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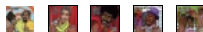
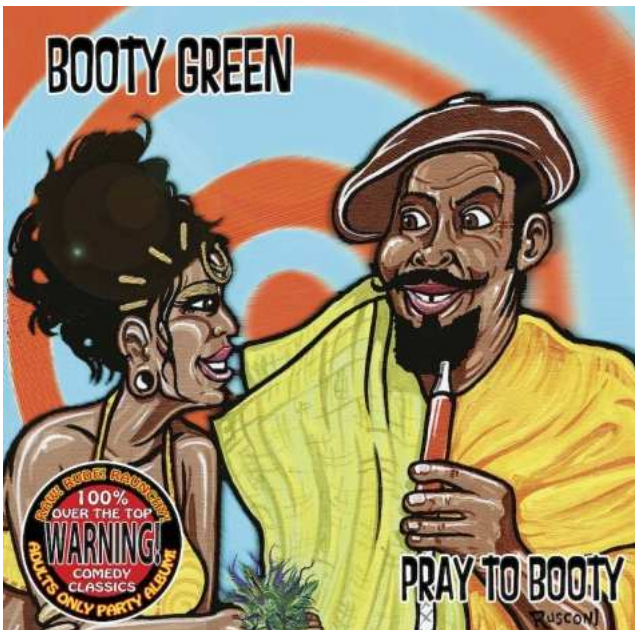
Comedy

Old School Comedy Classics

A series of reissues recalls a heyday for edgy, African-American comics. By Jake Austen

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Booty Green

Photo: Lenny

07/17/2012

In 1992, a friend handed 17-year-old Mark Jason Murphy a VHS tape of comedian Rudy Ray Moore's 1975 blaxploitation film Dolemite. Blown away by all the outrageous sex, violence and wordplay, the Sacramento teen tracked down cassettes of Moore's comedy albums and eventually Moore himself. Murphy soon found himself running the underground comedy Legend's website and collaborating with him on a biography—projects he has continued since Moore's death in 2008. Researching Moore's peers and rivals for the in-progress book led Murphy to his current project, which he hopes will revive a lost art form. By reissuing some of the filthiest, loosest, most offensive comedy records ever recorded, he wants to bring back the lost thrills of the '70s African-American comedy albums known as "party records," starting with Redd Foxx's I Ain't Lied Yet in June.

"Party records were albums that people would play at night after the kids went to bed, records you weren't supposed to have," Murphy explains. "They weren't on the shelves at record stores. You would have to ask for them, then they would reach under the counter and put them in a paper bag. It was almost like you were doing a drug deal!"

Though sexually themed blues records have been popular since the 1920s, "party records" became a phenomenon shortly after Los Angeles doo-wop label Dooto began issuing LPs by stand-up comic Foxx in 1955. Over the next three decades, Foxx would release more than 50 albums of dirty, double-entendre-filled jokes. In the late '60s, Indiana-based singer/comic Jimmy Lynch released Tramp Time, which broke ground by including a single f-bomb, inspiring Moore to release the uncensored Eat Out More Often in 1970. Both of those albums sold hundreds of thousands of copies, launching the 1970s' black comedy record boom, led by the low-budget Laff Records, whose owner's estate gave Murphy access to most of the recordings.

After launching his Old School Comedy Classics series with the re-release of Foxx's I Ain't Lied Yet, Murphy followed up with Skillet and Leroy's 2 or 3 Times a Day, Lynch's Nigger Please! and most recently, Mantan Moreland's Elsie's Sportin' House. In August he will release titles by forgotten comics Booty Green, Baby Seal and Chicago duo Sonny & Pepper. While these records were produced on the cheap, they are not only historical documents, but also still very funny.

There's not a comic today who couldn't learn something about timing and inflection from Foxx. Moreland, best known for his film roles in the '30s and '40s, demonstrates great gusto for X-rated '70s comedy, bringing vaudeville experience to graphic oral sex jokes. And Skillet and Leroy, remembered for their cameos on Foxx's Sanford and Son, have the

Wrightwood Neighbors Presents Taste of Lincoln Avenue graphic

audiences on their recordings howling with the abandon these taboo records are meant to inspire. While modern audiences might find the setups, punch lines and Friars Club storytelling dated, the comic rhythms and solid stagecraft prove timeless.

But in the age of Internet porn, is there still a place for playground jokes about "midget" women, pregnant gay men and monkeys with yo-yos? Murphy says there is. "These records still feel like you're not supposed to have them," he says. "While they have cultural significance for African-Americans and they influenced a lot of stand-ups and hip-hop artists, the real legacy of party records is that when you listen to one of them it feels like you're doing something wrong!"

All Old School Comedy Classics reissues are available for \$9.95 at www.cultcollectibles.com.

July 18, 2012

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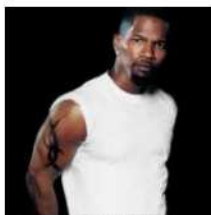
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