

KRS VS NELLY? KRS Himself Responds!



KRS

(Apr. 25, 2002) Last summer a producer and friend asked me to spit some lyrics on a song he was producing for an artist named Tone-Def.

Of course, I immediately agreed to do the project. For me, it was an opportunity to support a friend that, over the years, has never ceased to support me.

After some weeks, I finally got a chance to lay down some lyrics and complete the song. Such lyrics were my artistic attempt to answer those that had a problem with my views on "real" and "fake" Hiphop. In hind-sight, I should have just left it alone and let

people think whatever they wanted to think. But I didn't.

Before I had dropped my lyrics on Tone-Def's recording, I had been receiving e-mails, conversations and articles criticizing (and praising) my various positions regarding what I've called "real Hiphop" and "fake hip-hop." I believe it is important for Hiphoppas to grow up and unite around a set of principles designed for our continued health, love, awareness, and wealth. However, others feel that the "organizing" or "institutionalizing" of Hiphop, diminishes its freedom of expression. I respect such concerns. But when I see Hiphop's culture being turned into a corporate product because we have no set of cultural principles, I can only think about the plight of future Hiphoppas and how my role today shall affect their freedom tomorrow.

With this in mind, I released two songs: "Hot" and "Get Yourself Up," both of which pointed out the immaturity and irresponsibility of many rappers, and how we basically enslave ourselves to interest that stagnate Hiphop's ability to culturally survive and develop. No...my lyrics were not directed at Nelly in particular. They were directed to the general criticisms I had been hearing (especially from rappers). I had already heard Nelly's song "Number One" which stated: I'm tired of hearing rappers saying what's real hip-hop/ ... but there album flops! Although I did think his statement was a bit aggressive for a new comer, I did not take it as a direct "dis" to me. Even though such a statement showed little respect for Hiphop's cultural continuity and the opinions of Hiphop's pioneers, I took Nelly's lyric as him defending himself against his critics. But everywhere I went someone was either directly, or indirectly, asking me about what I thought of Nelly's song Number One? Some would even ask me about the similarities between his use of the chorus "uh-ooooooo" on his song "....." and my use of the same chorus some five years before on the song ".....". Each time I heard such gossip, I would dismiss it and try to bring the focus of the conversation to Hiphop's unity and preservation.

After a few months, not only is the Tone-Def song released, but an interesting e-mail goes out with the song implying that this recording is my answer (dis) to Nelly's song "Number One." This was simply not the case! However, the message was out and the gossip intensified. It wouldn't be long before I would receive phone calls from Nelly's former attorney and his road manager asking me if the rumors were true? Was I dissin Nelly? I explained to them that the lyrics I laid down on the Tone-Def recording was an artistic battle-type rhyme directed at all of my criticizers. That it was not directed to Nelly in particular, but I could see how people might take it as such. Therefore, I went on to tell them to tell Nelly that I am in no way trying to cause a battle with him, and that maybe we should do something together. Although Nelly's road manager and I did spend some time contemplating the pros and cons of such a battle, I informed him that I was writing books, developing the Temple of Hiphop's membership, and promoting Hiphop Appreciation Week (May 13th - 20th 2002). I went on to explain how I am somewhere else in my life these days, and that battling rappers is a bit childish for me. Nevertheless, I also instructed

them to take caution because I, and my army, are always prepared for any threat. Supposedly, they relayed this message back to Nelly who responded with how he respected and admired KRS and that he did not have me in mind when he wrote "Number One." I left it at that.

But the gossip kept growing. Finally on April 16, 2002 on BET's 106th and Park, Nelly and another artist were being interviewed. Nelly was asked----- to which he responded-----. Of course, his response didn't help to turn down the flames of confrontation. BET even put an early picture of me on the screen. Something I found interesting, as if they too were hyping up this controversy. Then I picked up the latest D.J. clue mix tape and Nelly is recorded there saying-----! I don't know, but it seems as if Nelly is being pushed into a position where he has to protect himself, his image, his credibility, and his manhood. I don't blame him, in his position you have to say something. However, I wonder where all of this is leading to? How does an emcee battle between KRS and Nelly help Hiphop? As many of you should know by now, I am forever prepared to accept any emcee challenge, and I do so eagerly ready to deliver historical ass whippings to any emcee in doubt. But, the year is 2002, and not 1987.

I have grown from being "Criminal Minded" to being "Spiritual Minded." I am not so quick to just smash a rapper (on several levels) because I know I can. KRS is a lot more disciplined these days. In the past I've been called "contradictory," "egotistical," and "arrogant" for responding to similar challenges yet projecting an image of peace and humility. What shall I be called today if I respond? I have soldiers, students and secret disciples in St.Louis ready to respond right now, but am I not the elder in this situation? I do not just talk "Spiritually Minded," I am "Spiritually Minded." And in the spirit I can see that many people praise my efforts in my face, but behind my back they seek to find anyway they can to set up my demise! In the spirit I can see an opportunity, not in battling and conquering Nelly, but in battling and conquering myself! The temptation to release another Hiphop classic at the expense of Nelly's credibility and career is great, but it is not overwhelming. In the spirit I can see the opportunity to strengthen Hiphop's Unity, not indulge in a battle that leaves us both without wisdom. In the spirit, this whole thing look's like a set-up! I could see if the battle was with someone on my cultural level like Big Daddy Kane, Doug E Fresh, L.L. Cool J, Rakim, Kool G Rap, M.C. Shan, etc. But a battle with Nelly is simply a mix match that leaves Hiphop imbalanced. Not that I claim to be above or below Nelly's talent, but that I am the elder in this situation and it is wisdom and moderation that must be considered first before rushing to quench the thirst for confrontation.

Therefore, I shall remain silent, and observe. I do have an atomically charged, lyrically activated emcee bomb ready for detonation. But what does the use of such a weapon prove when the original cause of the confrontation was built upon gossip and the need to use controversy to sell a record. I shall not be lured into such traps! I have no beef with Nelly, lyrically or otherwise. I wish him no harm, and may no harm come to him. For everything is temporary, even gossip and the need of others to drink from the cup of confrontation. I wish Nelly great success this year with his new project. As for me, I will be celebrating Hiphop Appreciation Week (May 13th - 20th 2002). I will be giving thanks to God, to Hiphop and to my supporters for the longevity and peace I have received and continue to enjoy. Let us all think about our roles in Hiphop and how our actions today shall affect our children tomorrow. Let us tell our children about Hiphop as a strategy that enhances the quality of inner-city life. Let us remember that we are not just doing Hiphop, we are Hiphop! There it is!