dudley, but Common co-executive produced with his manager as well.

Common is in current production for the shooting of this video to be released. For the theme of the video, I'm thinking something in between Will Smith & Jazzy Jeff's "*Summertime*" or Erykah Badu's "*Next Lifetime*". Or he just might bring it back to the basics of female/male relationships as he did when he & Lauryn "L-Boogie" Hill exchanged verses in 1997 on Common's videotrack "*Retrospect for Life*". But whatever the video concept, rest assured that Common's sense will continue to verbally politic his thoughts on his community as well as love and respect for teaching black renaissance through rap.

Not only has the Chicago-native, and new New York transplant Common released his latest project just in time for the summer, but he has released it during a much needed time when people are thirsty for something else record labels and artist drowning heads with platinum want to be wearing wannabe's and Bentley drivin' B-boys. And with this in mind to stay focused on the basic necessities of life, the MC along with his partner (Dudley) have founded the *Common Ground Foundation* in Chicago to raise capital for

Common makes sense of hip-hop



community centers, summer camps and scholarships as well as information and awareness of the plight of political prisoners all over the world.

But even as a hip-hop emcee, Common is definitely not worried about image. Putting him in the

same artistry as The Roots; which both artist share publicity at okayplayer.com, Common is all about substance.

Common continuously brings it to the masses discussing his thoughts of growing up in the inner city; it's people and its music.



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