



I Self Devine

Self Destruction
Rhymesayers

When listening to "socially conscious" hip hop, artists like Dead Prez, Mr. Lif and Immortal Technique, the question always comes up: Do these emcees practice what they preach or are they just rapping about it? Are they really out there in the streets, trying to lift up their communities, trying to fix social problems or are they just pointing the finger? Enter I Self Devine. This Minneapolis based MC, born to ex-Black Panther parents, not only calls out our socio-economic problems and injustices; he's lived with them. While working on his music career he even finds the time to act as a coordinator for a local Minneapolis community center, staying close as possible to the streets he raps about. Does all that make him a better MC? Not necessarily, but that same hard work ethic does. On his debut solo album, *Self Destruction*, I Self Devine's moral and social views are spit with such an urgency and seriousness that you can tell he's a man on a mission. The production side of the LP, which features Rhymesayers regulars Jake One, Ant and Vitamin D, keep the album moving and keep I Self from sounding to preachy. If the best emcees have the ability to be street reporters, then I Self Devine meets and exceeds this criterion. Not only does he report what he sees, he acknowledges the root of the problems, suggests solutions and works not waits for a change. -CS

J-Live

The Hear After
Triple Threat / Penalty Records

The third full-length album from J-Live is easily an early contender for best release of the year. The world was first introduced to J-Live in 1996 with his "Braggin' Rights" single off of his debut album *The Best Part* (Triple Threat/Seven Heads). The debut release would be held up in label drama and ultimately delayed until almost the same time as his sophomore release *All Of The Above* (Coup d'Etat 2002). While the previous two full length albums did not show much of an evolution of style in production for J, as both were full of very

heavily jazz influenced beats, the lyrical delivery did reflect a change as *All Of The Above* displayed an MC with seven years more experience under his belt. It was with the EP *Always Will Be* (Triple Threat/Fat Beats 2003) that J truly showcased his improving talents as an MC and producer. With tracks like "Car Trouble", a head nodding complex metaphor for J's experiences dealing with record labels, and "Walkman Music", an anthem for the common man - who J insists is who he makes music for - J married his MC lyrical prowess with his burgeoning skills behind the boards. In 2005 with *The Hear After* J-Live gives us braggadocio combined with allegory on tracks like "Fire Water" a certified heater for those that doubt. With tracks like "Do My Thing (featuring Cvees)" and "Aaw Yeah" J-Live shows he knows how to have fun on the mic and at the same time deliver his boastful, elaborate rhyme skills with a presence. The most heart warming and descriptive track on the album, "Brooklyn Public Part 1" is a narrative song relating J-Live's experiences as a junior high school teacher while adding a bit of the social commentary we've heard from J in the past. My favorite track on the album, "The Sidewalks," is an indictment of the prevailing view of the ghetto transmitted through popular hip-hop. While there are many more amazing tracks on this album I will leave them for the readers out there to discover. J-Live is one of the best MC's in hip-hop, and now handling the production for half of his own album is emerging as a producer on the come up. This is easily one of the most well rounded and down right tightest albums I have heard this year. -AR

John Wilkes Booze

Telescopic Eyes Glance The Future Sick
Kill Rock Stars

The Booze boys from Bloomington, Indiana are up to their old tricks, all distorted guitars and distressed vocalizations, and it's still "sour mash" solid soul. With sonics similar to a can of vegetable soup served up electrified sewer water style; all greasy and good but you know it's got to be bad for you, *Telescopic Eyes Glance The Future Sick* is like nothing

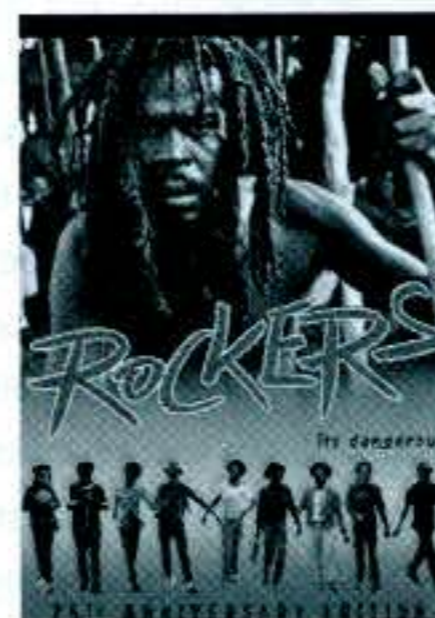
REVIEWS, ETC.



Freaked

Anchor Bay Entertainment
Dir. Tom Stern, Alex Winter
Night birds can now rejoice because *Freaked* is out in a 2 DVD format. For those of you who were never lucky enough to witness *Freaked* in its cable glory, it's a story of redemption for not only main character Ricky Coogan, but for the actor who plays him; Alex Winter. You'll remember Mr. Winter

from his most excellent and famous role Bill S. Preston Esq. from the *Bill and Ted* movies. A few years after *Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey*, Winter and film school buddy Tom Stern rounded up \$12 million to put together *Freaked*. The majority of the funds went to create the groundbreaking special effects, which were done using the old school methods of actual makeup and prosthetics instead of CGI. Chalk up another \$1 million for Winter's buddy Keanu Reeves' cameo too, here's a hint: Woof! *Freaked* follows Ricky Coogan from child star, to chemical spokesman, to mutant and finally to his redemptive role of revolutionary leader. Much as Coogan shows he's more than a child star, Winter displays the talent to combat any stereotyping he unjustly received from *Bill and Ted's*. Included are Stern and Winter's film school projects that are hilarious as well as completely whacked. In addition to the standard commentary and deleted scenes, you'll find *Freaked: The Rehearsal Version*, which is Winter in full costume acting with the other thespians during a full-length rehearsal. *Freaked* is definitely something to own if you remember it from your late-night munchies sessions or even if you've never set your Rastafarian eyeballs on it. -JJ



Rockers

Dir. Theodoros Bafaloukos
Blue Sun Film (1978)

Finally! Fans of Reggae music and culture can rest happily with the digitally restored version of Theo Bafaloukos' 1978 classic film *Rockers*. Complete with bonus features like director commentary, interviews with the director, remastered audio, and a 16-page color booklet, this classic period in Jamaican Reggae and film history justifiably receives its accolade. *Rockers* is a lot more than a film starring artists like Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace, Jacob Miller, Gregory Isaacs, and more, but the premise of the film is real, wise and intelligent. The acting is not scripted and fictive or tries to be disingenuous, but the film is about music, uprising, Rastafarianism and a look at real life trials and tribulations. I don't know if Bafaloukos ever thought that his film would ever achieve this pinnacle 27 years later, but he admits in the bonus feature interview he sensed there was something special and unique happening and indeed he was right. He impressively captures recording sessions with the late Jamaican producer Jack Ruby and captured a vibrant and funny Jacob Miller and a young revolutionary Burning Spear and brilliantly centers it all on a Robin Hood of the ghetto story line all for this one film. *Rockers* is a cinematically stunning film and the closest many in our generation will get to see these men as real people instead of legends. -RD