



DIVINE STYLER

Back in 1992, Divine Styler flipped out. For real. The once infallible manifestation of word power underwent the strange litany of emotional turbulence, fueled by the monetary stranglehold of a bad management contract, and the MC-like physical mass burned into gaseous elements transformed into something else entirely. A musician? A soul-salvationist? What was once strictly hip-hop became jazz-fed bebop incarnations, and the lyrically divine stylistics gave way to autumns of light. Or rather, *Spiral Walls Containing Autumns Of Light*, Divine Styler's second album and the follow-up to 1989's breakthrough *Word Power*.

The surreal nebula of that long-player was etched with live instruments (mostly played by Divine himself), cryptic verbal assessments and the uncompromising understanding that nobody, especially stringent hip-hop heads, would get it. In short, it was a revelation. But it also castigated the

Brooklyn-cum-Los Angeles artist into the vacuous boondocks occupied by other SoCal outcasts such as Bronx Style Bob, Justin Warfield and the unplugged Pop's Cool Love. In other words, worse than ignored, he was forgotten. Many people now don't even realize Divine had a second album. Hell, let's be honest — most people don't even know he had a *first* album.

But all that is fine with Divine. His latest offering — the 12-inch single "Before Mecca" b/w "Oneself Duel," on his own DTX Records — is the type of record that'll make you want to remember, with boombastic beats that hearken to the days of park jams and pop-locks, and lyrics that rival even the most scientific of wordsmiths. Yes, it's been six years (or nine, depending on when you caught up) since the world's checked his lyrical fathoms, and "Before Mecca" is just a precursor of things to come from his soon-to-be-released *Word Power 2: Directrix*.

"I've just been trying to find my place," Divine says, explaining his AWOL status. "I was still looking for a comfortable place to fit musically because I'm not one that

settles. I like to keep moving, keep that process fluid. I guess I was looking for the right timing and for certain things to fall in place."

Admittedly, it took him some time to evaluate his position (he's "getting up there" in age, and we all know how merciless hip-hop can be to the aging). But what put him over the top is also what symbolizes Divine's impact on the heads that can see through the haze — a magazine out of Toronto called *In Search Of Divine Styler*. Founded by Editor Fritz The Cat, *In Search Of...* was created as both a tribute to the MC and as a forum dedicated to underground hip-hop.

"I was buggin'," Divine chuckles. It was his daughter's mother that bought the magazine, contacted Fritz, and finally put the two in touch. "I still can't believe it. I thought it was real dope, but it also gave me the push I needed to finish my re-emergence. I didn't have a feel of hip-hop in terms of being an artist anymore, and wondering whether people would care. Believe me, it took me a quick minute to get my rhyme skills back to the point where I thought I could hold my own."