

Kuumba Freeque –Making Music Sexy Again [Video]

Written by Anthony Frazier

Friday, 23 September 2011 00:00



Houston has a plethora of gifted, exciting, talented and sexy artists emerging from the burgeoning scene that we call the “underground.” Rappers, poets, musicians, singers and yes....bands. Kuumba Freeque is one of those aforementioned bands that is slowly putting the underground music scene on lock.

Led by the charismatic and ever-charming Kmonte’ (pronounced kuh_montay) and the sexy, beautiful and talented Tresa Jerell, Kuumba Freeque is getting ready to release their debut cd Rezurekshun. I had a chance to sit down with the dynamic duo as they discussed the new music and the meaning of music to them.

AF- “Tell me about Kuumba Freeque. Where did you get the name from and what does it mean?”

Kmonte- “When we first got together in 2005 and decided to do a band together we tossed around name ideas. There were several. Most of them were rejected by Tresa. Some of the ideas we retained and used for other purposes. Prior to us hooking up, I had performed at a number of Kwanzaa celebrations. As many are aware, Kwanzaa has 7 principles. One of them being Kuumba which is Swahili for creativity. The stuff we were



coming up with was fresh and creative. I threw that out there and she was okay with that.” (both

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laugh)

AF-“Tresa, how did you hook up with Kmonte’?”

Tresa-“That’s a funny story that we tell all the time. I was attending a church that was doing original music with writing workshops etc. We were having a writing session at what was called Sip-N-Surf at the time. It’s now called Mocha Life. I didn’t know Kmonte’ although I knew of him. He was at the writing session sitting by himself seemingly doing nothing. He was being Kmonte’! (laughing). So the group I was with had just written a song and we were playing it, just getting a feel for it. My part came up and I sang. Everyone was in shock because I could sing. No one had heard me sing before. So Kmonte’ scooted on over to our table. He told me and I quote, “I like your voice.” I said thank you then he asked me if I wanted to be in a rock band. I said sure, why not and he said alright. I didn’t take him seriously at all. I thought he was blowing smoke. But literally two months later we had a show.

AF-“So did you have the name of the band at that time?”

Both-“Yes”.

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AF-“Was it hard to click when you all had your initial writing sessions?”

Tresa-“Our writing clicked from jump. He had tracks that had no lyrics. I had lyrics that had no tracks. And they all fit together. It was crazy. The writing has been pretty much effortless.”

AF-“Kmonte’, this is your 2nd full length recording, with “Painting Piktures” being the first a few years back. What is the difference between the two aside from the obvious having Tresa sing on everything?”

Kmonte-“This album is a true concept album. It’s based on three chapters, birth, crucifixion and the final chapter; resurrection. All of the songs tell stories and depict real vivid pictures of three distinct stages of life. Birth-representing innocence, purity and all things untainted. Crucifixion; which we jokingly equate to adulthood. You come to the realization that everyone does not love you. Stuff happens. We focus on the ills of relationships in this chapter. Resurrection is that final stage where you “grow up” and you reach that point of enlightenment. You pull things from your life growing up and you take things as they come at you. You’re alive and you do your thing.”

AF-“This is for the both of you. Kmonte, you’ve worked with a literal who’s who of the music industry in the City of Houston through the years. What have you learned working with those artists up to this point? And Tresa, I’m sure you look at Kmonte’ as a mentor. With that being said what have you learned from him?”

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Tresa-“I’ve learned a lot about the purity of music and I’ve learned quite a bit about the industry from Kmonte’. No matter what scale it’s on, it has it’s history and it plays it’s part in the whole scheme of things. He’s taught me a lot about marketing and promoting. On the music side he’s shown me quite a bit and I’m grateful for it. I’ve always been a singer. I’ve realized that everyone doesn’t have your best interest at heart. Kmonte’ is not one of those “sharks” in the pond kind of guys. Finding people that have your best interest at heart means a lot. Kmonte’ gave me an opportunity to be exactly who I am as an artist.”

Kmonte’-“The thing I’ve learned over the years is the value of consistency. It takes a while for anyone to develop what he or she should be consistent in. Once you figure it out as an artist, producer, writer or all around music professional you begin to act like, be like and perform like an artist. Then you learn the consistency in it all. When you start working with other artists coming from underneath you, you can then show that sense of professionalism and they become relaxed. Then you can make things happen because everyone is giving each other his or her best. Now you taught me through the years to be sympathetic and empathetic to an artist situation. When I first got to Houston you showed me that love and you didn’t even know me. That’s how you build long lasting, loving relationships.”

AF-“This is another question for both of you. It’s been 6 years since you formed the band and I’m sure it’s been a struggle. Was it hard to be loyal to one another on that business/friendship/band level? Were there times when you just figured you didn’t want to do this at least with one another?”

Tresa-“It’s kind of a yes and no answer. No it wasn’t hard to be loyal because when we started in the same way our album tells a story. It started in this birth kind of section. He had to be vulnerable and present his music and I could have easily said no, no way am I going to do this

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with you. He could have done the same when he saw my lyrics. He could have easily rejected my lyrics. So because we were vulnerable with one another on that level our loyalty was built on that initial meeting. That's the no part of the answer. Now the yes part to that question begins with the fact that we had a lot of missed starts, things that didn't work out, time schedules clashed etc. There were times I felt uncertain about a lot of things. Kmonte' kept his cool and he didn't stop. He kept moving along. So when I felt like not doing it I would see him doing his thing and I'd feel a lot better. So I don't see us having any disloyalty to one another on this. I lived out of state for a year. I was gone for the entire year 2008. We still managed to do shows. I'd come home, rehearse and we'd do a show. I'd hop on the plane and head back out. I don't think loyalty is a question. We're pretty tight."

Kmonte-“We don't know any other way to be. We've put in a lot of work and we will continue. Our connection is tighter than any connection I've had with any other artist I've worked with.”

AF-“You put on an excellent show. What should we expect once the cd drops?”

Kmonte-“Live shows and some funky jams.”

Look for the new Kuumba Freeque CD in stores September 20th.{jcomments on}