

'Rise and Grind' with Mic Capes

Artist hopes his music hits fans not just in their ears, but in their hearts

Bruce Poinsette
Of *The Skanner News*

“Step inside the booth like Superman. I’m hip-hop’s new hero,” proclaims Mic Capes on the title track of his new mixtape “Rise and Grind”.

Capes, real name Micheal Caples, has generated considerable buzz around the city with the new release. The emerging MC, who has aspirations of being a social worker, hopes his music will help inspire others who grew up in tough situations like himself.

One reason he thinks people have taken to the new mixtape is because of its decidedly personal tone.

“It’s hitting people how I want it to hit them,” says Capes. “Not just in the ears but in the heart and in the mind.”

“I wanted to be as transparent as I possibly could at the moment. It doesn’t feel like there’s some bubble around you as a rapper and it makes people feel like they’re not alone in those same situations.”

Capes says he’s gone through a number of struggles and transitions over the last couple of years and he tried to convey that in “Rise and Grind”.

One of those transitions was as an artist. Before “Rise and Grind”, Capes was probably best known for his work with Turf Noize, and before that, the Turf Bangaz, a

group he formed in high school with his friend Corey Mason. He says the group began to grow apart and he decided to go in a different direction, which he discusses on the mixtape.

While things have changed for him in the last two years, transition is nothing new to Capes.

“I’ve never really had stable ground as far as living somewhere,” he says. “It’s always been living with people or the situation at home is not so stable. You know, drug issues, evictions, moving schools. There was still love in the environment but it was economics.”

Capes first discovered his love for rapping

part of what helped him get through tough times.

He recorded his first song “Stay Clean”, as a part of Turf Bangaz, when he was 15 and attending Benson High School. The song got a big response and let him know that music could be serious.

Around the same time, he says he was starting to consider gang life. Capes credits Benson’s Next Generation of Leaders program with helping him decide to take a different route.

The program raised his awareness of social economics and helped mold him to be a leader in the community.

Specifically, Capes says men like Karanja Crews and the late Rob Ingram were instrumental in resetting his focus and steering him away from the gang life that he says is all too easy to fall into.

Recently, Capes spoke at the Teaching With Purpose Conference, put on by Crews’ Journey to Freedom Project. He has worked in school settings as part of his effort provide kids with the same positive influence that Crews and Ingram gave to him. These efforts have included work at Open Meadows Alternative School and the Caldera Art Camp.

“Basically whatever I do in life, whether it be music or working, I want to help people and inspire people and set them on the right track and be a resource to kids and adults that come from the same background as I do,” he says. “That stuff can get lonely. You get depressed. You can box yourself in real quick.”

Capes hopes his collective The Resistance will also help inspire people through music. The Resistance consists of Capes, Glenn



Mic Capes

Waco and Rasheed Jamal. According to Capes, the collective will be working on a project for next summer, following the releases of solo projects from the other members.

He says the group’s focus is to use artistic expression to promote originality.

“The name means resisting what people expect you to be in society and just being original and being yourself,” says Capes. “It’s a big push for people to be themselves and use their minds.”

The collective also represents the unity Capes would like to see more of in Portland hip-hop. He says artists don’t necessarily have to work together, but they should be supportive of one another’s talents. Capes feels like a “crabs in a bucket” mentality is hurting the city’s music scene, as artists are all striving to be the first to make it big.

“The first one to get on is going to open the door for all of us,” he says. “It can’t be this WWF type thing where everyone is cool behind the scenes but they talk mess in the public to generate stuff.”

“Just support basically. It makes the ‘Supportland’ real instead of just a word or a phrase.”

“Rise and Grind” is available for download on datpiff.com and mediafire.com. Mic Capes can be reached via twitter @miccapes_music

in 6th grade while he was in a foster home. He was already writing poetry and says an older kid who rapped made him realize he could translate his talents to emceeing.

Early on, Capes was influenced by artists like Tupac and DMX, who were known for introspective music. Their music, he says, is

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