

Serge Severe Releases Second Album with Universal DJ Sect

'Back on My Rhymes' features a soul, funk soundscape with Severe's distinct verse

By Brian Stimson
Of *The Skanner News*

Serge Severe wants to break out. With his new album, "Back on My Rhymes" out and an album release party set for Feb. 18 featuring Manimal House—a live, nine piece funk band—as his back-up band, it's not hard to see that he means business.

The album, produced with Universal DJ Sect, is Severe's second solo record, a work that features some of Portland's best and most accomplished hip hop artists—Destro, Braille, Gen. Erik, Illmaculate, Luck One, Cool Nutz and Theory Hazit. The Animal Farm member is pushing his music career into overdrive, hoping to break out of the Northwest into the music halls across the nation.

Set against the backdrop of 60s and 70s soul and funk—from

Universal DJ Sect's private collection—Severe says the samples Sect provided have helped inspire "Back on My Rhymes" to form a self-reflective album about life and the current state of hip hop.

Severe's release show will start at 9 p.m. at the Ash Street Saloon with additional performances from Mic Crenshaw and Destro & L Pro.



Severe sat down with *The Skanner News* to talk about his influences, his father's legacy, finding fans in Portland and the DJ that has inspired his best work yet.

The Skanner News: Tell me a little about "Back on My Rhymes" and the work that went into it?

Serge Severe: It mainly starts with my DJ (Universal DJ Sect), who is the producer, he produced my last record, "Concrete Techniques." He has a really deep collection of vinyl that dates back

and is heavily focused on funk and soul records. He has thousands of them. He's providing the soundscapes for me. I write in a number of different ways. I'll have some rhymes already there and they'll match up to the tempos and beats or I write on the spot if the beat is speaking to me. There's a couple of different ways we go at it.

TSN: Are there any specific artists who influenced your work on this album?

SS: We're really into the '90s hip hop... I'm really into the DJ/Emcee combination. One of the first tapes I had was Pete Rock and CL Smooth and so that was a big influence. "Get Started" with DJ Premier and Guru, and Guru just passed away, actually. Dr. Dre and Snoop. Stuff like that.

We're just really trying to focus on... people try to label it the "real hip hop" and stuff, but we're just trying to do what we're into, what we think sounds good.

TSN: Do you get much say in the beats and samples Sect gives you?

SS: Yeah, he'll have a rough draft of it, then I'll come in and



Catch Serge Severe Friday at the Ash Street Saloon.

help co-produce. He'll have the loop or the arrangement, I'll say like "Can we move the beats over here, so we can actually get a whole song out of it?" He's finding all these dusty old samples and looping them up and I'll have some ideas, like, can we make that be the chorus melody, and this can be the bass, and maybe some scratching would sound good here.

TSN: I thought the use of funk and soul along with your verse really made the album pop. It really works together. Fantastic musical choice. I dug it.

SS: Yeah, I give him (Universal DJ Sect) all the credit. Without him... I mean I know other beat makers and stuff, but the material

I've done with him, people have been really responsive to. He did the last album ("Concrete Techniques") which is similar to this one but with a darker edge to it.

TSN: What do you like to talk about in your songs?

SS: I like to talk about hip hop and what's going on in it today. I figure if you always speak about what's going on in the culture you're involved in, then it won't ever really die. There's a lot going on in hip hop culture that is not exactly true to the form it was started in... I'm not saying it has to always remain a certain way. I think one of the best things about

See SEVERE on page 12

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Page 8 *The Portland Skanner* February 16, 2011