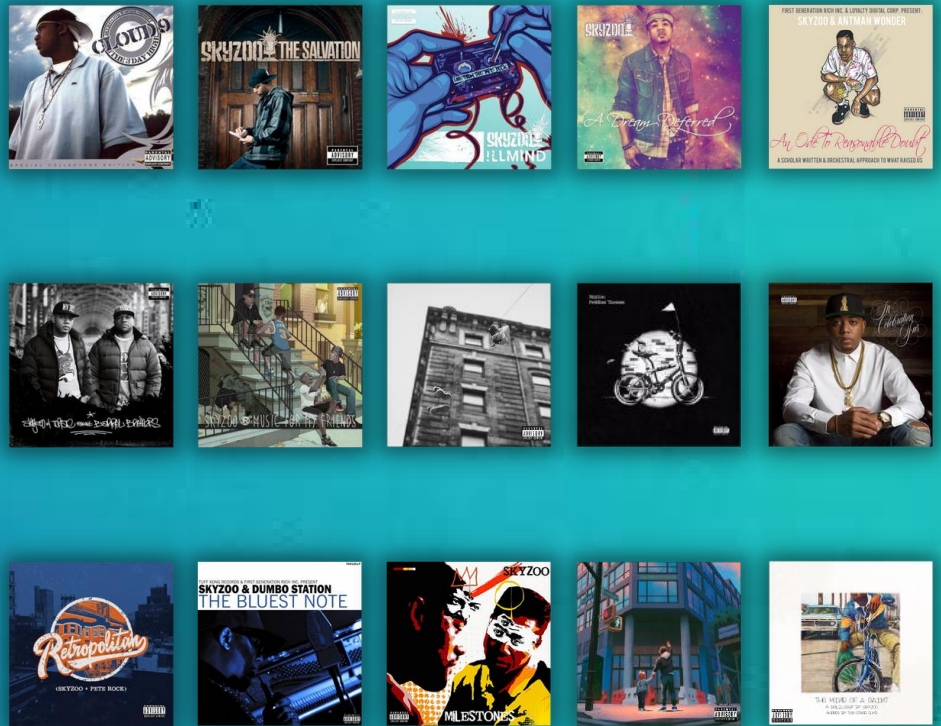

RESPECT: SKYZOO

A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON SKYZOO'S CATALOG



RESPECT: SKYZOO

A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON SKYZOO'S CATALOG

For Hip-Hop...

and Jazz.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0	RESPECT SKYZOO	1
1	<i>Cloud 9: The 3 Day High</i>	3
2	<i>The Salvation</i>	5
3	<i>Live from the Tape Deck</i>	7
4	<i>A Dream Deferred</i>	9
5	<i>An Ode to Reasonable Doubt</i>	11
6	Barrel Brothers	13
7	<i>Music for My Friends</i>	15
8	<i>The Easy Truth</i>	17
9	<i>Peddler Themes</i>	19
10	<i>In Celebration of Us</i>	21
11	<i>Retropolitan</i>	23
12	<i>The Bluest Note / Milestones</i>	27
13	<i>All the Brilliant Things</i>	29
14	<i>The Mind of a Saint</i>	33
15	IN ORDER	35

Written by MC Till



*Proofread by Joe November & Karyn Exilus

*A limited amount of writing took place after proof-reading so if you see an error that's on me (MC Till), not Karyn or Joe:)

RESPECT: SKYZOO

Phonte from Little Brother once asked, “*Dope beats, dope rhymes, what more do y’all want?*” For years, I did not have an answer. I mean what’s better than dope beats and dope rhymes? Well, I’ve given it some thought and I’m ready to give Phonte an answer: **a dope and cohesive catalog.** Sure, artists can create whatever they want. They can create experimental, eclectic albums that don’t sound like anything they’ve ever made. They can release single after single or a series of short EPs. They can release mixtapes. Artists can do whatever they want and they don’t need to ask anyone first. But, since Phonte did ask, I’ll answer. I want albums. I want well thought out albums that flow well with the rest of the albums in the catalog. Just as I love an album where all the songs go well together, I want a catalog where all the albums go well together.

That’s what I personally want from artists. Now, whether or not an artist achieves such a catalog over a specific span of time is another thing. When it does happen, it is special. De La Soul has done it. EPMD, A Tribe Called Quest and Gang Starr too. More recently, Roc Marciano, Homeboy Sandman, The Bad Seed, and Che Noir have all been releasing consistently good projects. However, in my opinion, the artist that is doing it the best by far is Skyzoo.

As I reflect, there are four primary reasons why I engage with Skyzoo’s catalog so much. First, our shared love for jazz. He definitely holds much more knowledge about jazz, its artists, and history than I. I respect that and love how he utilizes jazz into his albums through samples, the overall sound, and song titles. He even did an entire EP with a jazz band!

Another reason I appreciate Skyzoo is his subject matter. He stays positive. It is not all fluff and butterflies for sure. He addresses real life issues. However, he does so respectfully. Third, he is a great lyricist. He is the kind of lyricist that sounds fly upon first listen and packs in so much that I can revisit his lyrics again and again and always find something new. Finally, his beats! No one picks beats like Skyzoo. I love his beat selection. He has done collaborative albums with some of my favorite beat makers including Antman Wonder, Apollo Brown, iLLmind, and of course, 9th Wonder.

We are not frequently blessed with an artist like Skyzoo. His ilk is rare. He has been at it over 15 years and has given us dope album after dope album. Upon hearing the announcement of his most recent album, *The Mind of a Saint*, I started to think about his catalog. I went and got all my Skyzoo CDs out and started re-listening. Because an artist like him is rare and I know there are countless Skyzoo fans out there like me, I thought I'd pay homage by creating this digital magazine. Let's celebrate!

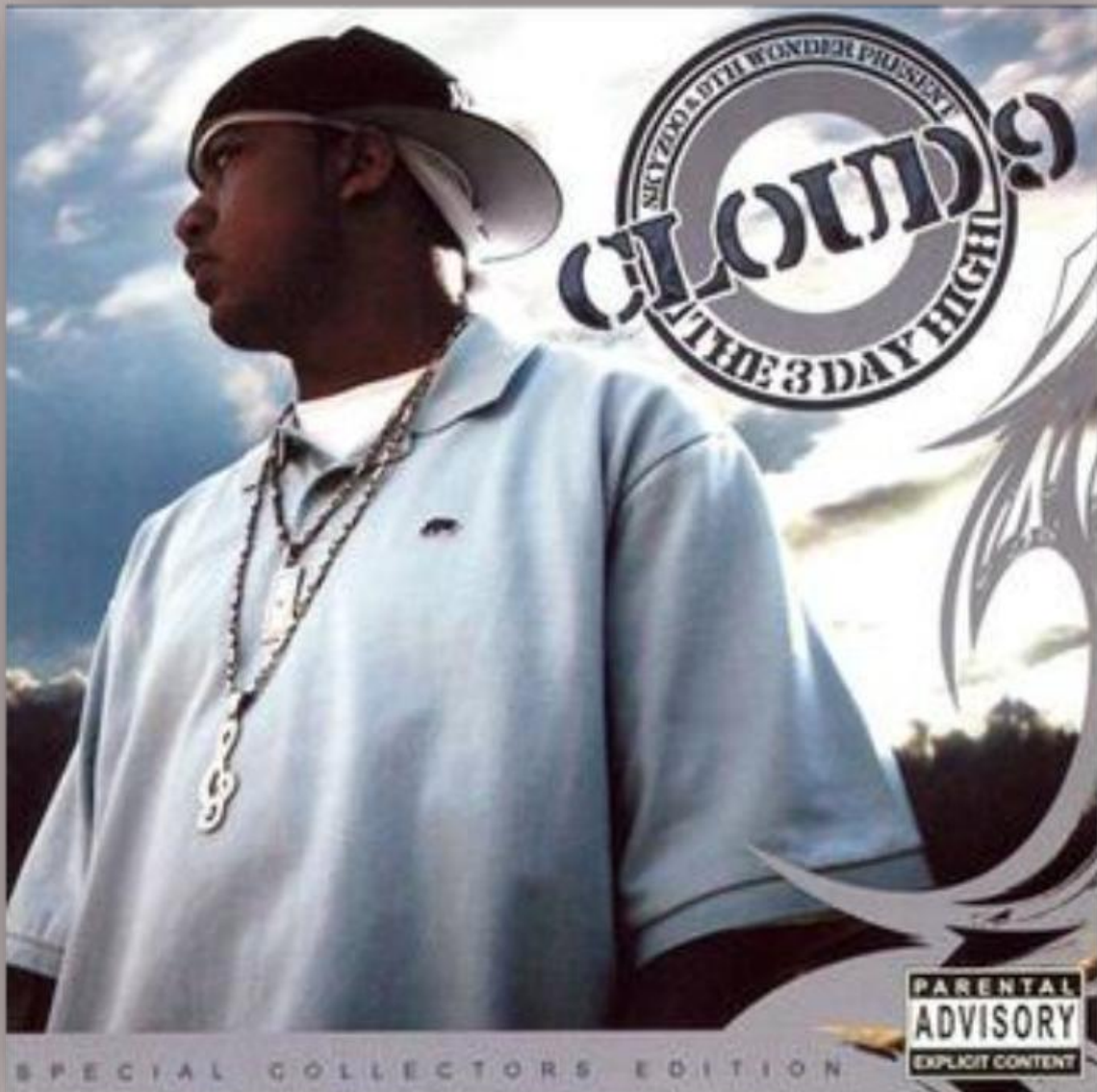
Peace!
MC Till

AN INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE

Because this is a digital magazine we are able to provide direct links to the music. Click on any album cover to go to that specific album and give it a listen. Then, buy it and support Skyzoo!



Traffic Entertainment



Title: *Cloud 9: The 3 Day High*

Release Date: 10/24/2006

Producer(s): 9th Wonder

This is the album that set it off. I picked this up from Everybody's Records. I saw the cover and it looked cool, so I picked it up and saw 9th Wonder's name on it. I bought it on the strength of that name alone. I had not heard of Skyzoo, but with a 9th Wonder cosign, could I go wrong? Nope. I listened to the CD on the ride home and enjoyed what I heard. Even though this album would eventually become my least favorite Skyzoo album, I still really like it. I think this speaks volumes of the excellence that is Skyzoo's catalog. Anyway, I checked out this first CD from Skyzoo and I've been a fan ever since.



Jamla Records, Duck Down



Title: *The Salvation*

Release Date: 9/29/2009

Producer(s): Cyrus the Great, Just Blaze, 9th Wonder, Best Kept Secret, Nottz, Black Milk, Illmind, Eric G, Needlz, Keleigh Reid

I was so looking forward to this release. It was one of the most anticipated releases for me back then. I knew it was going to have 9th Wonder on it and I knew that Duck Down Records had a hand in the release - two signs pointing to a great album. Then, there was the wait. I remember getting a gift card to Borders. Remember that bookstore? Well, I went there and asked if they were going to get a copy of *The Salvation* when it comes out. They said yes and reserved a copy for me. I had to wait weeks, maybe even a month or two before they finally got a copy in the store. As soon as I got the call that it was in, I was there. *The Salvation* was definitely worth the wait. My hunch was correct. It was an incredible album. I loved it. Still do. Skyzoo is confident, clever, and creative throughout the album. The beats are dope with producers like 9th, Eric G, iLLmind, Just Blaze, Black Milk, and my personal favorite, Nottz! So you know with names like that the production is on point. It was mixed extremely well too. All around, it's a great album and one of the better debut albums post-90s. Dope.



Duck Down



Title: *Live from the Tape Deck*

Release Date: 10/05/2010

Producer(s): !LLMIND

I slept on this album for a while. Not really sure why. Yes I do - money! Back when this album came out in 2010, I was not really into streaming albums yet. For the most part I only listened to music I bought via CD. I was checking for stuff online, sure, but not like today. Plus, I was recently married and my first child was just around the corner, so my life was full and I was trying to keep up. I finally gave the album a solid listen years later and eventually bought a physical copy. It is probably my second least favorite Skyzoo album and yet I love it! All the production is handled by iLLmind who does a great job of creating a cohesive boom bap album that features several synth sounds. Typically, I can't stand synth. But iLLmind makes it work. Skyzoo is dope as always and for the first time he brings some friends along including Sean Price, Rock, Torae, Styles P, Buckshot, and Rhymefest. Some of those friends are Hip-Hop legends and still Skyzoo holds his own. It's another great album in the catalog.



The Faculty, Duck Down



Title: *A Dream Deferred*

Release Date: 9/18/2012

Producer(s): !LLMIND, 9th Wonder, Jahil Beats, Eric G., Focus, DJ Khalil, Best Kept Secret, Black Milk, Tall Black Guy

At the time of writing this, *A Dream Deferred* is the only Skyzoo album that I don't own. However, it is coming. I finally ordered a CD copy the other day. I'm not sure what I was thinking. I even saw this CD at a Best Buy of all places and had it in my hands, but put it back. I am very frugal with money and I probably did not want to support a large corporation and thought, I'll get it from Everybody's Records or Shake It Records later on. I don't know but I should have picked it up because it is definitely a dope album. Unlike *Live from the Tape Deck* I did hear this album soon after it came out. Oddly enough I checked it out from the Library of all places. Though I do like this album, it feels different than the rest of Skyzoo's catalog. There are several beats that feel trendier and less sample-based. Not a bad thing but definitely not the direction my ears yearn for. Yet, with songs like "Jansport Strings," "Pockets Full," and "Spike Lee Was my Hero" this album still packs a lot that I enjoy.



First Generation Rich Inc. & Loyalty Digital Corp.



Title: *An Ode to Reasonable Doubt*

Release Date: 12/04/2013

Producer(s): AntMan Wonder

First Generation Rich Inc. & Loyalty Digital Corp.

First of all, I love the album title. I remember being at Everybody's Records when I came across this CD in the used section for \$5.99. What?! I don't think I even knew this CD existed so when I picked it up and looked it over, I was in heaven. I love this project then and now. I liken it to Elzhi's Elmatic project where he pays homage to Nas and Illmatic. And as dope as that album is, I think Skyzoo was able to channel the essence of Jay-Z in a way that Elzhi was unable to do with Nas (even though I like the Elmatic project a little more). Elzhi was a lyrical juggernaut on that dedication project, breezing lyrical gymnastics over reimagined Illmatic beats. It is breathtaking. To my ears Skyzoo took a different approach. He went for trying to sound more like Jay-Z. I'm not sure if this was on purpose or not, but it was definitely dope and it worked so well. Antman Wonder reinterpreted 9 songs from Reasonable Doubt and did a great job. The beats are similar enough to capture that original essence but different enough to keep it interesting. This album is right there along with Elmatic as two of the greatest dedication albums in Hip-Hop history.



**First Generation Rich, Internal Affairs,
Loyalty Digital Corp.**



Title: *Skyzoo and Torae present Barrel Brothers*

Release Date: 5/27/2014

Producer(s): Skyzoo, Oh No, Jahlil Beats, Illmind, Black Milk, Auréli 1 a.k.a. Tiga, Praise, Khrysis, The Stuyvesants, AntMan Wonder, MarcNfinit, DJ Premier

Okay, this next album I know for a fact that I wasn't aware of its existence until I was holding it at... you guessed it, Everybody's Records. At this point I was a pretty big Skyzoo fan. I owned a few of his albums and really liked them all. I knew he had a few more albums that I still needed to get, but I didn't know about this one! So yeah, I'm standing there at the record store in 2014. My second child wasn't even a twinkle in the eye and I had a steady job, so I didn't think twice. I was getting this album! So glad I did. It is so dope. And the way it came about is super dope too. I had the privilege of interviewing Skyzoo twice back in 2021 and he mentioned how some fans wrote about him and Torae via Wikipedia. It was made up but it looked good so Skyzoo and Torae went with it. They created an album the fans wanted and did not disappoint. This album features two elite lyricists over superb boom bap production. iLLmind shows up for a few beats where he manages to craft a more modern, trappy sounding boom bap, and surprisingly it works. Aside from two joints like that, this album is straightforward underground East Coast boom bap Hip-Hop. There is nothing better to my ears!



First Generation Rich, Empire



Title: *Music for my Friends*

Release Date: 6/23/2015

Producer(s): Antman Wonder, MarcNfinit, Jahlil Beats, Skyzoo, Illmind, Thelonious Martin, The Rvlt, Black Metaphor, Apollo Brown, Seige Monstracity

Here we go! This was my favorite Skyzoo album for a while. I was really looking forward to this album. Unlike the Ode to Reasonable Doubt and Barrel Brothers, I knew this one was coming out and I was thrilled, waiting with great expectation. So far I had heard several Skyzoo albums and I enjoyed every single one. Would I enjoy this one too? Or would Skyzoo go off and make his first album that I did not like? Nope, he did not! He made my favorite album of his. Better than Ode? Yes. Better than The Salvation? Ugh, as much as I love The Salvation, I have to say YES! Everything about this album is dope: from the look and feel of the packaging, to the interludes throughout the album that bring the album cover artwork to life, to the production which is often very soulful and very boom bap, to Skyzoo effortlessly gliding over the beats. Oh, and it does feature perhaps my favorite Skyzoo song of all time, “Money Makes Us Happy” with Black Thought. This album also features four of the best sounding Skyzoo songs in a row, “Women Who Can Cook,” “Civilized Leisure,” “The Experience,” and “Asking Bodie for a Package.” I love the beats from every one of these songs and they all flow so well together. It would be hard for me to find another four beats that fit together as well as these four. I think these four joints musically articulate this album’s excellence. Anyway, according to my count this is Skyzoo’s 7th album and in my opinion it is his best so far. It was definitely my favorite at the time.



Mello Music Group



Title: *The Easy Truth*

Release Date: 09/30/2016

Producer(s): Apollo Brown

Okay, by now I'm eagerly anticipating every Skyzoo release. Being that I'm a huge Apollo Brown fan, I was really looking forward to this release. I remember getting the call or maybe it was a Facebook message from Everybody's Records notifying me it was in the store. It was a Friday. Also on that day, D.I.T.C. released their first group album in years. (Side note, I was really impressed with that release and it is one that I return to often). But I digress; back to Skyzoo. I know that some herald The Easy Truth as Skyzoo's best album and I can see why. I mean it represents two of the best in their craft. Apollo Brown had an unparalleled track record of making collaborative albums with greats like O.C, Guilty Simpson, Ras Kass, and Boog Brown, to name a few. Skyzoo had become the top tier lyricist of the post 90s with only good to great releases under his belt. The outcome of the two coming together was pretty predictable: dope! This album flows well with soulful beats and rhymes. They had great chemistry as Skyzoo's voice sounded right at home over Brown's production. Personally, I don't think it was better than Music for My Friends and I think I enjoy The Salvation a little more, but it is super close. The Easy Truth is an incredible album for sure.



First Generation Rich



Title: *Peddler Themes*

Release Date: 7/21/2017

Producer(s): Sam Illy, MarcNfinit, Apollo Brown, !lmind, Skyzoo, Tuamie, MarcNfinit

I think this is the only project in this publication that does not have a CD release. I've never seen it at least. Maybe one day. Hopefully so because this is one of my favorite Skyzoo projects. I even like it more than Music for my Friends! Whoa now! For real? Yes. Definitely. This 8 song project is darn near flawless. Let's just go ahead and say it. It IS flawless. The beginning is perfect with that jazz sample and someone playing the role of his mom. Or maybe that really is his mom. Anyway, he chats a little and then the beat changes to something a little more serious which fits with what "Mom" was talking about and what Skyzoo starts rapping about. Then, the next song is "Bamboo!" Oh my goodness, that beat!!!! That beat is one his best ever. It is one of those joints where you screw your face up while listening to it. You know like when you heard "Keep it Thoro" by Prodigy for the first time or heard the opening two songs to Midnight Marauders. Yeah, that face. The rest of the project doesn't falter from there. He even rhymes over that background beat we hear on the intro to Nas' Illmatic. This short, lesser known release is super dope!



First Generation Rich



Title: *In Celebration*

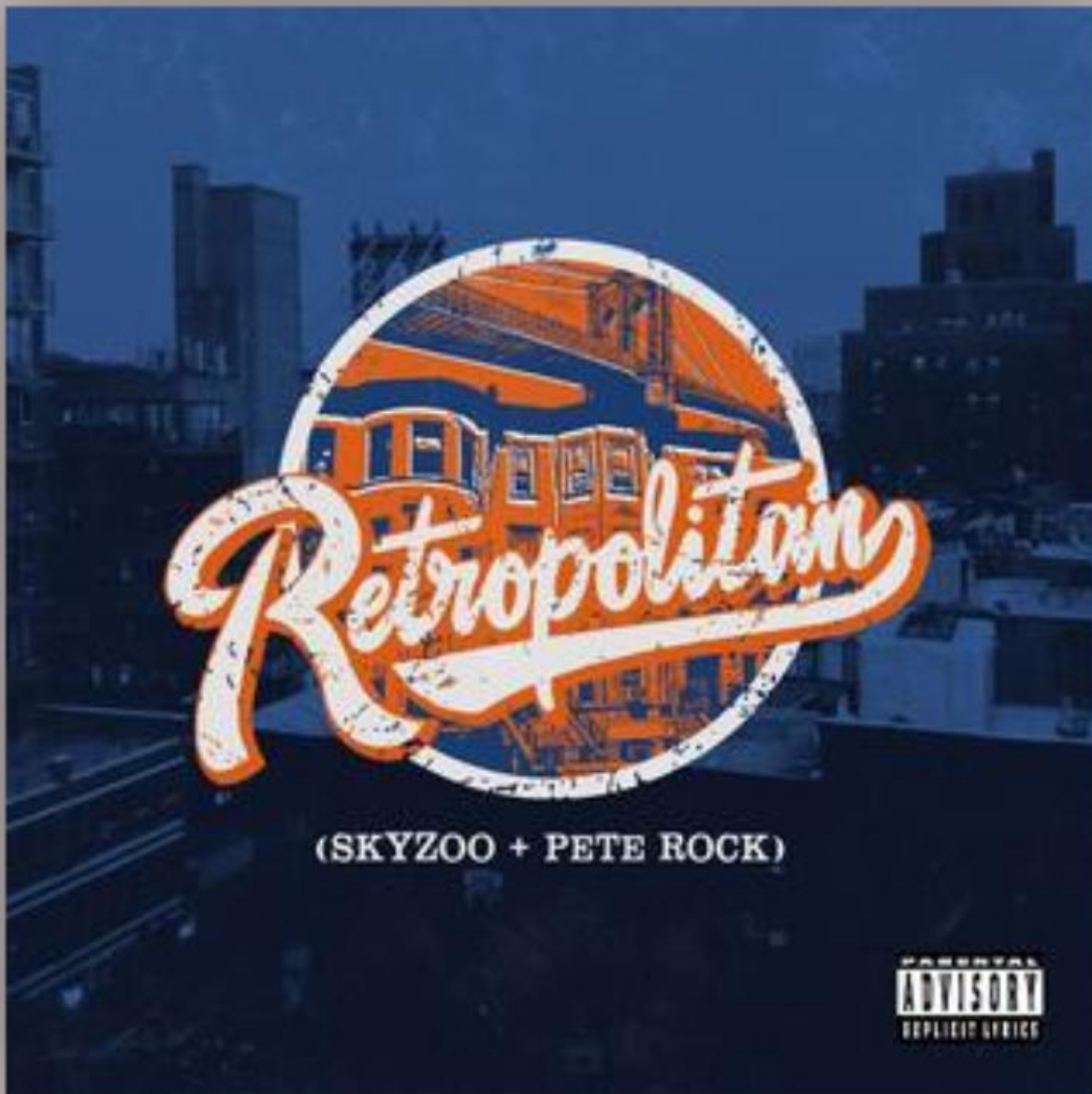
Release Date: 2/02/2018

Producer(s): Sam Illy, !lmind, Apollo Brown, Tuamie, Skyzoo, Cardiak, Avenue Productions, Seige, Monstracity

It would be hard to top Music For My Friends again and to do better than Peddler Themes. I mean at this time Skyzoo is over 10 years in and hasn't put out a flop yet. So you could say he is due for at least one bad album. Or at least one that doesn't compete with his best. Well, we would have to wait on that forgettable album because In Celebration of Us is pretty much a longer version of Peddler Themes. Again, near flawless. It begins with a great intro with Skyzoo playing the role of someone who is about to be a dad, and is telling his friend that he needs to change some of his ways. His friend is in full support. From there the album revs up and never dips. It starts high and remains there. A few higher highlights for me are a return to Apollo Brown's production on "Baker's Dozen" which also features Raheem DeVaughn, the boom bap bliss of "Crown Holder" and "Love is Love," the mix of pop and underground sounds on "Black Sambo," and possibly my second favorite Skyzoo song in "Parks and Recreation" featuring the life altering voice of Saba Abraha. In Celebration of Us is a celebration of Skyzoo, his people, and his culture and it truly is nothing less than excellent.



Mellow Music Group



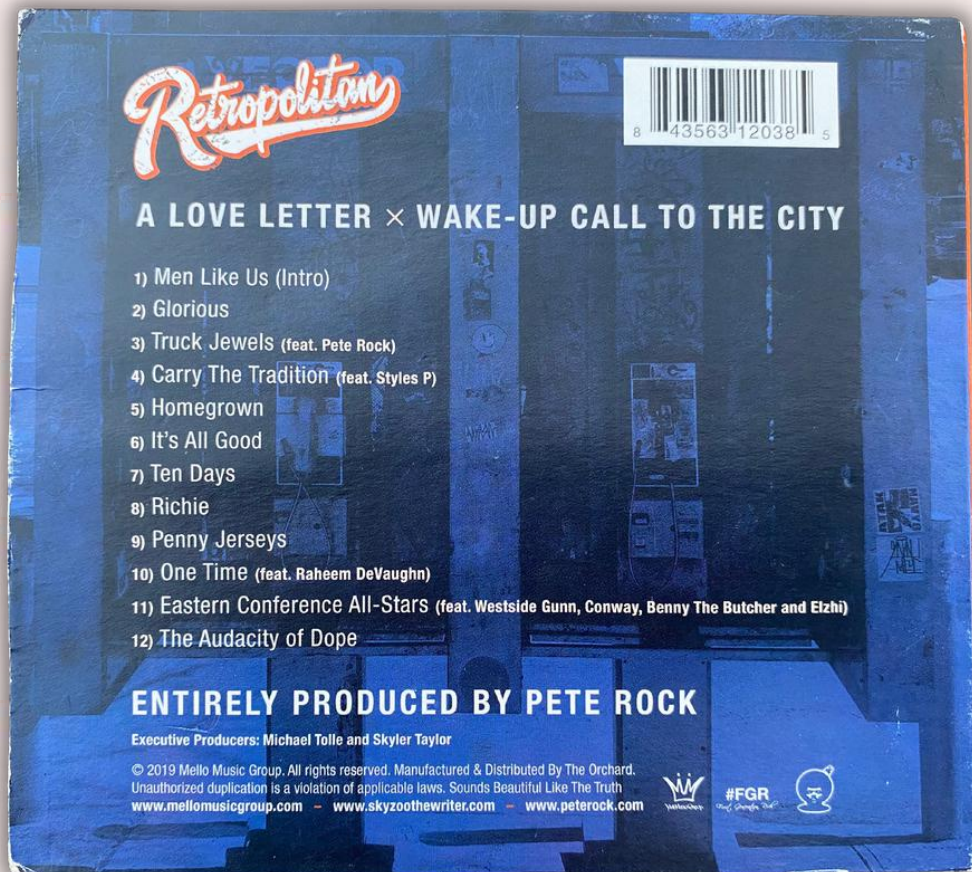
Title: *Retropolitan*

Release Date: 9/20/2019

Producer(s): Pete Rock

Wait one doggone minute. Skyzoo, who in 2019 was easily my favorite post 90s emcee and one of my all time favorites of any era, came out with an album produced by my 2nd or 3rd favorite producer of all time, Pete “The dude who produced “They Reminisce Over You (T.R.O.Y.)”” Rock!!!???? Are you serious!!!!???? This can’t be true. Well, it was. And it was beautiful. I’m right back at Everybody’s Records the day that album hit the shelves. At this point Skyzoo is making the best albums that feature the best intros! This particular intro (well, the beginning of the first song which technically comes after the intro) features an interview excerpt of Miles Davis. It is so dope. He is talking about how he didn’t start off making music to be the best. He then talks about how books about him are all wrong and the interviewer then says “except for the ones you are going to do” at which point the interlude abruptly gets cut off with a soulful Pete Rock sample. Shortly after the beat kicks in, Skyzoo arrives. It is as if Pete Rock and Skyzoo are saying that they are going to write their own story. They are not going to allow others to dictate their history. On the back of the CD underneath the title it says “A Love Letter X Wake-up Call to the City.” This is one beautiful love letter and a credible wake up call! The album is vintage Pete Rock with horns and soul oozing out at every turn. Skyzoo sounds a bit more animated as if he is in a Game 7 facing an equally skilled opponent. You don’t come with the same energy of a regular season game. He is rocking over history in Pete Rock’s beats. Literally, the beat to “It’s All Good” is from the 90s! It was a beat that Rock made back in what many would call the Golden Era of Hip-Hop. You know when Biggie and Nas and Goodie Mob and Mobb Deep (and Wu Tang Clan and Dr. Dre and Snoop and Ice Cube and Geto Boys and Jay Z and De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest) and many more were all releasing classic projects that would alter the trajectory of Hip-Hop? Yeah, Pete Rock made that particular beat back then during that era.

It is one of his better beats too. It is amazing to think it never came out back then. But, I'm glad it didn't because Skyzoo sounds amazing on it and it is proof that I no longer have to say he is my favorite post-90s this or that. He is one of my favorites. Period. His catalog is deep and it just keeps getting better!



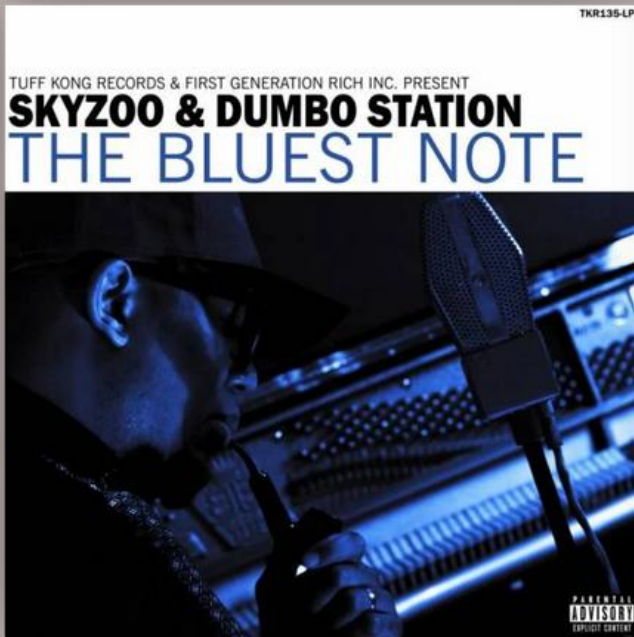
IT'S ALL GOOD



Click the image above to check out Skyzoo's video for "It's All Good" produced by Pete Rock.

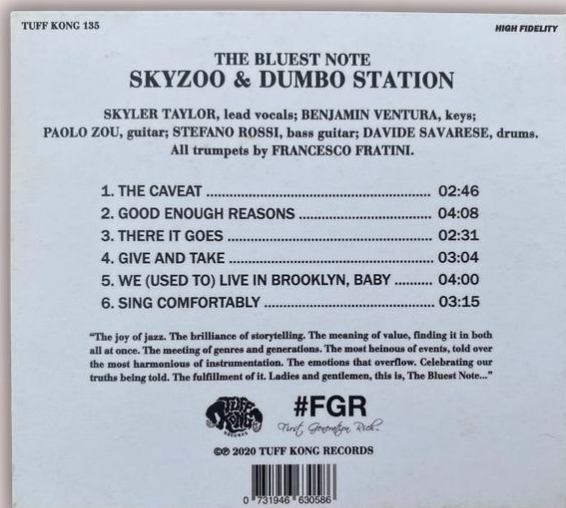
Tuff Tong First Generation Rich

Mello Music Group



Title: *The Bluest Note*
Release Date: 4/24/2020
Producer(s): Dumbo Station

Title: *Milestones*
Release Date: 6/19/2020
Producer(s): 1st Official, MarcNfinit, Tuamie, !llmind, Aaron Hardon



Okay so Retropolitan was Skyzoo's 11th album. He also had a handful of mixtapes that I did not include here. So he has been around over a decade with over 10 albums to his name and every one was good. Every single one! Some better than others, but none of them bad. So he does us a favor and gives us some relief from all the heat. He pauses from giving us another full length album. Instead, he offers two smaller and thus easier to digest EPs. The first comes in a six song jazzy EP The Bluest Note which is a collaborative project with jazz group, Dumbo Station. That gift came in April of 2020 and then Milestones, another short EP, arrived one day after my birthday on June 19th, 2020. Both of these projects are great in their own way. The Bluest Note features Skyzoo rhyming over live instrumentation by Dumbo Station. It has a nice feel throughout. I would love to hear Skyzoo over more jazz bands as I know he is a huge jazz connoisseur. Side note: if you dig jazz, search out his Sunday Morning jazz playlists. They are great. Skyzoo is as good an emcee as he is a jazz song curator. Speaking of jazz, Milestones not only borrows its title from a Miles Davis album, but also borrows some jazzy samples including one of my favorites of all times! Now, I'm no sample snitch even though you can just Google it these days. But still, I don't feel right naming samples. All I'll say is go listen to the song "A Song for Fathers" on Skyzoo's Milestones. Make sure you have Google nearby and go down that rabbit hole. "A Song for Fathers" is not just a dope Skyzoo song. I'll stop there. Anyway, neither project is very long but they are both very dope.

Mello Music Group



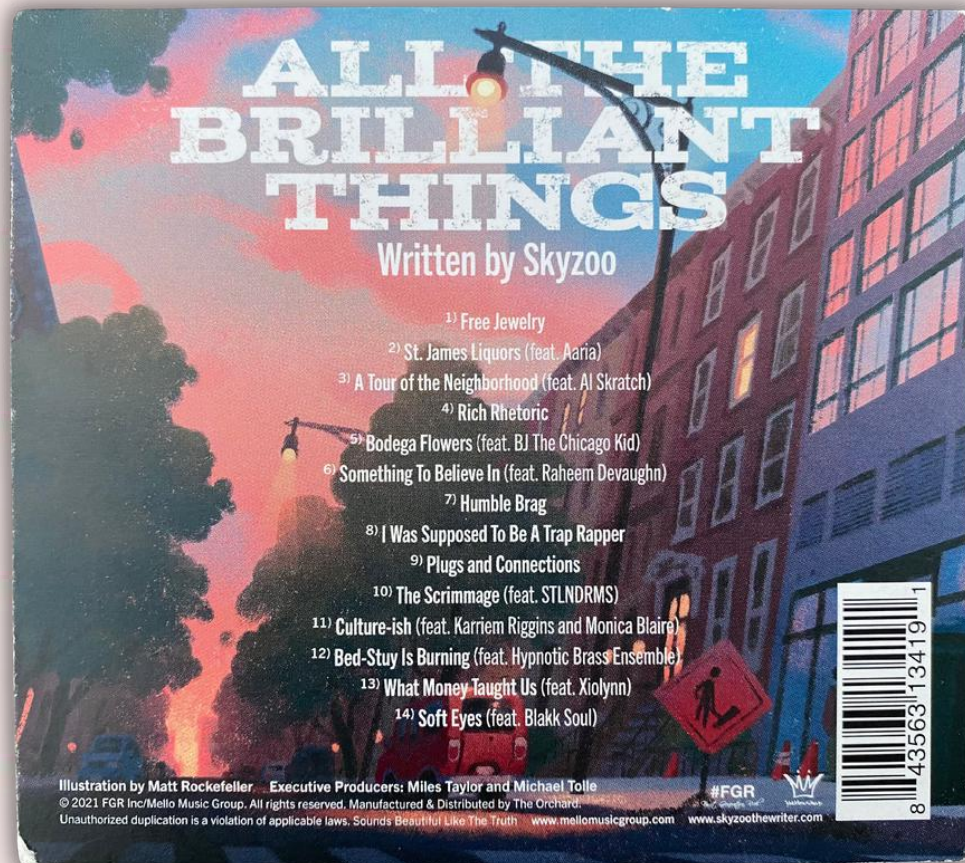
Title: *All the Brilliant Things*

Release Date: 6/11/2021

Producer(s): Zerrick Beats, Kenny Keys, Thelonious Martin, MarcNfinit, Karl Marxs, M31RK, Sam Illy, JR Swiftz, STLN Drums, Rashid Hadee, J57, Skyzoo, Tuamie

I was in Asheville, NC when this album came out. I was there with a few middle school students learning about what it's like to live in this country while addicted to drugs and/or without a home. It is definitely not easy. We were there Sunday night through Friday morning. It just so happened that Thursday was a pretty long day as we did a bunch of learning and serving. Midnight came pretty quickly and with everyone else knocked out, I was right there with my headphones waiting for Skyzoo's latest album to pop up on Spotify. Boom. There it was. I pressed play and was immediately drawn in. First comes the singing chorus borrowed from a Mase album, then Skyzoo speaking chill over a sample I've heard Dilla use, and then the beat drops utilizing a sample that I first heard Madlib use years back. It is like Skyzoo knows exactly what to do to engage my listening ears. From there we go into the second song "St. James Liquors" which features a booming and head-nodding beat. And that singing chorus comes back in which will be a returning refrain of this album. That song then goes into "A Tour of the Neighborhood" which features Al Skcratch at the end. This joint is so dope!!! The beat is incredible. But the song is less than 2 minutes long!!! What is up with that?! It doesn't matter because the very next song is even better! And then the one after that and the one after that and so and so forth. This album is it's title. It IS all the Brilliant Things. Brilliant title, brilliant songs, brilliant beats... shoot, even the packing was brilliant. If you don't own a physical copy of this album, I highly suggest it. Speaking of Brilliance, remember when I mentioned the four song run that I love on Music for My Friends? Well, you could argue that this album features a 10-song run starting with "A Tour of the Neighborhood" and "Rich Rhetoric" and ending with "Culture-Ish" and "Bed-Stuy is Burning" with the last two joints probably my two favorite Skyzoo songs. "Culture-Ish" is such a chill song that's so beautiful. I listen to it and get carried away, like nothing else matters.

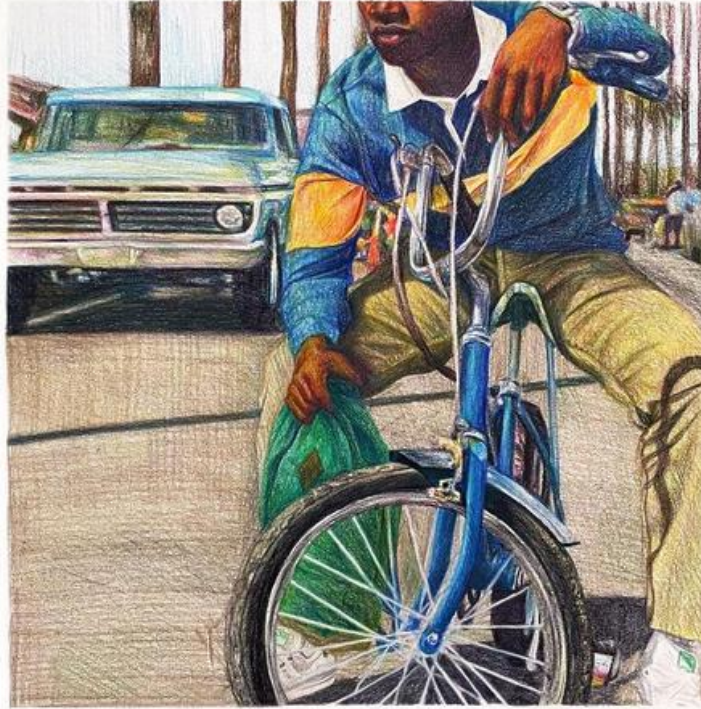
The instrumentation is lush and light and fits perfectly with the drums. That flows into “Bed-Stuy is Burning” which features a sample from my favorite horn player... oh wait. Yeah, I don’t like writing about samples. I almost forgot. Let’s just say it is a great sample and Chicago producer, Rashid Hadee, utilizes it perfectly. Amazingly, not only does Skyzoo release another great album, but currently it is my favorite album from his catalog. I can’t say any other artist or group has ever done that. No one has ever released as many albums over a span of 15+ years and gotten better as they went. My heroes haven’t done that. Nas, De La Soul, Tribe, Gang Starr, Rakim, KRS-One, the list goes on and on and with each name I can quickly calculate that my favorite album from them came early in their career. Now, they made great albums after my favorites, but no one has ever made a habit of topping their best albums as many times as Skyzoo has. That’s a ridiculous habit and one that only Skyzoo has. Amazing? No. Brilliant.



BED-STUY IS BURNING



Click the image above to check out Skyzoo's video for "Bed-Stuy is Burning" produced by Rashid Hadee and featuring Hypnotic Brass Ensemble



THE MIND OF A SAINT
A SOLILOQUY BY SKYZOO
SCORED BY THE OTHER GUYS

PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT LYRICS

Title: *The Mind of a Saint*

Release Date: 1/13/2023

Producer(s): The Other Guys

A week before *The Mind of a Saint* came out I started watching *Snowfall*. It is a very captivating show and I thoroughly enjoyed my binge fest. I was getting caught up on this FX show because I learned that Skyzoo's new album was based around the show's main character, Franklin Saint. As I became addicted to the show I started to worry for two reasons. First, because Franklin Saint was a big time drug dealer in the show, would Skyzoo pick different sounding beats in trying to achieve a trap sound? I did not think he would, but the thought did arise. I was really hoping he stuck to a more boom bap, jazzy sound like he has become known for. I love that sound. The other reason is more serious. I was afraid this new album would be hard for me to listen to based on the subject matter. Although *Snowfall* is a captivating show, its subject matter is hard to swallow. As I watched the show I noticed myself turning away from the screen on several occasions. I just don't like to see people killed so violently. It is disturbing. I did not always feel this way. I mean I always felt like it was wrong to murder and when I heard about real life death, it turned my stomach. But fictional violence? Eh. It never really bothered me. I understood it was just a song or just a show or movie or whatever. I know tragedy happens. People are awful and make horrendous decisions. Art can reflect this reality beautifully. It can make us cringe while also making us marvel at the artistry. It can. It did. It does, but not so much for me anymore. Something is changing. I feel differently now even when I see fictional violence. Maybe because I've lived longer and know the devastation that murder and violence has caused families and friends and entire neighborhoods. So although I knew Skyzoo was not going to intentionally endorse violence or glorify it, I just didn't know how he was going to portray such a sociopathic figure as Franklin Saint. I was slightly concerned.

Regarding the trap sounding worry? The Other Guys (the production duo who did all the beats) put that worry to bed quickly. From the start, they crafted very boom bap, jazzy beats for Mind of a Saint. Every beat on the album is dope as the sound throughout is sprinkled with breakbeats, vocal samples, and horns. I've talked about how Skyzoo has a great ear for beats. This album is another great example as every beat fits perfectly. There is not one out-of-place beat here. Salute to The Other Guys for providing an incredible soundtrack for Skyzoo's pen to come alive.

And rest assured Skyzoo's pen comes alive once again. It is immaculate as he brings the fictional character, Franklin Saint, to life. If you've seen the show, you will know the references and will appreciate how Skyzoo stays in character throughout. This album brings to mind American Gangsta by Jay-Z which was inspired by the Denzel Washington movie by the same name. There are a lot of similarities. Both Jay-Z and Skyzoo are excellent in portraying other characters. Both albums feature great production. However, I believe Skyzoo was able to achieve two things that Jay-Z did not. First, Skyzoo stayed in character on every song. The entire album is Franklin Saint, not most of the album. American Gangsta on the other hand was mostly written from the perspective of " " but there were a few songs that left me scratching my head because Jay-Z came out of character and was just rapping stuff that did not really go with the theme of the album. The other aspect that I think makes The Mind of a Saint more cohesive and more focused than American Gangsta is in its production. As I've stated, The Other Guys did a great job. Their sound was focused. Jay-Z went for more of an eclectic sound which is cool and all but I think the tight, focused sound of Mind of the Saint helps hold it together. Just as Jay-z went off script here and there I feel like the production felt a bit scattered at times too (even though that's still one of my favorite Jay-Z albums).

More on the Jay-Z comparison in a minute. Now, I want to revisit Skyzoo as Franklin Saint. It is amazing how he stays in character. He references things from the 80's, name drops all the different characters from the show, and expands Franklin's story. A great example of this is in the song "Apologies in Order." So as not to write a spoiler, this song did not actually happen in the show. Skyzoo is taking on Franklin imagining what he might say to his sweathard from the show. You can see it too. The way Skyzoo, playing as Franklin, addresses Melody in the song is exactly how you would imagine Franklin addressing her in the show. Mind of a Saint offers a kind of companion piece to Snowfall. Rest assured that if you like the show, you'll at least appreciate the album and if you are looking for a dope Hip-Hop album then you'll definitely like this one!

It is definitely a dope album, but is it one I can revisit again and again? Or will Skyzoo's interpretation of such a harsh character like Franklin Saint keep my ears at bay? I assure you I'm going to listen to this album about a million times when it's all said and done. Yes, Franklin Saint is a cold blooded killer who is not to be idolized. However, the album is much easier for me to stomach. In the show, the violence and drugs are so graphically vivid. But Skyzoo tells Saint's story with more humanity. It is not so in your face like the show. Plus his use of literary devices, code words, and creativity allows for those who have not seen the show to still enjoy the album.

When emcees choose to use violence in their lyrics, oftentimes I'm not impressed or inspired. To be honest, I'm annoyed and frustrated. I want artists to tell their stories. But if an emcee is just saying how he can kill this person and that person and say that sentiment again and again in new creative ways, I'm turned off. Sure maybe they get a point for creativity but I personally don't want to hear it any more. Skyzoo presents something different altogether.

He takes a fictional character and lyrically brings him to life. It is not annoying to me or a turn off. Instead it makes me engage. It makes me want to lean in and ask more questions like, how can anyone make the decisions that Saint makes? How come no one got through to him? Not his mom. Not his childhood sweetheart. He was loved deeply. His mom certainly loved him like that. Why would he go so deep down this violent rabbit hole of selling drugs. And not just any drug but one that devastated his community. He saw it. He knew the devastation he was causing and he kept doing it. Why!? Skyzoo's album does not turn me off. Instead, it brings me into a necessary conversation.

Skyzoo ends the album in a similar way as Jay-Z's American Gangsta. One thing I love about American Gangsta album is the final song, "Fallin." This song does not paint a rosy picture. It is the reality that a life of crime and violence almost always catches up with you and does not end well. Although Skyzoo does not provide a song as illuminating of the eventual downfall of such a lifestyle as Jay-Z, he does end the album with an apologetic tone with "Apologies in Order" and "Purity." In an instagram live Skyzoo talked about how Franklin Saint ruined Melody's life and that Franklin never apologized for that. Speaking on it he said, "I felt like that (the apology) was needed." So he extends an apology and then turns to the final song of "Purity." On the first and third verses Skyzoo lists several characters by name starting with his mom and uncle. He continues an apologetic tone with "The way my family bleeding thank God there ain't no more of you." It is the second verse though that really stands out to me. Like in "Falling" by Jay-Z it provides moments of self reflection. Skyzoo as Franklin Saint offers a story of meeting Nipsey Huddle's brother and dad. The two sons would have been young kids when Snowfall takes place so this makes sense. Skyzoo essentially gives props to Nipsye's dad for how he was being a father to his kids. He is remorseful of the life he has chosen even saying,

With a soul full of guilt and a trunk with product stocked
I downplayed my car and told them “you can buy your block”
And as Dawit and his family made their way up the street
I saw that what I did to this corner’s bigger than me

Skyzoo never breaks character. He adds so many different layers to Snowfalls’ story. It really feels like he brings Franklin Saint into the booth and allows Mr. Saint to add to his story. The result a masterful literary work on wax accompanied by excellent production by The Other Guys. This is where I would normally end it by saying “Skyzoo is dope.” But, on *The Mind of a Saint* he isn’t just dope. He is Franklin Saint.

#FGR
They changed the world



HIPNOTT
Records

THE MIND OF A SAINT

A SOLILOQUY BY SKYZOO, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FRANKLIN SAINT

01. EMINENT DOMAIN	06. BODIES!
02. VIEWS FROM THE VALLEY	07. THE BALANCING ACT
03. PANTHERS & POWDER	08. BRICK BY BRICK
04. STRAIGHT DROP	09. APOLOGIES IN ORDER
05. 100 TO ONE	10. PURITY

SCORED BY THE OTHER GUYS
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: SKYLER TAYLOR AND JOSEPH MILES

© 2002 FGR INC./HIPNOTT RECORDS. MANUFACTURED & DISTRIBUTED BY EMPIRE DISTRIBUTION. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. UNAUTHORIZED DUPLICATION IS A VIOLATION OF APPLICABLE LAWS.

IN ORDER

How could I get out of here without at least one list! So here are my favorite Skyzoo albums in order. I included every album, because I like them all! Putting a list together like this is never easy for me but always fun. Plus, it gives us all something to talk about. After you view my list, I'd love to view yours, if you care to share. You can send your list to me by clicking the WhatsApp icon on the bottom of this page. Also, please note that my list could change tomorrow... or later today based on how I'm feeling. I guess that's how these lists go. But here is my snapshot of time right now...

15. Cloud 9: The 3 Day High
14. Live from the Tape Deck
13. The Bluest Note
12. A Dream Deferred
11. Barrel Brothers
10. The Easy Truth
9. The Salvation
8. An Ode to Reasonable Doubt
7. Music for my Friends
6. Milestones
5. Peddler Themes
4. Retropolitan
3. In Celebration of Us
2. The Mind of a Saint
1. All the Brilliant Things

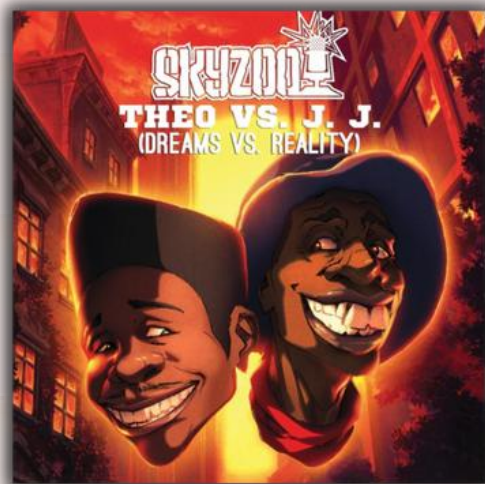
Hit me up via
WhatsApp



THE MIXTAPES

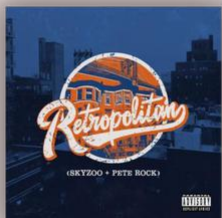
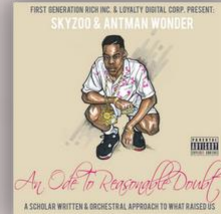
I decided to only focus on albums for this publication, but Skyzoo does have a number of mixtapes under his belt. If I missed one, please hit me up and let me know. If you have a favorite mixtape, let me know that too!

- I'm for the People, 2004*
- Back for the First Time, 2004*
- Ghetto Celebrity: The Mixtape, 2004*
- The Greatest Flow on Earth, 2005*
- The City's Favorite, The Mixtape, 2005*
- The Way You Get Down, 2006*
- Corner Store Classic, 2007*
- Corner Store Classic, The Remixes, 2008*
- The Power of Words, 2009*
- The Great Debater, 2011*
- The Great Debater Revisited, 2012*
- The Penny Freestyle Series, 2012*
- Theo vs. J.J. (Dreams vs. Reality), 2012*



RESPECT: SKYZOO

A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON SKYZOO'S CATALOG



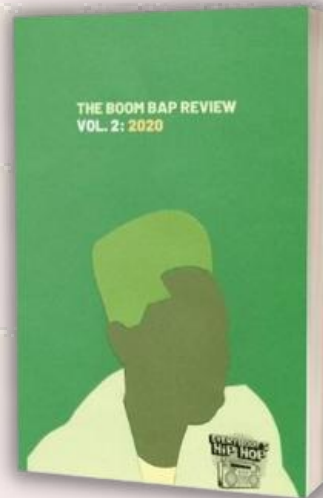
FOLLOW SKYZOO



Skyzoo has credited "Age Ain't Nuthin' but a Number" by Chi-Ali and produced by the Beatnuts as his inspiration to be an emcee. Click on the image above to check it out.

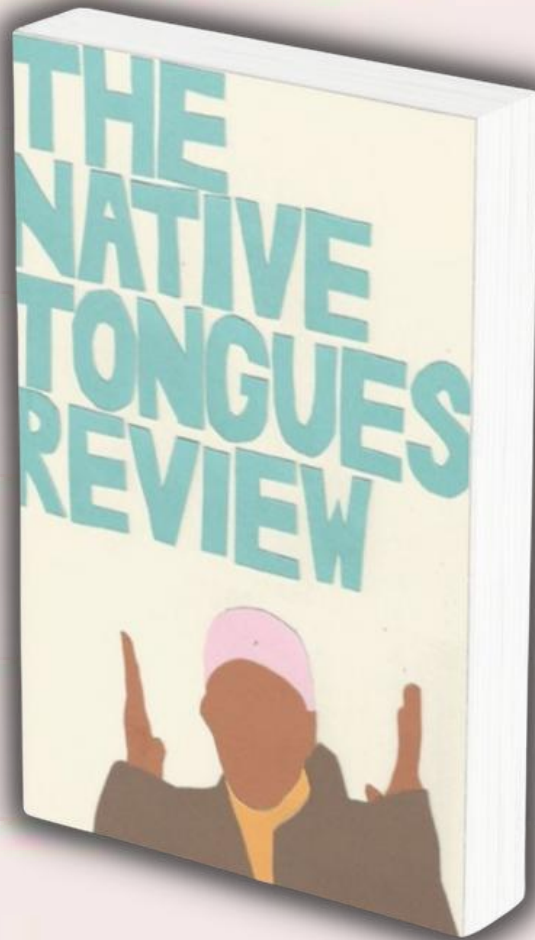
THE BOOM BAP REVIEW **BOOMBAPREVIEW.COM**

Did you enjoy reading through this RESPECT SKYZOO publication? If so, please consider checking out all our books at boombapreview.com. Use promo code 'SKYZOO' at check out for additional savings:)



THE NATIVE TONGUES REVIEW BOOMBAPREVIEW.COM

And if you dig boom bap, you probably appreciate the greatest Hip-Hop collective of all time, The Native Tongues:) Get our book all about this incredible collective at boombapreview.com. Still use promo code 'SKYZOO' at check out to save \$\$\$.



RESPECT: SKYZOO

A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON SKYZOO'S CATALOG

**Skyzoo, thank you for your music.
We'll keep listening.**

**To the reader - thank you for reading. If you have any feedback
whatsoever, hit me up at 812-430-4464 or
everybodyshipop@gmail.com**

**Peace,
MC Till**