



Concert DVD gives full flavor of hip-hop duo

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Every so often, one hears about a music act that sounds so wild, so out of the ordinary, that one knows it just has to be listened to. West Coast hip-hop duo Blackalicious is one of those acts.

Just the name would be enough to draw in fans, curious about what "blackalicious" could actually mean. However, once they have drawn those fans in, Blackalicious keeps them there with a mesmerizing flow of hip-hop from two of the most talented and creative artists in the game.

On their first-ever DVD release, "Blackalicious: 4/20 Live in Seattle," the two demonstrate their skills in front of a dynamic crowd of more than 1,200 people at Seattle's Showbox Theater.

What makes Blackalicious so exceptional is the cohesiveness between Chief Xcel and Gift of Gab, the group's two members. Both are from California, and they have been working together since they met in high school in 1987.

Over the years, the duo have improved, expanded their style and gained a strong fan base around the world. Xcel even boasts at one point during an interview that Blackalicious has performed on every continent except Antarctica.

That experience shows on this DVD, as they work together to create a smorgasbord of sounds that makes their live show a true gem.

During the show, the excitement is kept high as Xcel drops all sorts of wicked beats throughout the night. Gab demonstrates his amazing lyrical talent by meshing his vocals with Xcel's funky rhythms.

From the show's opening song, "Alphabet Aerobics," in which Gab raps a couple of lines for each

letter of the alphabet, to the album's explosive finale, "Quantum World," the chemistry of Xcel and Gab combines with terrific performances by other members of the Quannum MCs to make the show a fantastic display of artistic creativity.

MVD Visual also added to the experience by cutting to interviews with Xcel and Gab between songs. This was done masterfully and did not chop up the performance at all. The whole show still felt connected, and the interview questions were well-placed throughout the DVD.

The only flaw with the disc (at least in its advance review version) was that it was bereft of special features. The only feature included on the reviewer's disc was a short trip through the group's tour bus. It was a pleasant addition, done in the popular style of the show "MTV Cribs." Unfortunately, the tour was not long enough to give the viewer much of an idea about what the bus is like, and it did not really add anything to the DVD.

Overall though, Blackalicious was impressive. Already a big deal in the world of hip-hop, Blackalicious might find a way onto your playlist if you give them a listen.

"Live in Seattle" was about as energetic a concert as one will ever see, and the DVD production made the disc even better. No matter whether you are a hip-hop fan or not, you will be captivated by the smart lyrics and fresh beats demonstrated by Gab and Xcel on "Live in Seattle."

The disc will be available to the public starting Nov. 21 at mvdb2b.com.

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