"Hi, my name is L.L. Cool J. and I am gonna show you how to have a hip hop holiday. Wherever you see my photo, you'll find ground-breaking hip hop information, music reviews, events or gear. In case you're curious, I've been puttin' in work behind the movie camera. I was the chef that would not die in 'Deep Blue Sea.' Did you see it? Well, neither did anyone else. So don't worry, I'm starring in an upcoming Oliver Stone film 'Any Given Sunday' with Al Pacino. Oh, enough about me. Read Artsweek!"

When the Graffiti Hits

written by I.Jenne Raufc

As hip hop culture has slowly gained more recognition and respect in the last decade for elements other than 'rap' — b-boying, deejaying, graffiti art, etc. — it comes as no surprise that the opening night of "Contemporary Corruption: The Art of Graffiti" was packed with a diverse array of thugs and hipsters alike. As Celestial Recordings' DJs Hive and Daddy Kev spun underground hip hop and drum 'n' bass beats, art enthusiasts of all kinds drank 40s and white wine while viewing works from many Los Angeles graffiti artists. The heady aroma of pot loomed in the air while the wall-to-wall crowd, only inches away from the art, admired the works of Chaz, Saber, Mear, Krush, Siner, Skill, Miner, Relic, Rezza and Tyke.

To me, however, the topic of graffiti art remains a tricky one. While the genre itself has gained an increasing amount of attention from both the mainstream and more independent media, graffiti art is in an odd place. It's still an expression of defiant youth vividly decorating their oft-impoverished surroundings, much to the dismay of those who see it as property defacement and a warning sign of violence; but when graffiti moves into a semi-private place, what happens to the raw political potential of the scrawl across a subway, bus stop or vacant lot? Does graffiti art lose its meaning when brought into a new sphere for a radically different audience? I'm not one to judge, but while the works are indeed legitimized in the space of the gallery, surrounded only by each other and high white walls, they surely lose some of their initial force.

This isn't to say that the works in "Contemporary Corruption" don't live up to the expectations (emotional, aesthetic or otherwise) that I hold for art in general. In fact, the works of the show are, overall, thought-provoking, beautiful pieces created with a variety of media, including spray paint, oil, acrylic, wood, canvas, a part of a bus stop and metal. Styles vary significantly — take the collage mix media of Miner's 'Lucky,' for example. It's certainly not those hard-to-read bubble letters considered by many to be sheer vandalism. Graffiti artist Mear is perhaps the most famous artist participating in the exhibit (from what I've researched, anyway), as his works decorate the covers of Limp Bizkit, Hive and Freestyle Fellowship albums (just to name a few) with a mythical and lyrical grace that doesn't detract from its simultaneous energy.

It can be a beautiful moment when worlds collide, when boys wearing hooded sweatshirts drinking malt liquor come together with Armani-clad art lovers swilling chardonnay to appreciate the splendor and message of graffiti art. And, indeed, the scene at this past Friday's opening was an interesting mixture. Yet I hope that graffiti art doesn't lose its raw energy and force as it is increasingly legitimized by the same corporate world that maintains the conditions that have helped lead to its birth.

As my end-of-the-world anthem, Mike Ladd's Easy Listening for Blondes running in slow motion next to David Hasselhoff (who happens to have green eyes), it is all rad. Or at least it should be. Shouldn't it? I mean, I am the most eligible robot bachelor in this lovely little corner of Virtue known as Isla Vista. Who am I kidding? I get laid-uh-huh and, as it turns out, I do not even have to live in burhuk to pick up more women than some nerdy-yes-charming English poet guy with a frilly shirt, a moustache and a knack for making rhymes. Basically, I got game like any randor©.Çf(Éèandra nerdy-yet-charming English poet guy with a frilly shirt, a moustache and a knack for making rhymes. Basically, I got game like any randor©.Çf(Éèand
COG | Childish of de Ghette | Priority

After sitting through Childish of de Ghette’s self-titled album for the first time, I immediately dismissed it as just one more example of the modern gangsta rap cliché. On the surface the beats were repetitive and dull, not even interesting enough to outline the lyrics, which appear to have been chosen for no other reason but their inherent offensiveness. My roommate described it wonderfully as “the sound a perfect alarm clock would appear to have been chosen for no other reason.”

But much to his dismay I decided upon playing the album a few more times, concentrating on the few songs that made me feel the toughest, which I do believe is the greatest upside of gangsta rap. Childish of de Ghette has the ability to instill emotion in levels high enough to make shooting down cops sound quite justifiable. What I realized was that while there is a tremendous amount of time spent explaining all the sex and violence that these “Childrin” partake in, by the end of the track they are singing about love and friendship. If you want that, go get yourself the Beatles’ Anthology. If you want to hear an album full of reality presented by three seemingly unvarying bad boys, then maybe you should give this album a chance. Just make sure you really do give it a chance. [Mohran Gilad Mandelbaum has single-handedly diagnosed the problem]

Rap & Selph

I’ve never understood what people see in Tim Burton. Some of his films have been enjoyable, but there’s something about him that people see that I miss. A lot of what I think people like about his films and what I hate are in “Sleepy Hollow.”

Adapted from the Washington Irving story “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” Burton’s new film is noted as an adaptation of the campy horror classics of the ’50s and ’60s, and that can really be seen in the final product. “Sleepy Hollow” is all artifice and no substance. The sets, costumes and special effects make this one of the best-looking films of the year. But to what effect?

It doesn’t have the setup that Andrew Kevin Walker ("Seven," "8mm") is entirely predictable and shallow. Of course, those who have seen and liked it keep telling me that is the point. Different strokes for different folks. I’m sure it was fun for them, but that’s certainly not what it is for the audience.

There is no creativity in “Sleepy Hollow.” There is no play, only replay. [John Fiske]
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