

Mp3 Boomer Da Sharpshoota - Straight RefugeeZ Vol. 1



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Born in a refugee camp in Northern Thailand. Raised in the ghettos of North Stockton, CA. Deported back to "The Killing Fields." The music for this album is Amped.. Hardcore.. Gutter... Real. 17 MP3 Songs HIP HOP/RAP: Hardcore Rap, HIP HOP/RAP: West Coast Rap Details: Deported in Body, Returning in Voice

A Khmer hip hop artist uses music to return to his American homeland Text by Ross Duggleby

In a dark Cambodian country night, the only light other than that of the moon was from the misted up windows of a parked car. Accompanied by thumping hip hop beats, this was the vehicle for the outpouring of the emotions of an angry young man. This was Boomer's method. Inspiration, or rather compulsion, was definitely not in short supply, just a place in which to think and compose. Having been evicted not only from his home, but his homeland, this was harder than one might think. But here in a car beside the paddy field on which his extended Khmer family based their survival, his emotions boiled, and the hip hop flowed. Escaping the Killing Fields, wasn't no easy task, Go get your kids; here come them killas in them red scarf mask begins both his inaugural track Straight Refugee and his life story. Boomer was born in a refugee camp in Northern Thailand. His family had fled the Khmer Rouge instigated genocide to seek safety in the camps. After years of hunger and the threat of disease, they found themselves amongst the lucky few who were offered sponsorship to travel to the US to claim asylum. With this, Boomer became an American. Growing up in Stockton, California, in which was essentially a Khmer ghetto, Boomer's childhood was troubled and poor. With problems exacerbated by the departure of his Father, his path to drugs and crime was far from unpredictable. Finding himself alone in Cambodia, however, was a far bigger surprise. After serving a prison term for a first-offence self-defense shooting, committed when he was just 18, he was deported to Cambodia on one of the regular shipments of convicted young Khmer Americans as part of the Returnee Program. The official term Returnee is loaded with irony. Many speak

nothing but American English with a heavy Californian accent, and have never even seen pictures of their supposed homeland. There is no element of return, merely deposit. Boomer, however, was amongst the luckier of the returnees. Having grown up in a large Khmer community in Stockton he was familiar with Khmer customs and language, and having visited Cambodia once with his father five years prior to his deportation, he knew, at least partly, what to expect. But after a lifetime in the US, all returnees still consider themselves aliens in a foreign land or in Boomers words, America says were not from America, Cambodia says were not from Cambodia, were just refugees in a lost land. Removed from the gang structures of America, the returnees instead find themselves in a corrupt and largely lawless Phnom Penh. Local discrimination and other barriers to orthodox employment, such as language difficulties, force many to return to criminal activities as the only means to form friendships and make money. For Boomer, life in Stockton was entirely focused around the significant gang culture in the city, but it is an entirely different influence from his hometown that he is drawing on as the foundation for his new life. Stocktons importance in the west-coast hip hop scene has endowed him with the basis to carve out a living away from drugs and violence, a living based, instead, on music. Since his arrival in 2003 his efforts have turned entirely from crime to hip hop and his new living provides him with the route to channel his experiences and emotions into productive medium. He has a lot to say, and US based Khmers want to hear it and are eagerly awaiting the arrival of his first album Straight RefugeeZ: Vol. 1. With lyrics drawing purely on his life in the US and his deportation to Cambodia, the record is loaded with poignant and emotional messages, messages that he feels offer something different and unique to a hip hop scene which seems to openly endorse notions of criminality and violence. He feels his words have to reach the ears of both those American-based Khmers who have lived through similar events and the wider hip hop scene who are seeking something more genuine. As production on Vol. 1 comes to an end, he is poised to become a true returnee, returning to his real homeland not in person, but in voice. RD

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