

# BAP SOUND-UP

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## EMANON

### It Only Took A Decade...

To some, a decade may seem like an eternity, but in the music industry, being on the grind for ten years without an LP to your name is called "paying your dues." The rapper/producer duo of Aloe Blacc and Exile have been paying their dues since 1995 and 2005 marked the year their hard work finally paid off with the appropriately titled full-length debut, *The Waiting Room*.

Both members of Emanon grew up listening to hip-hop. Blacc was a b-boy by the name of "Little Rock" who used to bring his cardboard to first-grade recess battles before he started writing rhymes at age nine. Exile started mastering his DJ techniques before he even owned legit turntables, scratching records on a home stereo. He worked his way into the scene as a graf artist and eventually purchased a pair of Technics and Numark mixer. The duo met through

mutual friends back in '95 when Exile put out word that he needed a rapper to lace his beats. They were first known as Dream Sequence, releasing one mix-tape after the next before changing their name to Emanon, releasing the EP, *Anon & On*, and touring the world with the likes of De La Soul, Talib Kweli and KRS-One. Their soulful blend of old school boom-bap and social/political/philosophical lyrics has earned Emanon a fan base that will certainly agree that their debut album was well worth the decade-long wait.

#### Straight From Their Rhyme Book:

*"Passage to black, twelve steps to heal the broken hearted/If ignorance is bliss I guess I'd rather be retarded/Entice me; make me believe that knowledge is the key/Because so far, I've seen it unlock doors to misery" – from "Blind Individuals"*



## **LYRICS BORN**

**Born's Droppin' the Same !@#\$ Different Day**

Born in Japan, Tom Shimura got his start in hip-hop when he enrolled in the University of California – Davis, back in 1990. As a freshman, he linked up with Blackalicious' Chief Xcel and the Gift of Gab, DJ Shadow and Lateef the Truth Speaker. Together, they formed the now legendary hip-hop label, Solesides, and Shimura made his debut as Asia Born. The Solesides collective began releasing one hot joint after the next, with each artist making it their duty to appear on each other's album. Shimura evolved into Lyrics Born when he hooked up with Lateef and DJ Shadow in 1997 to become the formidable hip-hop trio, Latryx.

Solesides quickly evolved into Quannum Projects and Lyrics Born dropped his first full-length album, the self-produced *Later That Day...*, which became an instant hit. Since droppin' that album, Lyrics has toured the world with both his Quannum cronies and

legends such as De La Soul and The Roots. He's even found himself sharing the stage with popular rock acts Franz Ferdinand and the Killers. And while he might not be on a major label, his music has also appeared in Diet Coke and Motorola commercials, and the movie *Collateral*. May 2005 marks the release of his second album, *Same !@#\$ Different Day*. Featuring his boys from Solesides/Quannum and a slew of hip-hop notables ranging from KRS-One to Dan the Automator, this tongue twisting lyricist continues to show how it's done in the indie game.

### **Straight From His Rhyme Book:**

*"I just imagine some \*ssh\*le with glasses on up at the capitol/One of a thousand pawns packed in an office, cramped up like animals/Pictures of his sister, his mixture Lhasa Apso poodle/His 2.6 kids and the mis-sus thumb-tacked to his cubicle"* – from **"Stop Complaining"**



## ROOTS MANUVA

**This Time Around, His Lyrics Are Cuttin' Awfully Deep**

Rodney Smith's a bloke who's been reppin' the Dirty South of Great Britain for a hot minute now. Comin' from the South London area of Stockwell, this rapper put his hometown on the map years before the likes of Dizzee Rascal and The Streets blew up the spot with their garage/electronic brand of hip-hop. He started lighting the scene on fire in the late '90s, eventually dropping his debut, *Brand New Second Hand* in 1999. His English accent and ragga-inspired flow perfectly matched his unique trip-hop/electronic inspired beats, quickly winning him an international audience.

After building a loyal following with his debut on the typically electronic-based Big Dadda/Ninja Tunes record label, Mr. Manuva wasted no time and hit the studio to work on his follow-up, *Run Come Save Me*. After 15 tracks off that album didn't make the cut, he hit the studio again to tweak the remaining tracks and released a third album, *Dub Come Save Me*. His fourth release, *Awfully Deep*, hit stores in this and found the rapper using slightly (emphasis on *slightly*) more traditional beats and possibly earning himself an even larger international audience. Might we suggest that Roots form a tag team named the *British Super Powers* with another English-born rapper, the eye patch-rockin' storyteller, Slick Rick?

### **Straight From His Rhyme Book:**

*"Squeeze the pain from my belly  
and set my soul free/Travel over  
ocean land and sea/Faced 'nuff  
stress and difficulty/Flung back from  
the brink/Gwan'ing kind of stink/We  
don't give a frig about what them  
fools think"* – from **"Witness (1  
Hope)"**



## GRAND AGENT

Philly-meets-Cali When Grand Joins Forces with Oh No

There are two kinds of rappers in the hip-hop game. Okay, there's actually *much more* than two kinds of rappers, but for the sake of this piece let's agree on two. There are rappers who want to have as many different hot producers as possible to create their album and there are rappers who would rather have one dope producer bangin' out the beats. Until recently, North Central Philly-bred rapper Grand Agent was definitely the former.

Throughout his nearly decade-long career, Grand Agent has worked with plenty of different producers. When creating his latest release, *Under The Circumstances*, Grand opted to work solely with the currently blazin' Oh No – a West Coast artist hip-hop heads may already know as Madlib's brother. "I had done a tour with him and the Lootpack back in 2001 and people were hyping him up to me like, "Oh, he's

nice. He's Madlib's brother. It might be interesting for you to work together." Upon hearing Oh No's beats, Grand Agent confessed that, "Oh No just makes you rap!" And rap is exactly what Grand did over beats that run the gamut from "golden age" styled hip-hop to classic soul sampling to electronic, synth-infused club bangers. Gangsta rap styles are slapped dose of consciousness, with Grand Agent and Oh No having formed a classic emcee/producer team that's sure to get the critics talking.

### Straight From His Rhyme Book:

*"It's only right that you believe in what you can afford to/Throw your life-force at the stakes like horse-shoes/You'll feel Christian once you get it out your system/Life without passion turn a volunteer into a victim" – from "Grand Right Now"*