

New Cypress Hill, Pharcyde golden

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As a full-blown urbanite hailing from the town of the original Boogie Down, there are two things I get on my knees and pray for every night- the end to the rumor that I own "Small Wonder" T-shirt complete with matching lunchbox, and the violent death of mainstream rap and hip-hop. Luckily, two recent albums shine a bit of light into the dark cauldron the genre has been tossed into: Cypress Hill's *Live at the Fillmore*, and Pharcyde's *Plain Rap*.

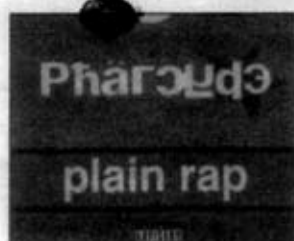
The music industry has destroyed yet another beautiful art form. Much like punk rock, hip-hop has been fed to pasty white suburban kids, and the lyrics and themes behind the music have taken a gargantuan leap off a cliff onto the jaggy rocks below. Perhaps these guys should try the eclectic fusion of Cypress Hill.

One thing these Latino advocates for marijuana have always been known for is their ability to attract fans of all creeds. Whether it be their euphoric lyrics or the voices of B-Real and Sen Dog rapping over the dark, slow and mellow stoner beats of DJ Muggs, Cypress has always proved that hip-hop is about having a good, occasionally high, time. No need for gold teeth and silver tuxes here. With *Live at the Fillmore*, Cypress has proved that hip-hop can still rock. This live performance was recorded with zero post-production and contains about as much energy as a coked up Richard Simmons. A few classic cuts are on this CD, bringing back not only the idea of MCs and DJs, but throwing guitars and live percussion into the mix as well. A guaran-

has been released along with Cypress Hill's first home video (and DVD) of the same name.

On a more mellow and toried down note, the west coast indie MCs, Pharcyde, are back from a bit of a hiatus with *Plain Rap*. It's a shame Pharcyde never blew up in the mainstream scene, with most of my peers having only heard the overplayed, but long forgotten, "Passing Me By" and this is just one of the themes present throughout their latest offering. Between their last album, *Labcabin-california*, and *Plain Rap*, Pharcyde has suffered typical abuse from the industry. Lack of money and support, the loss of Fat Lip and Tre to solo projects, and conflicts with their label, Delicious Vinyl, have caused members Imani Wilcox and Romye "Booty Brown" Robinson to call this release a compromise album. It is compromise that prevented this superb CD from being a total of 12 tracks. It stands at 11 tracks, but the dumped track featured the Afro-Latin Jazz of the Buena Vista Social Club. However, plain rap is exactly what Pharcyde has delivered, from one-word song titles, down to the grocery item themed cover and liner note art. Each track flows with funky mellow beats, and the lyricists, including Black Thought from Roots on the track "Network," are truly at the top of their game.

It would be nice if mainstream hip-hop could fizzle away and artists like Little Bow Wow would go back to playing with crayons and toys rather than bitches and hoes. However, popular radio and television rule the masses, so urbanites and lovers of good music must continue to put a bit more effort into finding the gold nuggets lost the glutinous mush of fecal waste the industry has created.



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