

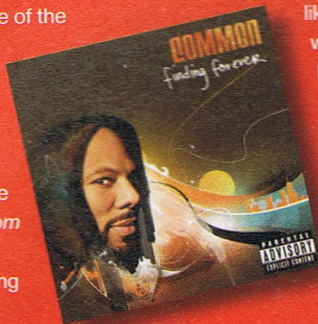
# RIGHT SIDE OF THE TRACKS

COMMON TALKS THROUGH HIS PERSONAL FAVOURITES FROM NEW ALBUM 'FINDING FOREVER'...

**'WE THE PEOPLE'** "This is my declaration of who I am. I wanna be a voice for people, not just black people, a voice of the people, everyday people. It features Dwele on the chorus and it's my favourite song on the album."

**'I WANT YOU'** "We were recording for the *Freedom Writers* soundtrack, and Will.i.am was just messing with a beat and I said, 'What's that?' He was like, 'It's just a beat I'm working on'. I asked him if he was gonna use it and he said no, so I said, 'Well, I'll have it then!' This might be the next single."

**'THE GAME'** "That's the dream team right there – I got Kanye West on the beat raw, hard, and then Premo on the cuts – all I gotta do is



just swim in it. I was like Premier needs to scratch on this 'cos it sounds too much like a Premier song. I went out and he was like, 'I love this. This shit is dope, I'm a tear this up.' He came and brought them scratches and that took the song to a whole other level."

**'SO FAR TO GO'** "Once they put it on [J Dilla's] 'The Shining' I decided that not only do I love the song, but that I want people to hear it that didn't get to hear 'The Shining'. So I went and re-rapped it, got

D'Angelo to re-sing it and decided to put it out there. I feel that J Dilla is a big inspiration on this album, he influenced this album a lot in spirit – you feel it."

**'FOREVER BEGINS'** "The spirit of this song and my father speaking takes me somewhere and Bilal is incredible. This song took me beyond hip-hop."

"PEOPLE KNOW THAT MY HEART IS TOWARDS CONSCIOUSNESS AND POSITIVE VIBRATIONS AND SPREADING LOVE"

**'Be' ended up receiving a ton of critical acclaim. Do you feel added pressure to match that with this album?**

"I always, as an artist, feel that I wanna grow and get better and I always want the next album to be better than the previous album. I went in with that mentality of just growing, but this time I didn't focus as much on making this album better than the last, I just said let me make this album good and something I feel.

"I think because there was so many other things going on in my life – good things, creative things that I was working on with being an actor and writing children's books – I was like, 'You know what? I don't feel the pressure I usually feel working on an album.' You gotta get all those things out your head when you're creating if you wanna create the purest music that you can.

"This time I was able to create something from the heart and I felt even less pressure because of the other things I was doing."

**With the content of 'Be', some parties tagged you and Kanye West as 'saviours' of hip-hop. How did you react to that?**

"No one person can bring hip-hop back. Hip-hop is such a big force, one person can't represent hip-hop. There is no one 'best' – the best to you may be different to me. The fact that I'm being named as part of the pack that's bringing hip-hop back is a beautiful thing. At the end of the day, I'm one of those people that likes rolling and being part of a team, 'cos I don't need *all* the glory; to be a part of that – I feel proud."

**What's your assessment of the state of hip-hop at the moment? Is consciousness coming back into it?**

"I think hip-hop had become – I say *had* because I already feel a change coming – hip-hop had become

not relevant, whether hip-hop culture wanted to acknowledge it or not. As a voice of the people of the inner city and now as a voice for people all over, it didn't feel as if it was really speaking from the heart to the people and speaking from a place of like, 'Hey, I'm a bridge different things and be creative!' It wasn't speaking from a relevant voice, I couldn't relate to it, to be honest. I feel bad that I wasn't really enthused.

"People would ask, 'What music do you listen to?' And I'd be like John Coltrane and D'Angelo, because I just wasn't interested in hip-hop music because it wasn't really reflective of what I wanted to hear."

**But do you sense a change of late?**

"Hip-hop now feels as if it's making a change and it's progressing to a point where people want something that's relative, something with some substance. That's going to balance hip-hop out – hip-hop doesn't need to be just one thing, it's not. We're part of hip-hop, we may have different backgrounds, we may have different beliefs, but we share hip-hop, you tell your perspective and I'll tell mine. It should never be one perspective; it should have the roundness of hip-hop culture. I feel good that hip-hop is becoming more balanced. I think that's the way that it will propel itself to the next phase, to the new place.

"There's always some underground artist out there that's saying something, they sometimes just don't get the exposure or the light, but now people are looking for that light. Hip-hop is going to show people another side of it and it's going to progress."

**The subject matter you address in song has progressed a lot, but do you ever look back at your old material and question your lyrics, like in 'Heidi Hoe'?**

"It's so funny, 'cos the other day we was joking about that song and it was like, 'Man, I was saying some crazy stuff!' You look back and laugh and realise that you was just a kid expressing what you knew at the time. I was just a Chicago cat who used to drink and kick it and go out and fight and do different things, so I just expressed where I was at and I'm glad that I can see the changes and the growth.

"Earlier I got into a discussion about homosexuality and I've seen myself grow into not judging. We're all people just trying to do best for ourselves, so I ain't there to judge anybody or be prejudiced. I'm trying to cleanse and get rid of all that, 'cos that stuff is implanted by the powers that be to separate us."

**'FINDING FOREVER' IS OUT NOW ON GOOD MUSIC**

## THE 411

- Used to rock the title *Common Sense* until a reggae group with the same name got the legal bods in touch
- Used to verbally badger broads until he discovered a new found respect for women circa album number three
- Used to rock the standard hoodie and Tims style, until Erykah Badu, allegedly, got him "dressing hippy"
- **BUY THIS!** 'RESURRECTION' (RELATIVITY)  
Com in classic emcee mode, including his tender ode to hip-hop itself

