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Music

CONTRIBUTED STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

This millennium's coming to an end and Jagged Edge, So So Def's premier male vocal quartet, are acting as if they have no time to waste. Black music is enjoying more mainstream acceptance than ever and Brian, Brandon, Richard, and Kyle are taking what's rightfully theirs, gracing us with some of R&B's warmest moments of late, all the while remaining true to what's in their hearts and souls on their emotionally-charged sophomore disc, *JE Heartbreak*.

While paying homage to one of Black music's most notorious male groups is just a small part of their choice of title, there's also a much more personal significance to it. "The other reason why we named this album *JE Heartbreak*," Brian reasons, "is the fact that in this past year, we felt a lot of heartbreak — individually and collectively. It was something that we felt we should talk about, so we decided to write about it." "There is a personal life away from the business," Kyle adds. "A lot of people don't realize that." Instead, what music lovers *did* realize was that So So Def, already an urban leader in breaking formerly unknown acts (Kris Kross, Da Brat, Xscape), had scored big-time with the best best of 'em — as was evident on their disc single, "The Way That You Talk" (featuring JD and Da Brat) — it's no surprise that their way with a sultry groove is what ultimately clicked with music lovers. Indeed, the sensitive "Gotta Be" went on to become what some may refer to as "The people's hit." "Everything we got was from the people," Brandon (a.k.a. "Case Dinero") suggests. "Gotta Be" was a hit record, it was one of the most requested songs of the year." "The fans validated us," his identical twin brother, Brian (a.k.a. "Brasco") concludes; "they were reaching out to us."

JE Heartbreak is a mostly self-written collection of songs running the gamut from straight-up street head-nodders to those heart-wrenching soul ballads we've come to expect from them. Indeed, many of their experiences over the past year have resulted in an emotional well of personalized material. Though they're quick to tell you that not every scenario is necessarily autobiographical. Brian explains, "just like on *A Jagged Era*, we did a lot of writing. Even though each song is not necessarily a direct situation that one of us has been

Jagged Edge and no time to waste



Jagged Edge haven't changed much from the four teenagers who sang in separate singing groups at church youth rallies. Nothing but fate could have led all four to Atlanta. After relocating to the southeast's most flourishing music town from their native Hartford, Connecticut, Brian and Brandon quickly connected with the local church community, where they instantly aligned themselves with the local vocalists. After a chance meeting with Kyle, then a member of another group, Brian and Brandon teamed up with Kyle and two other vocalists, doing what they now refer to as a "R&B/hip-hop/ Take 6 king of thing." After a slight line-up change, Brian, Brandon, Kyle and a fourth member formed Twin AK, a group which caught the attention of star-making Michael Bivens and his Biv 10 label. When music industry red tape threatened to slow the pace of their recording career, the group's fourth member opted out, just as the

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