



Rapper Ja Rule poses in his recording studio in the SOHO neighborhood of New York. (AP photo)

Back in Style

Ja Rule releases comeback album

(AP) — Ja Rule probably should have battled nemesis 50 Cent with sticks and stones, considering what happened after their war of words.

A few years ago, Ja Rule was among the most popular - and overexposed - figures in hip-hop. His first four albums had sold millions of copies each. His deep, gravelly voice, either in rap form or an off-key warble, punctuated hit after hit. He enjoyed numerous collaborations with artists ranging from J.Lo to Jay-Z to labelmate Ashanti.

Then a pre-superstar 50 Cent blew up with the song "Wanksta," a thinly veiled attack calling Ja a fake gangsta wannabe perpetrating a tough-guy image. Even though Ja fired back on underground songs, interviews and last year's "Blood in My Eye" album, the image seemed to stick.

As his beef with 50 Cent escalated, the man born Jeffrey Atkins suddenly became uncool. His catchy harmonizing was considered wack and weak. Some said the verbal wounds would be fatal to

his career.

Not quite.

His sixth album, "R.U.L.E.," released Tuesday, is being buoyed by the hit "Wonderful," featuring R. Kelly and Ashanti. And Ja didn't even have to change his style - he's still crooning badly, still rhyming with the same bluster excitement.

"If we come out of this, and we do our thing, that's a big story. It was all odds against us. No one thought we would," boasts Irv Gotti, head of Ja's record label, The Inc., formerly known as Murder Inc.

Both Gotti and Ja say they never considered altering the image and style that earned him so much criticism. Now it looks like they were right: The forever fickle audience is falling back in love with him again. At Jay-Z's all-star blow-out concert at Madison Square Garden on Nov. 1, Ja got one of the evening's biggest ovations.

Everything is finally coming back around. Just like Ja knew it would.

Ongoing and Upcoming Music

The Blue Monk on Belmont plays live jazz. For a schedule, visit www.thebluemonk.com. Interstate Bar and Grill has mature live music at 4234 N. Interstate. The Black Notes play Thursdays at the Candlelight Room. Mel Brown plays jazz at Jimmy Maki's on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at Salty's on the Columbia. A Community Unity Breakfast is held every third Thursday at SEI at 7:30 a.m. Skip Elliott Bowman Jazz Trio plays Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon at Hannah Bea's, on northeast MLK Jr. Blvd. and Shaver. R&B and live funk bands perform weekends at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center.

Chains of Sexism

PCC's theater presents 'Nora'

The Portland Community College Theater Arts Program is celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Sylvania Campus Performing Arts Center this year with Henrik Ibsen's classic play 'A Doll's House.'

The adapted play, titled 'Nora,' is by famed theatrical and film director Ingmar Bergman. He retells the timeless tale of a heroine who realizes her marriage is false, and that she has been nothing but a 'doll wife' to her husband.

The play is set for 7:30 p.m. on Nov. 12-13, 18-20 and 2 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 21. All performances are in the arts center, 12000 S.W. 49th Ave. Please be warned that the play contains brief nudity.

Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$5 for all PCC students and staff, and seniors. Call the PCC box office at 503-977-4949.

Torvald (Noel Thomas) berates his wife Nora (Michaelyn Perdue) in PCC's production of 'Nora.'

