

FEKKY

Prepares debut album 'El Clasico' for release

South London rapper Fekky is at the forefront of a new generation of MC's who are reinvigorating the British Rap and Grime scene. Making his mark with memorable ad-libs and a forceful flow, Fekky is one of the first British rappers to hold genuine comparison to his American counterparts. The 28 year-old's predominantly Trap-based beats and stark subject matter retain an energy and authenticity that we've yet to see from a UK rhymer.

Though his sense of humour, abundance of ad-libs and South London slang and accent make him a resolutely and singularly British MC, Fekky's compelling flow and menacing sounds also conjure the sorts of street dreams more commonly associated with U.S. rappers like Meek Mill, Y.G or Rick Ross.

Then there's his live show - Fekky was the most booked underground MC of 2013 and 2014. Booking all of the 60-plus dates without a manager or live agent, Fekky has spent much of the last two years touring the country and building up a core, dedicated fanbase. Onstage is where Fekky really thrives with street anthems like 'Rudeboy Ting', 'Bang' and last year's Dizzee Rascal featuring 'Still Sittin' Here' dominant in clubs across the country. His high-octane performances and natural stage presence, which typically involve Fekky scaling speakers and stagediving, have helped build his buzz to epic proportions and seen him supporting tours with artists including the Game, Rick Ross, Boy Better Know, Wiley & Kid Ink.

Currently preparing his debut album, set for release in the Autumn of 2015, 'El Clasico' features beats from some of the most interesting and innovative producers emerging from the underground, including the Splurgeboys [Tinie Tempah, Stormzy, Krept & Konan], Beatfreakz and Slic Vic. 'El Clasico' is also set to feature the cream of UK MC's including Dizzee Rascal, Wretch 32, Skepta, Stormzy and Krept & Konan. The co-sign of such a relative novice by established emcees speaks volumes; this charismatic, engaged, focused rapper is the one to watch.

Born in Lewisham to Nigerian parents, each Sunday Fekky's house was filled with Gospel on the radio and the sounds of his dad's Bob Marley and Fela Kuti vinyl. As a young child he would unconsciously hum along, adding harmonies without particularly realising or appreciating what he was doing. As a teenager, he would help his parents in their newsagent shop on Deptford High Street, playing the part of the dutiful son. He excelled at school and went on to study at college, to all intents and purposes a young man who had managed to avoid the temptations that the streets of south London can offer a

teenage boy. However, a much darker side was emerging. It was while working in his parent's shop that he was unexpectedly exposed to another world. "There was a shop across the street that was a front for the local dealers. I would see them pull up in their expensive cars and nice clothes and I wanted that too. I wanted to live lavish," Fekky remembers. For the next decade, Fekky would indulge in a life of crime, rising the ranks and becoming one of London's most successful "entrepreneurs".

During this time he touched on the idea of MCing, but rarely seriously. During the mid-2000's, many young men in London had vague aspirations to rap, and Fekky was one of them. He had the occasional bar ("Fekky's gonna get ya") that would get reloaded when he jumped onstage with grime crew Essentials, but generally his exposure to Grime and UK Rap came via making friends with MC's like Wiley and Dizzee in clubs. "I've known these guys for years, but generally via my old life. I'd be the guy in the club buying champagne, making sure everyone was comfortable and enjoying themselves. So when I said I was thinking of quitting road life for rap, lots of my friends told me to think again," Fekky remembers. G-FrSH and Skepta both warned him that there was comparatively little money to be made and what money there was, was hard fought. "I learnt that lesson fast," he laughs. "At first I would spend money on this video and that video. I realised not only was it bad business, it was unnecessary. Good music will shine though regardless of how much cash you spend on the visuals."

He released his debut mixtape, 'Come On Den' in 2012, hosted by 50 Cent affiliate DJ Whoo Kid and featuring JME, Frisco and Krept & Konan. The single 'Ring, Ring Trap', hit 100,000 views in less than three days, followed by Charlie Sloth's 'Fire In The Booth' (half a million views and counting) and 'Bang'. He soon became known for his 'bu-bu-bang' ad-lib, and began taking bookings in Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. Seeing his buzz build, Fekky began to put his full energies into music, and decided to leave his old life behind for good. Though he's realistic that his history could present problems, as it has for other MC's, he hopes that his past won't be glorified; rather that his decision to change his future will be the focus. "I think it means a lot more to a kid on the verge of entering a gang or illegal activity to see someone like me or Giggs make it," Fekky points out. "They know that we are people who are really from that walk of life, unlike most rappers. I changed and the benefits of that can be seen. I'm not dead, I'm not in jail, I'm not constantly looking over my shoulder. You can make money in a clean-hearted, creative way, whether that's becoming a lawyer or a lyricist. I hope that's what kids take from me and my music."

Though tracks like 'Show You How' worked particularly well with a broader audience, 'Let It Go', premiered on Noisey, saw Fekky's development as a lyricist. "I'll always have gassy songs to make people jump up and down in a club or at a rave, but I balance that with tracks that offer a deeper perspective too," he says. "Music is about energy and I want to show different vibes with every track I put out." Key to Fekky's rising success was his ability to get played in clubs next to Drake and Rick Ross; a rarity in UK Rap. "The quality of the beats I was jumping on and also the style, isn't common here; you can

play my latest single 'Ain't Nobody' next to 'Started From The Bottom' or 'BMF' and people won't miss a beat."

While in the studio with The Splurgeboys, they played him an idea for a beat; a reworking of 'Sittin' Here' from Dizzee Rascal's Mercury Prize winning debut 'Boy In Da Corner'. "I sent it to Dizzee, via Twitter, not really expecting too much," Fekky remembers. "I was at home one day and this email popped into my inbox; Diz had sent me the verse." Arguably one of 2014's hottest underground tracks, 'Still Sittin' Here's remix attracted everyone from Meridian Dan to Kano, Skepta, D Double E, Chip, Tempa T, Jammer, Frisco and Tinchy Stryder. Both the original and remixes videos have racked up over a million YouTube hits to date.

Alongside Stormzy, Fekky's hardknock, no-nonsense beats and erudite ruminations on road life helped UK Rap and Grime return to its heart in 2014; the scene was becoming exciting and energetic with new voices talking about new experiences.

Now signed to Island, the father of two has spent the last year appearing on tracks with Krept and Konan, Sneakbo and Professor Green, doing shows around Europe and the U.K and performing 'Still Sittin' Here' at the MOBOs 2014. Fekky has also ventured into acting, and appears in the forthcoming films *The Intent* and *The Legacy*.

Later this year, we will get to hear the full scale of his artistry when Fekky releases 'El Clasico'. "It's a statement of intent from me; I'm in the big league now, I'm working alongside the big boys, so it's time for me to show what I can do. It's about showing depth now."

His sights, like many, are firmly set towards the U.S., a goal that is becoming ever more achievable. Alongside Skepta, Stormzy and Novelist, Fekky recently appeared onstage with Kanye West at the Brits; an endorsement from the global superstar of the scene. UK Rap and Grime have never been healthier; especially as the wave of new artists are retaining their authenticity and refusing to water down the sound. If 50 Cent and Drake can sell around the world, then British rappers can too. "It's 100% in our sights now," Fekky insists, "They know that we're a threat and they can either jump in or jump off," he laughs. "We'll make it with or without their support, but I think everyone sees that it's a lot more fun if we all join together."

With millions of plays to date on YouTube, a fast growing fanbase, the support of his peers and a bulging CV of street anthems, Fekky steps into 2015 with huge ambitions.

"I sound different. I sound like Fekky. Me being me is precisely what separates me from everyone else. I've done a lot of this independently up until now. I'm shooting for the moon, but I feel like I'm already in reach of the stars. It's mine for the taking."

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