K-Os a hip-hop bucket of boredom

K-Os
Atlantis: Hymns for Disco
EMI Canada
www.k-osmusic.com

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It would appear that K-Os is back with his signature sound, for his new album, *Atlantis: Hymns for Disco*, keeps with the smoothness that makes even most uptight person you know start to tap their toes a little.

K-Os' standard hip-hop is paired with piano, trumpet and saxophone, giving the disc a classier sound. K-Os' vocals have the same flair and style as in all his previous hits, but he shows his versatility on slower tracks like "The Rain," on which he croons with to his very best. Notably on the album is K-os' duet with Sam Roberts on the track "Valhalla," which is laid-back, providing an epic air that makes it suitable for long drives.

On the whole, K-Os keeps a strong hold on his usual party flavour. *Atlantis* is a lot more chilled out than most casual listeners would expect from the man who brought them "Crabbuckit," but it's still jazzy and fun.

K-Os
With Magneta Lane
Friday, 10 November at 8pm
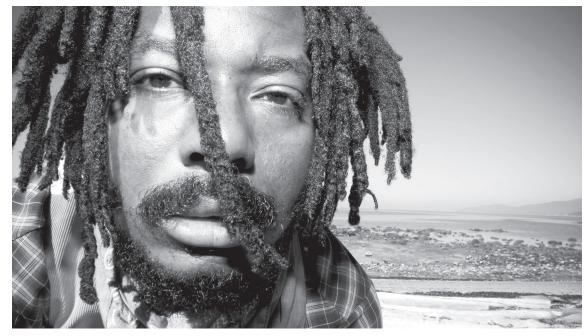The Starlite Room

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In Kurt Cobain's famous ode to the pungent aroma of the modern adolescent's soul, he sang, "Here we are now, entertain us," as a statement on the masses and their need to be constantly stimulated.

While the boredom of the average person is a powerful force used to drive sales in the music business, it can also be an important motivating tool for the actual creation of music. Toronto hip-hopper K-Os explains how he used such tedium to go in a different direction on his new album, *Atlantis: Hymns for Disco*, as well as to spur innovation in his musical career in general.

"A lot of these things that happen to me just stem from being bored," K-Os, born Kheaven Brereton, says over the phone. "I'm just trying to excite myself, have fun and try something new."

Atlantis saw K-Os moving away from the tone of his award-winning 2004 release *Joyful Rebellion*, which commented significantly on the hip-hop culture. While he still exposes feelings and statements on this culture in his album, K-Os says that he's paid more attention to his own hip-hop individuality, and that as far as his music goes, the broad social and musical commentaries were a part of the past.

"I just got tired of talking about the same old things over and over, like the state of hip-hop or the state of the world," K-Os says. "I feel like hip-hop is inside of me and is more like a law or rulebook or credo, but I had to talk about it for a while to realize that. It lives in me as an attitude and as a spirit, and I still love hip-hop, but I don't think it's my job to say that this is or isn't hip-hop. I've done that already and it gets really boring to pontificate and claim you know it all about music."

Rather than comment on the industry as a whole, K-Os says that his current focus is making connections with different artists.

"[The industry] is more about getting to know people," he explains. "I always want to be working with someone who creates a dialogue. I think we've all had one conversation with friends or people we've known and been like 'Wow!' So that dialogue is something I love to be a part of."

Clearly working on these interpersonal connections in the music business, *Atlantis* features K-Os collaborating with several prominent Canadian artists, including Sam Roberts and Buck 65. As well, a side project last year saw K-Os working with the CBC Orchestra on a song entitled "Burning To Shine," a time of personal growth that he was excited to talk about.

"That was a living experience, [to work with] guys who study music, look at the charts and for the first time play something and know exactly how to play it," he recalls. "That's amazing to me; banging on keyboards, strumming a guitar once or twice and putting it on a computer to make something out of it. To see their viewpoints or feel their viewpoints, it made me a smarter musician hopefully, and definitely a smarter music maker."

This variety of different episodes and opportunities in his career influence the ever-changing, genre-mixing style that K-Os has come to achieve. While he may find inspiration in boredom, he sees an exciting musical future ahead.

"[My style] will keep changing, as long as I keep growing as an individual," K-Os explains. "Hopefully new things will keep being brought to the table."

Making Comics draws on simplicity

Making Comics
Written by Scott McCloud
Published by HarperCollins
On sale now

MIKE KENDRICK
Design and Production Editor

Any aspiring artist knows that the best way into the world of drawing is to pick up a pencil and start making lines on a page. It doesn't take a lot of experience, and there's a virtual plethora of instructional materials out there for all levels of skill.

Perhaps the most daunting task for a newbie cartoonist is deciding just which guide to follow, and where to start. But thanks to *Making Comics*, the latest installment from famed alternative cartoonist Scott McCloud, that task just got a little bit easier.

What's most important about *Making Comics* is what it doesn't try to do. It's not a guide to figure and anatomy drawing; it's not a tutorial on perspective, nor is it a comprehensive guide to securing a job in the comics industry. McCloud acknowledges that there are already a million-and-one of these books already available, and offers a complete bibliography on them. Instead, *Making Comics* is a book about visual communication in a specific medium, and according to McCloud, comics are not simply a series of pictures with word bubbles, meant to entertain pubescent boys. Since the first etchings on cave walls, pictures have been used to convey emotion, capturing a moment in time and immortalizing it.
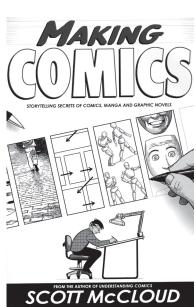
The first few chapters outline some tips to getting started on building a comic from the ground up, refraining from wasting any time dwelling on tedious details. Using a series of step-based rules, McCloud explains the processes he's developed in his 24 years of experience and how they've been a saving grace for him on many strips. From character design to scene placement to word use, *Making Comics* covers all the basics in making your comics work. There's even a chapter on choosing the right materials for the job, although it's stressed that the artist settles on whatever feels the most natural.

What really makes the book stand out from the hundreds of other guides is the fact that it not only embraces its subject matter, but goes entirely beyond it to make the content universally applicable. While McCloud refers to common artistic topics like character sketches and storyboarding techniques, these are only tools used to tie in to the comics genre. *Making Comics* could just as easily be a comprehensive guide for novel writers, playwrights, directors and social psychologists. It explores the methods that make characters believable, and then connects these methods to the human experience and the emotions that transform a handful of scribbles on a page into truly a believable human being.

Making Comics is McCloud's third entry into this genre, following 1993's *Understanding Comics*, and 2000's more controversial *Reinventing Comics*. However, it holds up perfectly on its own, while making reference to his past works in order to strengthen key points. While years of experience have made McCloud a near-guru among fellow cartoonists, he maintains a style of modest fallibility in the book's conversational writing. This sort of attitude is comfortingly familiar amongst artists; we're often our own worst critics.

Because of McCloud's knowledge in his field, though, *Making Comics* offers a vibrant pastiche of all things comics, spanning eras and cultures. Paying homage to past greats like Eisner and Kirby, it allows you to gain a true appreciation for their humble beginnings and the careers forged in their own love's labor. Much like drawing comics themselves, *Making Comics* makes its subject matter approachable, easy to pick up and quick to master.

MAKING COMICS
STORYTELLING SECRETS OF COMICS, MANGA AND GRAPHIC NOVELS
FROM THE AUTHOR OF UNDERSTANDING COMICS
SCOTT McCLOUD