

Ugly Duckling  
Words: Stewart Dalley

There seems to be a growing voice of dissent within the world of hip hop. One that says that they are sick to the back teeth of rappers talking absolute shite about how much money they've got, the number of bitches they've dicked-down and the amount of crack they've been selling. Take Ripshot's 'Versus' for example, which tells the imaginary, but never the less real tale of the battle between pop and hip hop. "You fake ass willies that distort hip hop, treating it less than an art. If you all about the money and it's not in your heart you ain't got shit locked. No skills, no style, you can't go off the top and you ain't got real props. Is that your best shit, is that all that you got?"

Ugly Duckling is also a group born out of a love for hip as one third of the group, Andy Cooper, explains. "I've liked hip hop since I was a kid and to me the roots of it were always drenched in positivity and having a sense of humour, from Biz Markie to the Sugerhill Gang. So I don't think we're doing anything wrong. Its these other people who don't understand it that get all upset about it. You know I've always maintained that hip hop comes from a greedy urban America and whilst there may be a lot of violence, for every drive-by there are probably about fifty barbecues."

The soon to be released 'Journey to Anywhere' album reflects this passion for humour, alongside some skilful MC'ing and DJ'ing, none more so than on the title cut itself. "It's like a cartoon dream sequence in flashback to when we were kids. We just thought of every little goofy cartoon we used to watch like Hong Kong Phooey." Elsewhere on the album the woman haters get the tables turned on them in the form of 'Pick-Up Lines'. "Everyone does songs about girls and the girls are always some ho', sex fiend or a gold-digger. So we wanted to do a song that painted girls in a positive light – a story about a girl that's a decent girl that doesn't skank around. Our whole group is about looking at things from another angle. Our perspective is one of fun; it's the cat that is a little different. Everyone else falls into the trap of dressing the way you're supposed to dress and liking the music you're supposed to like. Ugly Duckling to me is about understanding that you are maybe a little different as a person and just being yourself with your own expression. And if people like it then that's cool but if they don't its like well what can you do. Don't get me wrong we try our best to make songs that people will like - we're not sitting around hating the world all day or anything. But we are who we are."

So the Ugly Duckling moniker does have a Danny Kaye twist to it after all but just like that fable so too have this group figured out where their bread is buttered. "To us the UK and the whole of Europe is where our market is at. We are trying to build a fanbase on trust. We're about good performances and fun. All of us about this age that are doing hip hop came to it as more of a dream than a cultural pursuit to join a band. When I was growing up it wasn't at a time where hip hop was the predominant music. It wasn't in charts, TV or radio so it was grassroots effort if you wanted to get involved."

All sentiments brought to wax on the current single 'Friday Night' which is coupled with 'I Did It Like This'. Future releases come in the form of 'Eye on the Gold Chain', complete with Cut Chemist remix and the b-side of 'Cardiff' due out in the Spring ahead of the full album release.

You can catch UD and the famous 'dookie' gold rope when they come to bumrush the Arches stage on February 20<sup>th</sup> as they set about the brave decision of a winter tour in the UK. But since one part of the group spent time as a kid living in Antarctica it won't be too much of a trauma.