

## STEP INTO MY PARLOUR



By Shaun Proulx

## SHAUN PROULX TALKS TO HAYDAIN NEALE

Sexy is a combination of things, but in my book walk to the beat of your own drummer and you're halfway there. **Haydain Neale** is even further along for a lot of reasons, the least of which isn't jacksoul, the band for which he's front man. With the release last month of their third album, *Resurrected*, jacksoul once again has produced soul songs about the world today without fixing a sound unbroken. Or, as Neale puts it, 'Straight-up, raw dawg, takin' no prisoners, goin' for your throat, tear-jerkin, ass shakin', sweet and low down, fried chicken and dumplings with a side of grease, mess around and hurt yourself soul music'.

Indeed. However their music is described jacksoul and Neale rule-break in an industry focused obsessively with next big things and reception to their end-results are turning the lead vocalist and the band into big things themselves. Following 1996's debut *Absolute*, their sophomore *Sleepless* in 2000 snagged jacksoul a Juno and if the *Resurrected* release party at Mod Club last month is indication, jacksoul is set to demonstrate that good things come in threes; the space was jam-packed over an hour before Neale et al. took to the stage.

In a recent **GGT** Subscriber poll we learned most of our readers don't want sex on this site. But you didn't say you don't want sexy. So I spoke with Neale the afternoon following jacksoul's Mod Club performance, where we talked about what's right and wrong with urban music, who called his music 'too intellectual', and what's sexy to him.



As we speak the most-played song on radio in Canada is called *Still Believe In Love* by a band called jacksoul. What does the Hamilton boy who once rehearsed in a converted chicken coop say to that score and to the attention you and jacksoul are enjoying?



It's a huge wave of relief to be honest. We are artists: we don't innately believe that everyone's gonna get it or connect to it or buy into it. So to have people come back and say it's a great song, it matters. We wanted a positive tune for a change about breaking up. It's great to know that people are enjoying a break-up song that's got an upbeat sound.



I've been playing an advance copy for weeks and right away again is that nice instant familiarity to you and I know you work towards a loved soul sound from back in the day: Al Green, Otis Redding, Sly Stone. Have you had to fight the great music industry marketing machine needing 'next move in sound' versus 'of established sound'?



It is weird because their mandate kind of fits into an artistic headspace but sometimes they fight themselves on it. It has to be original so they can market it. But if it's too original they're scared off. But this time I was given enough rope to hang myself with, I didn't have to ask anyone for their opinion. At the end of the day there were no headaches at the creative side of it, no long history of fights with Haydain. I just got to do a soul record.



It's refreshing. I'm an urban music fan, but so many times lyrics are lame, sexual innuendo is never-ending, beats are from other hits, bootie-bootie-bling-bling; it gets monotonous -



- Dude, it forces you to become the channel flipper. I'm in the same headspace as you. In the old days you could have a bootie call tune, but you'd also have an entire body of work that included spiritual tunes. For every 'let's get it on' there was a 'what's going on'.



Gosh you're quotable.



(Laughs.) I come with sound bytes. But we should all be getting back to that. We should speak but not just from a ghetto mentality. It's not just about 'Hi, I got shot nine times'. I may be black but, you know what? I also know there's terrorism, problems in the Middle East and Jewish gravestones being vandalized here at home. It's good to sing about the world *and* throw in a good tune about getting it on.




You've noted the Temptations, Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye for using music to inspire people's minds and attitudes, saying 'music needs to start moving with that purpose again'. If so, what's the message of your music that you want to inspire?



That honesty is sexy. And being positive is as powerful as being ghetto. As a black artist I do take responsibility for being part of a genre, even if it's being on the fringe. Many of my brethren are pushing a self serving negative view on life in general. And their views affect people, kids, and not just black kids because its suburban white kids buying the most hip hop. And it's brutal. We can't just stop there. It's not just supposed to be a pantomime of white life or black life. We should still aspire to be in half decent relationships, not just always fighting. As far back as Mozart artists have been known to push culture and society forward and we shouldn't now be about holding it back.




Didn't one A&R rep at a U.S. label say they couldn't sign jacksoul because your music was too 'intellectual'?



Yeah. I'm not here to paint with a wide brush about how dumb Americans are. I think they are smarter than their media masters give them credit for actually. But if you only drink dirty water you only get sick.




What's your stance on Internet downloading?



I think that people have to stop lying to themselves about how music is important in their lives. People do the dishes to music, wash the dog, go to the gym, drive. Music should be universally available but that is not the same the thing as being free. To encourage music that matters or that's just fun we have to keep buying it. But we need a top-down solution. Every man woman and child in the free world should give into a fund every year that allows them access to downloadable music. And I think we also have to admit that we are moving towards downloadable music as a standard.




Know what I like best about *Resurrected*, Haydain? It feels like sweet summertime.



Thanks Shaun. That's so cool. It's hard to pick the second single though and that's what I'm working on now.



It's the first track *I Think You Should Know* that put me in that summer groove right away.



Really? That's funny because you're the third or fourth person to suggest that and I'll take it seriously. It's a huge deal to have a gay guy compliment you on anything, especially music for me. A good friend of mine Stephen Sandler is a designer and I met him getting some clothes and we've remained friends. He goes through music like crazy and I never see him without his iPod on. As a culture you guys go through music like no one's business, you are like British pop radio listeners in the way you go through music so quickly, and how much you love music. So to get onto your radar in any way, even if it's just for a month, is huge to me.