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Next Big Step On 'Father Figure 3: Somewhere Out There'

TAYLOR
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The RX is Uproxx Music's stamp of approval for the best albums, songs, and music stories throughout the year. Inclusion in this category is the highest distinction we can bestow and signals the most important music being released throughout the year. The RX is the music you need, right now.

“Are you going to be asking questions like Nardwaur?” Rexx Life Raj asks early in our interview in San Francisco, before adding, “As long as you don’t do middle school sh*t. We went through the MySpace days”.

It’s a moment of hilarious commentary from the rising rapper – born Faraji Wright to a gospel singer mother and former Black Panther father in Berkeley, California — showing off his trademark

ability to make anyone in his proximity laugh; whether in-person or social media. The self-described “Caption God” has the ability to craft self-reflective narratives that allow fans an inner look into how his mind processes the world, reminiscent of Alice’s venture into wonderland; the aftereffect is evocative of a psychedelic trip with friends, where the end result is the acknowledgment of one’s genius.

“I mean you did battle Philip Banks of Trey Coastal in high school after he transferred to Berkeley High from Alameda... Who won the battle you or Phil?” I ask.

“That’s pretty crazy,” he says. “That’s pretty nice that you know that.” A slight chuckle exhales from his body — a 6-3 frame valued during his tenure as a Division 1 football player at Boise State University — now in a serene state of rest after his performance at Nima Etminan’s (EMPIRE’s Vice President of Operations) birthday party. A melodic set that highlighted standout songs from his discography, Raj closed with “**Moonwalk**,” his latest collaborative single with superstar producer Kenny Beats set to feature on *Father Figure 3: Somewhere Out There*, his upcoming studio album.

On first listen, the track follows the Berkeley musician’s smooth, harmonious flow, and mystifying wordplay, all magnified by Beats production. But there’s also a glimpse of the rapper’s progression into confidence. “You know my life is crazy, look at my DM’s (Look at my DM’s) / Yeah, buss her ass one time, now she actin’ like my BM (Ooh) / Yeah, battling demons, they was sleeping like a

Tylenol PM,” he raps in the opening lines with a keen awareness of the situational influences associated with his rise as an emerging rapper in mainstream music.

His musical evolution, encapsulated throughout his *Father Figure* trilogy, is grounded in a self-orchestrated journey that honors the influences of his youthful upbringing, like the Marshall Quartet on his maternal side, as well as contemporary icons such as Nipsey Hussle, sampled on “Burgundy Regal” from the upcoming *Somewhere Out There*.



“For me, the journey is about slowly finding myself, spiritually and sonically as a person,” Raj says. “It’s about growth. I’m coming into who I am, understanding who I am, and what I

want in my life, in my sounds, and in my music. Everything is slowly coming together. All of it, to me, has been a learning process. It's damn near like self-reflective type sh*t. I've reached a point with the subject matter and sonically, where it's okay to take time – everything I've done has led up to right now and it makes sense.”

LINDSEY BEST

Raj's dedication towards the creation and production of music began with writing raps as a delivery man shortly after packing up his cleats to pursue a music career, culminating in his early-to mid-2010s mixtapes, *Portraits* and *The Escape*. He earned a spot on [Complex's 20 Rappers To Watch](#) in 2019 in large part because he is in a constant state of metamorphosis — a developmental stage where instead of making “trendy” music, he draws upon the familial and regional inspirations. This adds up to make him something of a “Berkeley superhero.” Raj's blueprint is reflective of all the influences that contributed to his formation as an artist; Nipsey's community-based empowerment, Mac Dre's cultural awareness and appreciation, and E-40's entrepreneurship. It's a natural reflection of Faraji Wright through the musical vessel of Rexx Life Raj.

Adding to this legacy are his philanthropic efforts, sparked by a love for his hometown akin to Nipsey's dedication to Crenshaw. This is reflected in Raj's Good & Prosper event series which has financially supported YR Media, an Oakland-based, non-profit production company focused on the maturation of a youth-led creative generation of musicians and journalists,

and the donation of a new football tunnel to Berkeley High, his alma mater. “[Nipsey] is one of the main examples for me,” Raj says. “A lot of people laid out blueprints in terms of how to move, but Nipsey was the one to look at. Everything he did was involved in the community and empowered them. I try to keep that in mind, whether it’s through music or something I can do outside to provide. I feel like that’s a major key for any artist, big or small, to give back to the community through empowerment.”

Despite the early comparisons to Drake in his career, there’s no one in modern music with the intricacy and complexity required to construct his music.

However, his discography is frequented by an abundance of collaborations and features with artists from the Bay, like his middle and high school classmate G-Eazy, because there’s always hella love for his hometown.

“The Bay is really tight because it’s a place with a diversity of sounds coming out,” he says. “There’s a lot of new people opening doors, and we’re all connected. For me, I feel like it’s the first time where I’m connected to other Bay artists. I could hit Kehlani. I could hit G-Eazy. I could hit ALLBLACK. It’s always good, you know what I’m saying. We can get in on the same way to make music that isn’t even necessarily Bay music. It’s like, ‘Yo! Let’s make music,’ and whatever comes out is beautiful.”



Next month, Raj is scheduled to headline his first tour in support of *Somewhere Out There*, an opportunity the Berkeley rapper has worked towards since his experiences as an opener for Mr. Carmack, P-Lo, and Bas. There's an excitement in his voice as he explains the incorporation of live instrumentation in the musical arrangements, since the upcoming album features a predominance of guitar and bass in the tracks, giving another glimpse of Raj's next musical direction.



Once excitement shifts into a mature tone from the rapper, his knowledge of the implementation of tour dynamics appears as he adds, “You’ve got to run it like a machine. You’ve got to have your merch be on time, get your stages on, you’ve got to be on top it... It’s a whole bunch of small components that go into making a big and good show. I’ve learned from P-Lo, from very early he has his brand and aesthetic really tight. They move as a unit. They got it

down, you know what I'm saying? It's learning how many different components there are, and how well oiled they need to be to make it really move."

With two years since the release of *Father Figure 2*, Raj describes the gap between projects as his justification to invest and produce timeless music. "I think all my sh*t, especially *Father Figure 2*, are classics," he proclaims. "I think all of them were clean, but I think *Father Figure 3* is the most polished version of Raj that people have ever heard. That's what separates this one from all my other ones – that I've grown sonically. Not only that, I have pieces around me that are a lot better, like better producers".

Guided by producer DTB — the architect behind the Bay's strongest talents, like Guapdad 4000, Saweetie, Offset Jim, and YMTK among others — Raj's end goal is to produce, mix, and master his own music. Reflective of his musical career, he is centered on maintaining autonomy in his music, and he demonstrates thoughtful intent in his selection of peers to collaborate with, such as producers Julia Lewis, Kyle Betty, and Wax Roof. These are musicians with a keen understanding of his sound, endowed with the techniques to ensure its longevity.

LINDSEY BEST

On "G.O.D.," the second track of his recent EP *En Route*, the chorus alludes to his ethics and morality as an active participant in a music industry that has the power to distort one's self into thinking they are a God. "I was never supposed to be here, now we here/ I'm

not content with none of this shit, though, bro, be clear / G.O.D., G.O.D. is the only thing we fear,” he sings, in a delicate voice that rings with his mother’s gospel choral background.

Raj has his feet firmly on the ground as he looks to make his next big step. Looking ahead at the next year, Raj is ready for whatever comes next. “One of my biggest fears is becoming complacent, stagnant, and not getting better,” he says. “Constantly getting better for me is the biggest thing. There’s no endpoint in it. It’s always growth, It’s always pressure to develop, so I think it’s something that I’m going after because it’s always more sh*t to learn. You can always be a better version of yourself, so I’m still chasing.”

Father Figure 3: Somewhere Out There is due out on November 6 via Rexx Life / EMPIRE. Get it [here](#).



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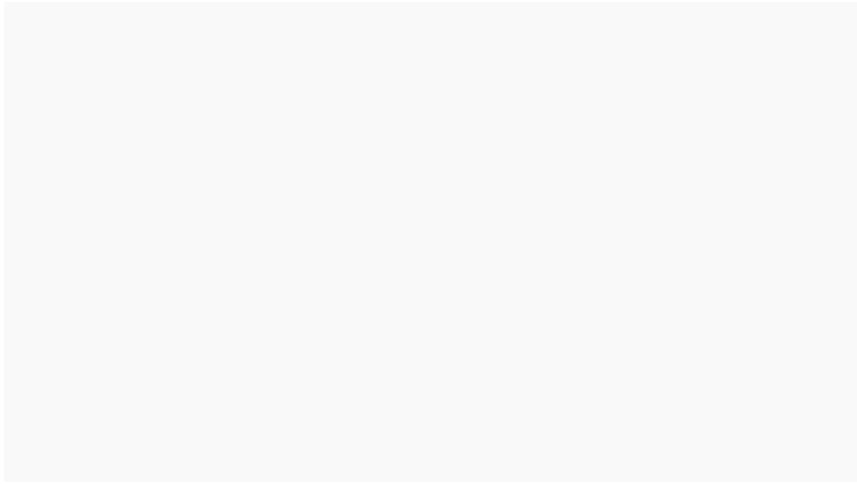


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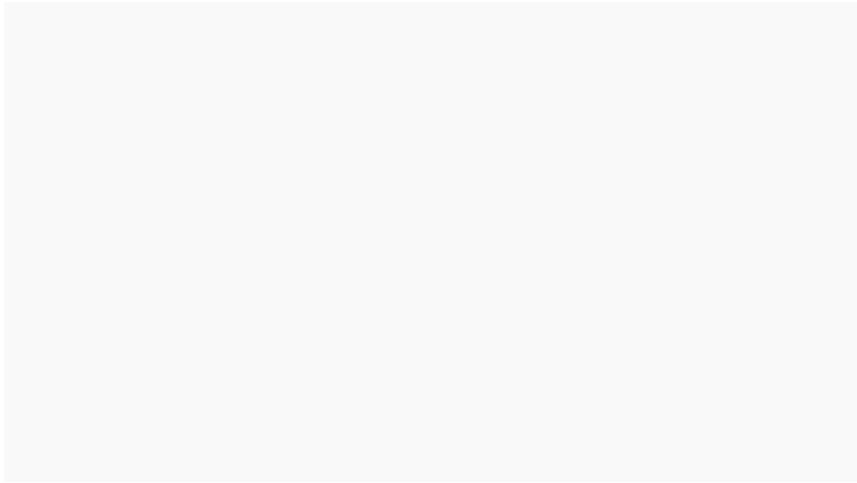
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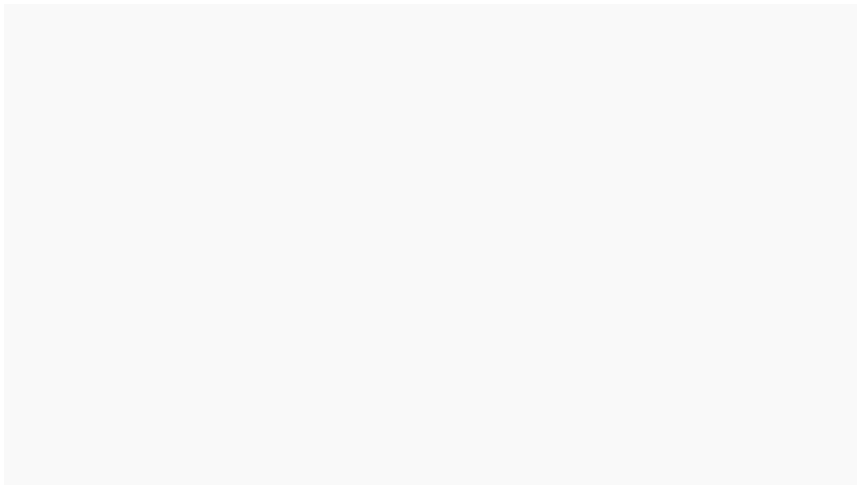
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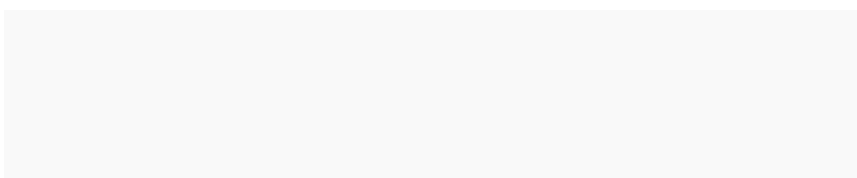
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