

Asia Continental

Passion unlimited: A Lyricist's Quest by Ruben Borges

Asia Jones, aka Asia Continental, the Golden Child of Houston hip-hop lets us into the mind that spawned K-town



The new CD is K-town by Asia Continental

Egalitarian: *K-Town* is a mix that summarizes the stories and experiences of someone living in K-Town (Korea Town). What aspect of the accounts that you've heard interested you the most? The one you thought would stick out in song and pen?

A.C.: Practically every line in K-town is related to something that someone and/or many people told me. The crime and violence aspects of the accounts that I heard interested me the most because these were the aspects that countered the myth of the Model Minority that has been conveniently bestowed/forced upon Asian Pacific Americans because it especially veils real issues and concerns that need attention both from those outside the Asian American community and those within.

I thought that these aspects, crime and violence, would stick out in song and pen for two reasons. The song was based on the experiences and stories of people who live in Ktown and those who spend a lot of time in Ktown, so the song is something that acknowledges their experiences and stories.

In addition, the songs give each a voice, letting other people who are not familiar with Koreatown know about what's going on in Koreatown.

Egalitarian: *I agree with you that racism is still rampant today. Do you believe that because of that minorities in the U.S. struggle with themselves to be open about their cultures? Especially, now in the aftermath of 9-11?*

A.C.: Although it does play a part, I don't think it's just because of racism that people struggle with themselves to be open about their own culture. I think various factors, from self-hate to lack of interest are other reasons.

I think racism is more of a static barrier that interferes with peoples' reception of other cultures. Now in the aftermath of 9-11, I think many people really want to be more open about their own culture and to express their connection with other people in the U.S. However, I also think that in the aftermath of 9-11, the static barrier of racism has increased has increased its interference with peoples' reception of other cultures, as well.

Egalitarian: *Ktown seems to be a serious area with serious problems that don't get picked up by most people, even in LA. It's good to see that you're giving us a window to peek into so we can see what goes on behind the scenes in a community most of know little about.*

What do you think is the reason we don't know more about the Korean community -- its problems and its successes as well? And for that matter not just Koreatown, but all minorities communities?

A.C.: First of all, I don't know if it's possible to cover "all" the problems of a whole community, but we can certainly try. I think there are several causes, however.

Who controls the media and who is participating in the media are two causes that lead to the issue of a whole community being neglected. If those in control of the media do not see a need in covering a community, and/or don't think about covering a community, then that community in question will become neglected. In addition, if there are no representatives from a community in question or people familiar with that community actively participating in/with the media, then there is a high potential for that community's problems to become neglected.

Egalitarian: *MTV has created a whole new wave of hip-hop musicians who are breaking out. Do you enjoy some of the hype or is it just pure entertainment? And what do you believe are some of the negatives in hip-hop today?*

A.C.: I don't have cable at the moment, so I don't really get to enjoy MTV as often as I used to, when I was younger. To some degree, I enjoy some of the hype; but I think, for the most part, it's just pure entertainment. [And] I'm waiting for when I can become a part of that MTV wave of hype/entertainment or at least another Asian Pacific American musical artist.

I think most of the negatives with hip-hop today are a lot of the same negatives with music in general. You have these large corporate music companies pumping millions of dollars into a few acts, some of which hopefully will actually be good, and then they flood the market with the same few acts. Then you have all these other artists with actual talent and who make good music

going unnoticed and they are unable to compete with the majors.

But all that's changing now, and many artists are going via the independent route, and are being successful at it. Other negatives, such as the one most people talk about like violence, I think is over-hyped and isn't necessarily just hip-hop related. That's just the way it gets tagged. As a result of this and corporate interference with hip-hop music in general, we, the public, get bombarded with the same s__t day after day.

Egalitarian: *So you are a UH alumni. Is there Cougar Pride?*

A.C.: Yeah, I'm a UH alumni. I don't know if I call it Cougar Pride, more like just Cougar support. I pay my alumni fees. I wish they had a music business program like HCC does.

Egalitarian: *Tell us about Omniversalata, which you founded with your partner Marcus Jones. Where do you guys want to take it and whom would you like to take along with you?*

A.C.: Omniversalata Entertainment, LLC is a commercial vehicle to translate creative endeavors from our minds and souls into tangible products that can be consumed and experienced by others. With this vehicle, we can control our own movements and directions. We currently are focusing in on, specifically, hip-hop. We have plans to expand into other forms of music and the spoken word, and later into film and other artistic mediums. We want to take it to where it can provide our families, our staff, our artists, and us a means by which we can all live.

We want to take it where the public is familiar with the name Omniversalata, and when we release a project, people look forward to it. We want to take it where other people and companies are wondering what we are doing. We would like

to take all our "peeps" and supporters along with us in some form or fashion. It isn't no fun if the homies can't have none.

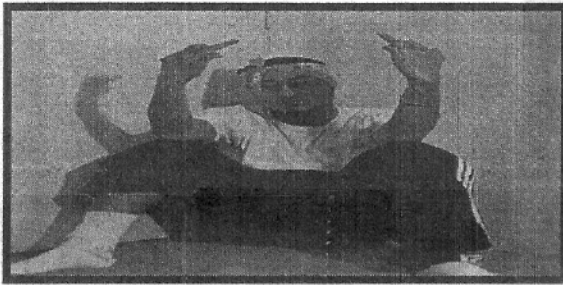
Egalitarian: *Any concerts or events lined up?*

A.C.: Right now I'm trying to work out something with Jamsource (the Entertainment News Source) for this December. I'm also trying to work out something with the "Jump-Off," a monthly hip-hop venue in L.A., for early next year. Confirmations will be listed on my website, www.asia.8518.com under the Performances section.

Egalitarian: *Finally, What do you have to say about the world today? Politics, TV, anything?*

A.C.: The world today as it was yesterday is crazy. [People] should get involved in politics and that does not necessarily mean that you have to run for office, but at least vote. Make politics work for you, not against you. Know what you are watching on TV and why. Don't believe everything you see and hear on TV. Analyze it. Wake up!!

To those who have already bought my maxi-single, *Ktown*, Thank you!! To those who have not done it yet, it's available at Soundwaves at 3509 Montrose (in the Rap section) and at Cactus Music at 2903 S. Shepherd (in the Local section).



Asia Jones, music entrepreneur, artist, and social commentator. Respect.