

DJ Premier

Words: Stewart Dalley

Without a shadow of a doubt DJ Premier is one of the greatest producers of our time and in the hip hop game you can drop the words 'one of' and replace it with THE. As the producer behind all of Gangstarr's albums that statement would be true enough, but when you factor in production credits for Jay-Z, Nas, Big Daddy Kane, Common, D'Angelo, De La Soul, Ice T, KRS One, Mos Def, Notorious B.I.G., Rakim, Snoop Dogg and Xzibit there are no disputing the facts.

Gearing up to drop his debut solo album 'A Man of Few Words', Premier is in good musical shape and determined to raise the bar of hip hop. "Microwave music", is how he describes hip hop's current fascination with the fast and easy style – and he's not happy seeing artists destroying what he's built a career enhancing. "I have no problem with rap artists driving {Rolls Royce} Phantoms, but your music better sound like you earned it! If your music ain't sounding right, don't drive past me smiling cause your cheddar is right. Fuck you!"

Speaking to him in his New York Headqortcerz studio he's got a few minutes to spare in-between finishing off a tune with Pitch Black and completing a mix on an Ol' Dirty Bastard track 'Pop Shots' that they'd been working on prior to his death. And that's only the tip of the iceberg, says Premier. "Nas is due into the studio next week to record his vocals for the album. I've also reached out to Jay-Z, 50 Cent and Mary J Blige. I'm also just about to bring someone back on some shit, Slick Rick. And I can tell you he still sounds good and his stuff is still on point and flowing."

The new solo album has come about thanks to a past recipient of Premier's trademark tight beats, rapper Fat Joe who approached DJ Premier to do an album where he would work with different artists to create "a masterpiece", to quote the man himself. But it's been a long time coming says the guy they also call Primo, as he explains. "I did the deal about four years ago – during the time when we were just starting work on the Gangstarr album 'The Ownerz' - so he {Fat Joe} and Atlantic Records have been stressing about getting the album out, cause it shouldn't take four years to turn in a project", he laughs.

"Like it could have happened back then but this is the time for it to happen. This is the take-over period. Fixing hip hop back to its raw roots and making it sound heavy again. Back in the early days it was unstoppable because the energy of the music was so tight. Now it's just so commercial and watered down people are confused as to what's good and what's wack. So I'm here to fix that problem and that's why I'm now putting out a lot of stuff, trying to flood the gates a little some. For me it's about staying fresh and coming with that heat. But I try not to change it too much, because people like me already for what I'm doing. Only fickle people go with the next flavour of the month. I'm glad I'm not flavour of the month. I'm like earth, wind and fire that's for certain - can't never get rid of that shit. I'm Father Nature."

And as for some new Gangstarr joints, fear not cause Premier is as keen to put out some new tracks as we are to hear them. "We are working on the situation right now. We're not with Virgin Records anymore so we are just regrouping, figuring out what we need to do to make sure things land right because Gangstarr deserves to be heard."

Ol' Dirty Bastard 'Pop Shots' on Roc-a-Fella Records January 2005

Look out for 'Man of Few Words' dropping Spring 2005 on Terror Squad/Atlantic Records.

DJ Premier and Mr Thing 'Kings of Hip Hop' album is due out on BBE April 2005.

Primo Top 5 Quotables

1. **Primo on production:** "You've got to know the artist's music to be able to tune into them, even if you are dope - which I think I am."
2. **Primo on creating the jazz/hip hop sound:** "I wasn't doing it thinking that it was a new phenomenon. It was through necessity because at the time we were running out of James Brown songs to sample!"
3. **Primo on Puffy:** "I'm not a fan of his music but I've seen him come up. He's more than a guy who makes horrible records so I guess he deserves his money."
4. **Primo on the hip hop lifestyle:** "Most of these current rap millionaires aren't being smart they are loosing money big time. I manage to do well from making a few thousand from a record." (Premier reputedly charges \$50,000 per remix)
5. **Primo on recognition for Gangstarr:** "I'll maybe run on stage at the next hip hop awards and just snatch that shit up. Do it Ol' Dirty Bastard style. Because those awards were supposed to go to us."