

Rascal No More

Words | Gal DeTourn
Pics | Dean Chalkley
Design | Cat's Eye

TMO ONLINE



Dizzee Rascal could easily play the 'Baaad Bwoy' card... but being taken seriously as a musician is more important to him. Gal DeTourn met the Bow born MC and producer at XL's West London offices to talk about his new album, 'Showtime'.

Dizzee Rascal is tired of journalists seeking the gory details of last years multiple stabbing incident in Aya Napa, or indeed, his many youthful misdemeanors. He wants to talk about 'Showtime', the follow up to last years Mercury Music Award winning 'Boy In Da Corner'. Hence, without warning, as if to get the sorry mess out of the way, he lifts his shirt to expose the wounds. It's a gruesome sight.

"I just want to get on with life" he declares. "It's done. What's the point in bitching about it? It's there. What I'm more interested in is being an artist... I think my music is strong enough to sell on it's own."

At nineteen, Dizzee is somewhere between adolescence and full adult maturity. However, intellectually, he's transcended his trouble making East London beginnings. Diz zee's tale is one of school expulsions, scraps, thug mentality, and eventual salvation through music - with a little help from a teacher who saw the talent behind the Bad Boy exterior and encouraged him to use the school's computers. But all that's eons ago, and the Dizzee that's sat before me seems vaguely embarrassed by it all. Quite simply, he's now a talented adult. And he's tired of being reminded of what he did as a child. He wants to talk about the innovative, rib rattling urban brew that is 'Showtime'.

"Sonically I wanted it to sound bigger," he enthuses. "Bigger sounding, more impact, harder hitting, without making it too polished. It shows the transition from underground to mainstream, but still not compromising. It's just showing other areas that I'm capable of doing."

It certainly does. Dizzee may have sprung from the Garage offshoot that is the 'Grime' scene, but his style leaps beyond strict boundaries.

'Showtime' motors through glitchy twists, oriental fuelled minimalism, off kilter Moroccan flavours, pastoral electronica, and above all, resolute rumbles crafted into sharp urban nuggets. It's an offbeat style that perfectly compliments his excitable yet controlled, quick-fire wordplay contortions.

"I find it more interesting," he explains, "cos playing beats, there's only so much you can do, but when you offbeat it, it gives it more dimension from a delivery perspective."

Dizzee has an open musical mind that eschews the rules of ghetto scenesters. Who would of thought for example, that one of his favourite albums was Nirvana's 'In Utero'?

"For me it was more about the affect they were having," he explains. "I saw the video, and they were different, like they had long hair and were head banging an' all that. The energy it was giving... I felt that I was liking it, but it was something I wouldn't be expected to listen to... I would have loved to have seen them man."

And who would have expected him to include his very own version of Captain Sensible's 'Happy Talk' - 'Dream' - on the album?

"Exactly, that's why it's interesting" he argues. "I saw it on Top of the Pops 2, and the hook caught me. I was like 'rah, I wonder what I can do with that?' I never took it too seriously, even when I was recording it. I went through all those big serious things (stabbing) so I thought 'right, let me have a laugh with this'. I was just showing my versatility. So now you've got three versions: The South Pacific one, the Captain Sensible one, and now the Dizzee Rascal one. And they all do different things. And it's heavy to be part of that. I think when you cover a song, you've either got to do it justice or make it better. I think I at least did it justice."

However, he's not forgotten the scene that enabled him to cut his teeth. "It's council estate state of bass" he declares, explaining the

Grime creed. "It's another reflection of the city. It's just as important as any other type of music or small subculture that's around. It's really reflective of the UK. In that sense it's good. It's individual to the UK."

Technology wise, Dizzee moved forward on 'Showtime' by embracing the possibilities that Pro-Tools has to offer. But he's quick to point out that for him, gut feelings come before techie nerdism.

"I taught myself to make music," he recalls, "on the computer and that (using Cubase). No-one helped me with that. So when I was able to go into studios and there's a bigger mixing desk, and samplers and Triton machines an' all that, I had a lot more to work with. But it's never been about the technicals. It's the feeling. I roll off a sound and see what I can do with it."

Undoubtedly, Dizzee's sound is influenced by the gritty, urban environment that's characterised the majority of his existence. However, with a Mercury Music Award and chart success under his belt, life's looking rosier. So will he become musically emasculated if he becomes removed from the anger and the feelings that originally drove him to express himself?

"It's more about the outlook," he counters. "That environment has given me an outlook, so if by chance

the environment becomes distant, then I've got the outlook and I'll find a way to make it interesting. It's about my artform. It not about where you're from it's about where you're at. Like Jay-Z said. It's true. Where you're from is individual to you as a person, but someone outside might not necessarily give a shit about that, but they might like your song because of how you did it, and how you went about it. In the field I'm in, that's what's important."

Yep, deep down he's as much of a muso as any folkster, lanky haired indie kid, chin stroking jazz head or knob twiddling sonic adventurer. No doubt about it.

"What I'm more interested in is being an artist," he asserts, "and the fact that people around the world are feeling my music... I'd rather dwell on that man." Nuff said.

Dizzee Rascal's 'Showtime' is out now on XL



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