

plains of his return to hip-hop, "is I got to be refamiliarised with the music to date, the means of how you make and sell records. And I got to get my skills back up on the road, and that was the best part of it." Plus, he got more airtime than Danny Boy, Everlast's partner in the House.

1997

Divine Styler introduces the world to his protégés, Styles Of Beyond, with a guest appearance on their *Killer Instinct* twelve-inch and spends his own money to travel to London and Toronto, ON to headline the *In Search Of* one-year anniversary. More importantly, he also takes a long-delayed trip to Mecca. "I went with a blank page and I did it as a blind servitude to my god. And because of that I got so much more than most of the people



House of Pain



Styles of Beyond

who went there cuz there was no preconceived confusion in my mind as to what I was doing and why I was doing it. Everything became so clear to me. When I came back to America, that's when I started to change." His experiences result in "Before Mecca," the autobiographical first single for his next album. The trip also inspires the song "Hajji," which sums up his life from his trip to Mecca to the time of writing. Although "Hajji" would not appear until the album is released two years later, the *Before Mecca* twelve-inch hits the streets, creating high anticipation for the album.

1998

Styles Of Beyond release their debut album *2000 Fold* on Bilal Bashir's Bilawn Records. Sadly, Divine Styler is only on one track, the previously released

"Killer Instinct." Still, *2000 Fold* is arguably the best hip-hop album of 1998.

1999

Not only is Styles Of Beyond's *2000 Fold* re-released on the Dust Brothers' Ideal imprint, but the first new Divine Styler album in seven years drops, only ten years after its *Word Power* namesake. *Word Power 2: Directrix* (DTX) is a fabulous return for the Divine MC, but for him it is just an opportunity to prove to others that he still has the skills. And,

like his previous two albums, there is plenty of meaning to *Word Power 2*. "Directrix means the median line in the trajectory of fire, which to me is the balance, and balance can mean a lot of things to a lot of different people. But in this case, it's the balance between good and evil within myself." Sadly, its mission now accomplished, this year also sees the final issue of *In Search Of... Divine Styler*.

2000

"I promised myself I would never do another major record deal, and Mo' Wax is the only kind of company I would ever sign a contract with." Originally proclaiming his signing with Mo' Wax as "another act of God," before laughing, he later admits it was "DJ Shadow, yo." Recording "Divine Intervention" with Shadow for the Mo' Wax released

Quannum Spectrum compilation in 1999 brought him to the attention of label head James Lavelle. "When he heard that and he knew my past, one thing led to another." The end result is the current re-release of *Word Power 2: Directrix*.

As part of the record deal, Divine Styler is in the studio working on music for his next album. When asked which of his albums is his favourite, he replies, "The one I'm about to make." *Word (power)*.



With research assistance from Fritz the Cat.