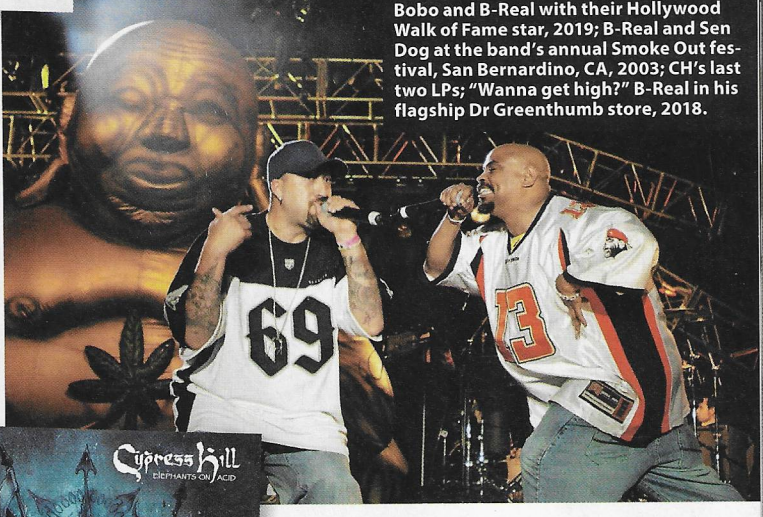




Blunted growth: (clockwise from left) Cypress Hill performing at Lollapalooza, New York, 1992; Sen Dog, DJ Muggs, Eric Bobo and B-Real with their Hollywood Walk of Fame star, 2019; B-Real and Sen Dog at the band's annual Smoke Out festival, San Bernardino, CA, 2003; CH's last two LPs; "Wanna get high?" B-Real in his flagship Dr Greenthumb store, 2018.



"WE DIDN'T CARE ABOUT FAME OR MONEY. I'M GLAD WE DIDN'T LOSE OUR FUCKING MINDS."
DJ MUGGS



recently they've included research into cryptocurrency and blockchain technology. "I became a conglomerate on my own, a multi-millionaire, just by understanding my business."

Muggs still found time to mastermind most of Cypress Hill's studio output as B-Real and Sen Dog soldiered on, their status as hip-hop's Grateful Dead unswayed as they tweaked and toyed with their winning formula — trying out a 50/50 split with nu-metal on 2000's double *Skull & Bones*, putting reggae high in the mix on 2004's *Till Death Do Us Part*. Yet Muggs's limited involvement (just two co-productions) on 2010's uneven Latin crossover *Rise Up* contributed to its commercial failure. Cypress Hill were no longer the unbreakable team of 1989-'95.

IF THERE WERE WHISPERS THAT THAT MEANT Cypress Hill had become essentially a heritage act, they were dispersed by 2018's *Elephants on Acid* — a triumphant full return by DJ Muggs to the mind-bending soundworld of the group's classic LPs.

"It came from a lot of dreams and just going deep inside the psyche," says Muggs, who poured in elements of *Nuggets*-era '60s psych and experiments with street musicians conducted on his working trips to Jordan and Egypt. "Externally, it was Salvador Dali, Alexander Jodorowsky, Picasso... artists going where they've never been before, going to different dimensions and going on an adventure."

And while Muggs arranged its sitars, ouds, organs, flutes and

interludes, the tension between B-Real's energetic reflections and Sen's hardcore counter-punch felt reinvigorated from side-projects Prophets Of Rage (B-Real's stadium-touring supergroup with Chuck D and three quarters of Rage Against The Machine) and Powerflo (Sen's heavy metal group).

This year's tenth LP, *Back In Black*, is a more straight-up reiteration of their core vocal strengths, with greater input than ever from Sen. "The Sen Dog we're hearing now is off the fuckin' chain," says B-Real of a set worked up with Detroit producer Black Milk. "It's for the fans not so much into the dark psychedelia as they are those boom-bap crackin' hip-hop beats. We never try to do anything too happy, that's always been our MO. This one just captured a vibe."

It's a vibe that the prolific Muggs — who released five collaborative hip-hop albums (with Rome Streetz, Yelowolf, Crimeapple, Hologram and Flee Lord) and the instrumental LP *Dies Occidentum* for Sacred Bones in 2021 alone — initially seems at odds with.

"I didn't take a back seat on this one — I didn't even know they'd made the record!" he says spikily. "They'll never make a record as great as the records I make." Then his voice softens. "But I know B-Real and Sen Dog killed it, like they always do."

Will they reunite? Probably. "We were all just kids trying to figure this shit out," says Muggs, looking back over 30-plus years of Cypress Hill. "Our relationship just gets better and better. Every year there's more understanding."

For B-Real it goes deeper still. He's under no illusions that had he stayed on the streets in South Gate his prospects would have been infinitely bleaker.

"While Muggs and Sen were trying to make music, I was out there fucking up," he reflects. "They saw something different in me. They saved my life."

