

## BlackEyedPeas

"I see you try to dis our function by statin' that we can't rap/ Is it because we don't wear Tommy Hilfiger or baseball caps/ We don't use dollars to represent/ We just use our inner sense and talent/ Don't try to represent no set just so we could get some respect." - "Fallin' Up"

Black Eyed Peas are keeping it real, real. Real how they see it. With hip hop music influenced by soul, jazz and Latin rhythms. With a live band. With pumpin' live shows that inspire Black Eyed Peas to bust into acrobatic movements and that drive audiences to a frenzy.

"Just cuz we dress the way we do and perform with a band doesn't mean we're not hip hop", begins Will.I.Am, Black Eyed Peas' co-founder and lead rapper. "That's who we are and we're not about fronting. This isn't about an image; this is about the music, whether it fits in the current scene or not."

Behind (as in beyond) the fronting, behind (as in to the rear of in) the surface skin, behind (as in advocating) the music are three MC's: main mic man Will.I.Am, acrobatic Apl.de.Ap (apple-d-ap) and hypnotizing Taboo. And four-piece band plus one stunning back-up singer.

And it's all laid out on Behind the Front, Black Eyed Peas' Interscope Records debut produced by Will.I.Am.; the 16 song collection turns positive words and phrase into refreshingly novel styles. Styles that set them apart from their peers and leaves them accessible to fans of music of all genres. "We made songs that could be understood by the normal listener where you don't have to be a part of the scene to understand what we're talking about," asserts Taboo. Continues Apl : I know the hip hop world will be feelin' the Peas and so will fans of all types of music. I think that's not only because of the live sound, but because our music crosses musical boundaries as well as cultural boundaries."

In fact, the diversity of BEP's songs - from the R&B moves of "Joints & Jam" to the melodic sound of "The Way You Make Me Feel" to the Latin sound vibes of "Que Dices" and "Karma" to the alternative hip hop of "Head Bobs" - is directly attributed to a multitude of cultural influences.

While in high school, Will and Apl formed the dance crew Tribal Nation. That group evolved into Atban Klann (A Tribe Beyond A Nation); they signed a deal with Ruthless Records in 1992. Atban Klann recorded an album that was programming and half live band, but the record never saw the light of day.

Will and Apl reformed as Black Eyed Peas with Taboo also serving as MC; BEP began playing around Los Angeles all the while gathering musicians to create a live band. "We wanted the emotions and spontaneity of a live group," begins Will. "Each time is like a new time because of the energy and feeling that's put into it; it's like you're performing a different song even though the lyrics are the same." In 1995, they won BMI and ASCAP showcases and discovered the final necessary ingredient to the band - singing backing vocals for another group. Will recruited Kim Hill to sing on a demo track, and after one session, her sweet voice became an integral part of the BEP sound. Interest started building until their show - the hearts and heat of the group - were crowded with fans as well as reps from many major record labels; Black Eyed Peas signed with Interscope Records in July 1997.

With Will and keyboardist Brian Lapin at the controls, BEP recorded 50 songs at a Los Angeles recording Studio from July 1997 to February 1998; those 50 were narrowed down to the 16 that appear on Behind the Front. The goal was simple: "We thought about what we needed to make this an ever-lasting travel album. An album that will always be there," Will asserts. "To do that we incorporated the sounds we grew up on, lyrics we believe in and the energy of our live shows."

Important among the infectious multi-cultural beats and rhythms are the positive lyrics performed by Will and Apl and Taboo (as well as sung by Kim) including those in: "Fallin' Up", about the frustration the group incurred when hip hop folks gave them grief for trying new grounds; "Karma", told from the actual perspective of the group acting as Karma; and "Positivity", about looking to the positive side while referring to the state of hip hop and senseless deaths.

"People got special powers. Black Eyed Peas has the power to be able to create music, and through that power we hope we can influence people in a positive way", stresses Will. "We're not the only kind of individuals like this, and we're

not about preachin', we're just doin' what is real to us, what gives us energy and what feels good. That's power to us.  
That's Behind the Front.

"The principles of true hip hop have been forsaken; it's all contractual and about money making." (Black Thought - The Roots)