Ruben 7 speaks with CP2 about the road he's paving with positivity, integrity, real rap skills and without a record deal.

How one local artist artist vows to change the game

By FELICIA C. HANEY

Staff Reporter

Fresh off stage from opening for Def Jam recording artist Ray Jr., Cleveland's own Ruben7 has a word with CP2 about his road through the rap game. A road he's paving with positivity, integrity, real rap skills and without a record deal. Under the direction of music veteran DJ Quest95, he's building the foundation to move hip hop forward from rapping about cars, clothes and the rest of the rigmarole by taking it back to what it used to be and beyond. Read carefully as he explains how Ruben7 is making his claim to fame.

Let's talk a little bit about your name. I understand it has some special significance…

I'm Ruben7 a.k.a. Godson, a.k.a. Malcolm Next a.k.a. Frederick Thugless you name it. But seriously, it comes from my childhood and I don't want anybody to confuse it with a gimmick. My mom had six kids before I was born. They all passed away. So, I'm here trying to take advantage of this opportunity we call life. I'm trying to experience it to the fullest and it just so happens that I have a passion for something and it's called music, no matter the form or the genre.

Hip hop has seemed to influence you the most. But, how do you define your music?

Hip hop is probably the form I have adapted to the most. It's what I witnessed growing up. It was the most powerful and how powerful it was if evident to this day. It's the most influential form of music that we've ever encountered as far as I'm concerned. The people respond to it. Hip hop has had influence on people no matter their age. Even if you don't listen to it, you're wearing the clothing. Even gospel artists are dressing like rappers. I define my music as culturally universal. Our problems are global. The only difference is the way the people are treated. Hip hop has to be used for the betterment not a detriment, and as far as I'm concerned, that's my job to resume the responsibility.

As an artist, how do you balance the type of music you want to make with what gets the popular vote among mass audiences? Unfortunately "positive" music hasn't been getting positive rappers that big break.

There are three voices – the voice of the artist, the voice of the people, and the voice of the artist and people together. Based on that perspective, you've got the artist who says what people want to hear; you've got the artist who says what the people are thinking. That's where the machine comes in; the distribution companies. They want to put out what the people want to hear. They're not concerned with what the people are thinking. That's where I come in. That's the road I'm traveling down. It's empty. The road less traveled. If you can get the kind of music that relates to the way people are thinking they'll listen. You just have to figure out how to get it to them. Once you get it to them, that's what they'll want to listen to. That's the artist and the people's voice together. Let the people speak, cause they gone tell ya. Real music takes precedence over this bullshit any day.

So what's your take on Major vs. Independent. I get the creative control of it all, but what does that mean if you don't have that major push to get it to the people?

I've come to appreciate the independency of what I'm doing vs. the dependency of major labels. Mainstream artists have attached themselves to these major labels, and signed a deal with the devil…

You mean like illuminati?

I won't even say that word. But, no one said that door is closed because we're not attached to a conglomerate or major distributor. It's called being an entrepreneur, being a man not a puppet.

Is that what you think of the "popular vote" music that occupies the airwaves? Puppetry.

The music out right now is just a glorification of superficiality. It glorifies everything that means nothing. After a while, you can only listen to so much of that. What I'm doing is going to supersede over the superficiality. Most people who download the music can't even relate to what the artist is talking about. They're the people who read the Call & Post. I mean, how many of them can afford Bentleys? So, like I said, after a while you get tired of it. This art form becomes therapy. A release from all that. Open mindedness, broadens people's perspective.

There's a time to party and bullshit and there's a time to be serious. I think I still have some partying and bullshit left in me but I've been doing this long enough to know my position. There's nobody in the music industry right now that I would want to mimic cause if I do, where are you going to lead me? To a swamp or a fresh stream? How many artists have succeeded talking about money hoes and clothes? I've grown passed the machismo-ism.

You seem really into fitness (based on the buffness of his physique), is that a passion of yours as well?

It is. Both [music and fitness] have been therapeutic. Music is completely an emotion, off the top. It takes emotion to produce a track. It's a chemistry. A band can't go on the road without developing a chemistry, and I can't go on the road without developing myself mentally and physically.

What sets you apart?

Image and information. I'm all about image and information. They go together. They're everything. If you don't have the information to go get the nice things, how are you going to get them? I've got the information and the image which makes me a threat. I love being a threat, and lyrically I'm the same way.

Want to get more info on artist Ruben7? Log on to Ruben7.com where you can download his latest project. He will be performing live Sunday, Nov. 25 at Earth Nightclub, 1295 Old River Road on the East Bank of the Flats or you can "catch me in the gym," as Ruben suggests.

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