

NEWS

Rakim Ready To Release 'The Seventh Seal'



Rakim

July 13, 2009 06:00 PM ET

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"The Seventh Seal," the long-anticipated album by rap legend Rakim, is slated for release in the fall, Billboard has learned exclusively. The project's first single, "Holy Are You," will drop July 28.

The album is being released on Rakim's Ra Records label in a joint venture with Tuscan Villa Entertainment, headed by industry veterans Ron Kyle and Lennie Petze. In turn, Tuscan Villa is entered in a joint venture pact with SMC Recordings whose principals are Ralph Tashjian and Will Bronson. Handling distribution for Rakim's album is Fontana/Universal Music Group. The rapper is managed by Matthew Kemp.

The rapper signed with Dr. Dre's Aftermath label in 2001. Featured on the 2002 top 10 R&B single "Addictive" by Aftermath labelmate Truth Hurts, Rakim later parted ways with Dre and Aftermath and his album was never released. Rakim - best known as one-half of the rap duo Eric B. & Rakim - has not released a new studio album save for 2008's mostly live set, "The Archive: Live, Lost & Found," which included four previously unreleased songs.

The rapper tells Billboard the new album is fueled by consciousness and spirituality:

BB: What's the story behind the title, "The Seventh Seal"?

RAKIM: The seals are from the Bible- Revelations and the coming of the Apocalypse. But Islam, Judaism, Christianity: all have a version of the same events. The Lion of Judah breaks the seven seals one by one, each imparting knowledge and inflicting catastrophe, ending with seven trumpets announcing the end of Times. After the Apocalypse, God rises from the ashes to recreate the Kingdom, taking only the greatest elements from the past with them.

When you look at Hip-Hop, I want to do that: to spit fire and take our best from the ashes to build our kingdom; to recognize all the regional styles, conscious lyrics, the tracks, underground, mainstream, the way we treat each other. Lose the garbage and rebuild our scene. I've always tried to insert consciousness and spirituality in my records, interpreting the writings of all cultures and religions and how they apply to life in modern times.

BB: Does this album contain any material from the unreleased album you did with Dr. Dre or is it all new music?

RAKIM: No, that's locked down in the lab for now. This is me live from New York City, everything brand new.

BB: Who produced the album? Are there any guest features?

RAKIM: I'm going to keep that cat in the bag for one more minute. But you'll see names you know and names you don't recognize yet but will after this drops. We've got our New York dudes on there, but we reached out to everybody. We have some features too; special cats in the right places but not everywhere.

BB: Are you concerned at all about reaching the new generation of hip-hop fans who aren't necessarily familiar with your music?

RAKIM: I don't accept that the new generation is looking for anything different than what we've always been looking for. Depending on the moment, they want bangers that make them crack their neck, they want tracks that put them in a zone where they can sit back and chill. The ladies want something that makes them feel sexy and loved. And everyone wants something that makes them think a little bit-at least sometimes. Every generation wants that real hip-hop. And I've always been able to bring that.

BB: Is there a chance that you and Dr. Dre may work together again in the future?

RAKIM: No doubt if the project and the timing are right. He's got his thing going on and I got mine. But I know our camps will look for ways to mix things up.