

Andre on... *Andre*



Hip-hop icon Andre Benjamin, considered by most as the quirkier half

of the chart-topping duo Outkast, is known for his genre-busting hits and eclectic fashion sense. But he recently charted new waters as the creative force behind his own Cartoon Network series, "Class of 3000," which is loosely based on his life growing up in his hometown of Atlanta. When he's not in the studio making the voice of the main character or shaking it "like a Polaroid picture" in his music videos, the Atlanta native has lots to say about everything from conscious hip-hop to turbans.

His style: I am known for my unique styles but I want to be on the record stating that I have never worn a kilt! A lot of my outfits are performance-driven; like that time I wore a turban (on an awards show), I was trying to grow my dreds out and I didn't like the way they looked so I had to come up with a way to cover them up. Ever since Outkast started, our style was different. We knew what we were doing wasn't the norm but it always felt normal to us. Whether it's our music or my personal style I have to do what feels right to me. I do whatever makes me feel fresh and dope!

Hip-hop today: A lot of people rag on it saying it's so negative, but honestly I love it! I would hate for all hip-hop to be conscious because then you wouldn't have that variety. Hip-hop is about black people

telling stories about what's going on in their lives. No, there is not a true balance in the music right now, but look at the news - there's no balance there either. If the news was all good, sh*t, nobody would watch it. The truth is people are more interested in hearing about who got robbed. I hate to say it, but I don't think most of the so-called conscious rappers will ever reign supreme, but they'll always be there as an alternative.

Music responsibility: I'm older now and more mature and I know I have to be more responsible. I have a son and I know when he asks me about what I'm talking about in my music I'm going to have to explain it to him. Don't get me wrong, he's like most kids his age. He loves all the songs on the radio, like Lil' Wayne and all the boys in the 'hood, but I try to expose him to the other side, like the fact that Lil' Wayne is going to art school. A lot of kids these days they don't know about the history of hip-hop. They don't know there was an NWA, a Tribe Called Quest or a Brand Nubian.

Big Boi: There's always these rumors going around that we really hate each other but that is not true. Me and Big Boi really are the best of friends. It's funny because we came down such different paths in life. He grew up with T.I. and my mama sent me to a white school and got me into piano - but we're really homeboys. I love that dude, man.
— As told to Chandra R. Thomas

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