

Ty

Words: Stewart Dalley

UK hip hop has transgressed the old hurdles of accent and the overall fact that we don't come from the States. What kept UK hip hop in its place was partly fuelled by our own talking down of the genre, and much like any self-conscious person it started to believe all the bullshit people said about it. But quietly the UK hip hop kid grew up and screamed No More! This 'coming of age' coincided with the watering down of the US scene leaving the UK talent to quite rightly come to the conclusion that they really could do better than that American shit. Enter a slew of clever lyricists with killer flows to match; amongst them Ty, that's Ty like a knot okay?

Instead of heading into the lion's den that is the major label Ty decided to take the well-trodden indie route, joining forces with Ninja Tune associate Big Dada to release 'Awkward'. "I've been in the industry for long enough to realise that for a hip hop artist the major way isn't the best way to go for people that actually want to do real hip hop. I suppose what I'm saying is - prove you can do it yourself so that when they approach you, you can still do what you want to do."

And prove it he certainly has with the release of one of the best UK.... No fuck that. One of the best hip hop albums in a long time. Entitled 'Awkward' it's one of those things journalists latch onto when they can't think of anything better to ask. Ty knew all too well that the questions over the nametag would be inevitable but he stuck to his guns. "Everyone was against it; they were all saying I should use something more positive. There are many spins you can make on positivity what I'm saying with the title is I'm not the stereotype."

Since dropping 'I am a Don' back in the day Ty knows he has grown as a performer stating that "the progression has been tumultuous." Of the new work and a record deal that allows him to get material out quicker Ty is also not lost for words. "People are getting a clearer resemblance of me..... the Kodak's newer." His confidence in his craft is well-footed and has grown since hosting the unparalleled hip hop haven that is the Lyrical Lounge, with DJ Pogo. That craft has also been lent to many a project over the past six years, including Nextmen, Unsung Heroes and Eric Benet to name but three.

Whilst Ty states the album "doesn't encompass me totally" and that his style is a "vocal pick 'n' mix", 'Awkward' is definitely a celebration of many things. On one hand it's about being proud of heritage. "I wanted to make something for all those kids in school who are escaping from their culture and learning not to appreciate it. Let someone they might listen to say, yes I'm Nigerian and proud of it." On the other hand it's about a common enjoyment of humour and the sounds of a multi-cultural Britain. "When Afrika Bambaataa came out he played a bunch of music that if you were in America at that time you couldn't help but notice made sense. For us over in Europe we have a napster of music to choose from, in fact we are legends. Many rappers from here don't reflect that, theirs is a carbon copy of what America does. I'm a grown man and I wanted to make something that represented me and one that didn't disrespect women. You know women get on the bus and come to hip hop gigs just like men and they deserve respect for that. I'm not Mr Goodie-Two-Shoes, I get my freak on too but we have to give praise to the ladies."

'Awkward' out now on Big Dada – Buy it!