



Snoop Doggy Doggy

Never mind the rhymes, getting to talk to Snoop Doggy Dogg is heavy enough. Before the phone interview can be organised, potential interviewers are subjected to journalistic scrutiny from his record label Death Row records, and legal forms must be signed agreeing not to discuss his murder case. With his debut solo album entering at Number One in the US charts, Snoop Doggy Dogg is out on \$1 million (US) bail, and a young man very much in demand. Interrupting rehearsals for the Arsenio show with his crew the Dogg Pound, Snoop is polite, soft-spoken and keen to talk, first explaining his caution about the media.

"There's so much drama built around me right now, it's the chosen few who I do my interviews with at present. Overseas got action though because I want to take my music to regions where they didn't think rap could go. Over there I don't have a problem with y'all, it's just over here the media try to twist me up."

Dr Dres' *The Chronic* album shot the canine rapper to almost instant fame two years ago, but hip-hop has been part of his life for considerably longer.

"I was ten or 11 when I got into hip-hop, I just loved it because it was some different shit, I knew I had to be a part of it. You have some gifted athletes and they have a knack for certain sports, like Jordan had basketball in his heart from the day he was born. Rap was in my heart just like that, I started rapping at school in the 6th grade. At home

I was listening to r'n'b, 70s music, Dramatics, O Jays, Isley Brothers and rap followed out of that tradition. My mom would listen to Gregory Isaacs and Bob Marley and at school I'd hear KRS One and Eric B and Rakim, so I was hearing all sorts."

Aside from playground rapping, Snoop made good grades at school, making him something of a rarity amongst his peers.

"I was an alright student y'know, enough to pass plus I didn't just want to be basic. I had so much willpower to get out of the ghetto, to improve my life. My mother was a single parent so that made me not want to be one, it made me want to find a woman. You know how it was on TV, find me a woman and have a family with kids living at home, and having a good job. So I had to have that education, and I strived."

If his life has resembled a TV show in any way since then, it's been more like an episode of *Cops*. Running with a Crips gang in Long Beach, he ended up in jail three times. He sees this as the pressures of his environment.

"The gang thing was something I had to get over. I wore the jacket, and I took it off. Where I'm from you don't have no choice anyways, if you don't

body out there. So you're either an associate or a banger, whoever you are."

Last year's peace treaty between the Bloods and the Crips was short lived, so can this ex-banger see any hope for the future?

"There was a peace treaty for a minute, but that shit died out because there was no money after the looting jumped off. The looting symbolised us getting paid, for a while there was ways to make money. Now there ain't no more money out there in the hood, so it's back to the same old mindset again, hustling, gang-banging, all that bullshit. It could end if the white people in power would collaborate with the black people in power and put some money in the neighbourhood. Really though, I don't see that happening."

Right now sticking close to Dre and his smooth G-Funk sound appears to be the safest bet for Snoop. So what is it that makes this coupling so successful?

"It's that smooth laid back shit, it's exactly what I listen to and it's exactly what I give you. Peoples want to hear something they can relax and chill to, they don't want to be jumping up and down, all tired and exhausted. They want something they

can groove to so we're in the G-Funk era. The P-Funk was the forefather, people like George Clinton in the 70s were putting it down. They were the inspiration for us, but now we're taking it to another level, which they weren't allowed to then."

The next level for Dre is re-uniting with his fellow ex-NWA colleague Ice Cube for an album. So where does this leave Snoop?

"The Dre and Cube thing is an upcoming project, but I don't think I'll associate myself with that. I'll probably write some lyrics for Dre, but it's a reunion thing for them, and I don't want to be in someone else's party. Right now working my album could take a year, with going overseas on tour, doing videos and touring with Dre, there's so much hype about it. Right about now I'm in business mode."

By this stage the Dogg pound are getting real loud in the background, and Snoop is indulging in one of the herbal cigarettes he is so fond of rapping about. The head Dogg obligingly asks them to keep the noise down, and shifts the conversation to marijuana matters.

"My homeboys the Dogg Pound are chilling out right now, smoking some bomb-ass chocolate tar. I hear you've got the bomb-ass weed over there too."

A quick affirmation leads to a lengthy discussion on New Zealand cultivation, and the revelation that he's very keen to visit here and soak up the local flavour. His interest isn't confined to big buds either.

"Shit, I know I wanted to go there when I was in elementary school, they have some fine-ass ladies over there, I know that for sure. The Miss New Zealand was firing 'em up every year on the Miss Americas Pageant, yeah Miss New Zealand was the shit! I just want to see it, and experience it for myself."

STINKY JIM