

People Under the Stairs  
BY: Stewart Dalley

I hate shit hip hop. I respect Puff Daddy as a businessman but I hate all that player shit that he stands for; fur coats, bitches, Rolexes, and all that material junk. If you ask the average kid on the street who defines hip hop, it will either be Eminem or Puffy. Eminem is alright but.....there's just something about him that sends a chill down my spine. Yeah it was funny that he took the piss out of Will Smith at the recent MTV Europe Awards, when he donned a rubber Will Smith mask to accept his Best Hip Hop and Album Awards. So yes it is cool that rap has come to the point where we can slag off Will Smith, but the smack in the face about Eminem's award was that the same people who voted for him voted for Will Smith last year. In other words these people, like a million others, recognise that he is as poptabulous as Will Smith is. Did Eminem realise this and hence the mask or was he just having a laugh?

Don't get me wrong I know hip hop has always had its fun side. The first wave of hip hop was all about showboating. Take 'Rappers Delight' by Sugar Hill Gang for example, that's well over fourteen minutes of 'I'm better than you are'. But what does stick in my throat is that for every Jay-Z there are ten great rappers with killer beats that go un-noticed by the mass populous. One such 'underground' act is the People Under the Stairs (PutS), Thes One and Double K are their names and if either of them win a MTV Award I'll dress like MC Hammer for a week. The sad fact is that it's almost guaranteed I'll never have to do it - that is unless they go all jiggy. "It seems that everybody does end up doing that, but we're People Under the Stairs man, we've got fans that like our music. We ain't going to stop making it until they stop buying our records.....or they all die", they laugh. "When you are touring like we do and you are sitting on the trains all shit tiered and you've got to get up and do the same shit for minimum amounts of money, it puts things into perspective. We could do some jiggy shit and be travelling about in a private jet or do some fast up-tempo shit and shout 'the funk bastards, the funk bastards' over the top of it, and we'd be getting £10,000 and fill arenas. We are making big sacrifices here, but we do it because we love it."

And love it they do, you get the impression by listening to albums like 'Question In The Form Of An Answer' and 'The Next Step' that hip hop runs through their veins, not the desire to be ghetto fabulous. PutS not only write and rap the music; they also engineer it and scratch on it. Hell they even design the artwork. This process allows them complete creative control, which means there is no loss in the translation of an idea to another party. As a journalist you talk to a lot of people and you get the sense from some of them that they are only in it for the money, but not PutS. With them it's a passion that goes way back. "We both heard of each other whilst at school, we were both making beats and rapping. There were all these rumours going round as everyone started to compare us. You know, that one of us was better than the other. And then one day we ran into each other and it was like, so this is the guy that I've been hearing so much about. We ended up playing some beats for one another and from that came the People Under the Stairs."

At this point in the interview we find ourselves at the dreaded 'Where did you get your name from' question. And like the consummate professionals they are they pluck a response out of the air as if it were the first time they'd been asked the question. "Contrary to popular belief the name didn't come from the movie. We describe it as being an abstract feeling about the group and the music. It has a lot to do with the fact that in LA there is a scene and people all try to sound like that. We are removed from all of that, we stay on our own and if people want to find our music they are going to have to look for it. It's not going to be shoved down their throats, it's going to be hidden.....under the stairs."

As musicians it may not take you by any surprise that the PutS are studio bound. Although don't expect them to have written any of it whilst they are on tour, "You'd think we'd write when we are touring but you've got to be in your element. If we did we'd start writing about the train guard and doodling train crashes and fish eating each other. So we'll write the third album when we get back home and have had a chance to rest up. We've got a lot of kids out there ready for some soundtrack music to their lives."

Meanwhile get a taste of things to come in the shape of there latest release 'We'll Be There' out now on OM Records.