

STUDENT LIFE

CD slams the state of hip-hop

By Kelley L. Carter
Knight Ridder Newspapers
(KRT)

Raymond Scott is angry. Actually, he's more than angry, he's furious.

He's got some rage boiling up inside of him that he's ready to unload to the hip-hop masses, that is, if folks bite on his indie project, "Arch Nemesis," which hit stores last week.

Scott, better known as rapper Benzino, has a vendetta against rapper Eminem and he won't stop talking, or rapping, about it.

"It's a situation where I feel like it's a double standard being used in hip-hop. The people that are handling him are using the fact that he's a white rapper to monopolize the game so to speak. I

just spoke up on it as an artist. Not as somebody from the Source. I'm an artist first. I made a couple of songs on a mix tape and went at him," Benzino says.

"This guy goes at people all the time. But I guess I struck a nerve and he came back at me. His stuff was more personal. I had a real motive for what I did and why I did it. I feel like hip-hop, as it's growing, is in danger of being stripped from us like how rock music was. I'm just being that voice of the street, that's all."

For those who missed the saga of the last year or so, here's a quick catch-up: Benzino is best friends with David Mays and both publish the Source magazine, which for years has been the place to go for everything hip-hop.

The magazine was the first national publication to give Eminem props. In 1998, it featured him in its influential "Unsigned" section. After Interscope Records signed him, the magazine nomi-

inated him for multiple Source awards and championed him as the first white hip-hop artist of significance.

Then something changed. Through underground mix tapes and Benzino's own CD, he traded barbs with Eminem and his label, Shady Records, for most of 2003. Scott called Eminem a "rap David Duke, a rap Hitler, a culture-stealer," and was pictured in the Source holding Em's head. Eminem called Benzino the "softest, fakest wanna-be gangster in New York."

Then there was the cover story the

Source printed that depicted Em as a racist. That edition came with a CD containing snippets of raps Eminem made, before he was a star, that include derogatory comments about black women. Exactly when they were made is disputed, Eminem

said it was after a teenage breakup, but the lyrics caused a stir when the Source played them at a news conference and posted them on its Web site. The article talked about the rapper's early career, and Mays says they've collected a lot of evidence that suggests Eminem may not be sensitive to the black community and issues of race.

Lawsuits followed and court decisions. Among them: Could the CDs be distributed with the magazine? (Not the full songs.) Were there copyright infringements? (An injunction was granted against using the lyrics on the Web site.) Should the Source pay damages? (No.)

The hip-hop hoopla died down for a minute. Then Eminem released "Encore," which talks very personally about these struggles and others in "Like Toy Soldiers."

He raps: "I am never supposed to show it, my crew ain't supposed to know

it/Even if it means goin' toe to toe with a Benzino it don't matter/I'd never drag them in battles that I can't handle unless I absolutely have to/I'm supposed to set an example."

Benzino responded with the single, "Look Into My Eyes." The video picks up where "Like Toy Soldiers" ends, having an actor who looks like Eminem calling someone named Jimmy (likely Interscope Records Jimmy Iovine), and telling him he's scared and wants to get out of the business.

The entire album isn't about his beef with Eminem. It's autobiographical and talks about his life and growing up in Boston.

"This is what I've been going through the last two years. Everything that I went through is on this album. Admittedly, I've stepped up my whole lyric game. My whole rap game," Scott says. "The whole concept of 'Look Into My Eyes' is basically an answer to what Eminem did. He came out with 'Toy Soldiers,' acting like he's trying to squash the beef. He said he helped big up hip-hop. What he's trying to do is fool everybody to try to get their sympathy. Eminem is an all-right rhymers. But there's a lot of talented guys out there and they'll never get the shot. His people are monopolizing the airwaves and TV. 'Arch Nemesis' is just my testimonial of what's happened these last couple of years in my life. And I'm proud of my work."

The jury is still out on how others will receive Benzino's album. Nothing he released has sold well.

MC Serch, of WJLB-FM in Detroit, says, "He's the owner of the Source magazine. He's the owner of a magazine who has a hobby making music. He has the money to make music and he feels like he needs to put out music. He's respected as an entrepreneur. He's respected for the way he handles the Source magazine. But I don't think he's respected as an artist."

"The people that are handling him are using the fact that he's a white rapper to monopolize the game..."

- Benzino, rapper speaking about Eminem

El Canelo now serves suds

By Annie Sevin
staff writer

El Canelo, a Mexican restaurant located on Buffalo Road, has just received its liquor license. This family-style restaurant is open seven days a week with hours ranging from 11 a.m. - 10 p.m. (Mon.-Thurs.), 11 a.m. - 11 p.m. (Fri. - Sat.) and 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. (Sun.).

Jose Montes and his brother, Jose Ingncio Montes, own all seven of the El Canelo restaurants. There are three located in Erie, two in Buffalo, N.Y., one in New Castle, Pa. and another in Oil City, Pa.

The El Canelo location closest to Behrend is in the East K-Mart Plaza, 4459 Buffalo Road, Erie, PA 16510, (814-898-1531). El Canelo restaurants are also located 3.5 miles southwest of Erie at 2709 W. 12th St., Erie, PA 16505, (814-835-2290); and 2.6 miles south of Erie at 4236 Peach St., Erie, PA 16509, (814-860-8187).

El Canelo serves all kinds of Mexican style dishes, includ-



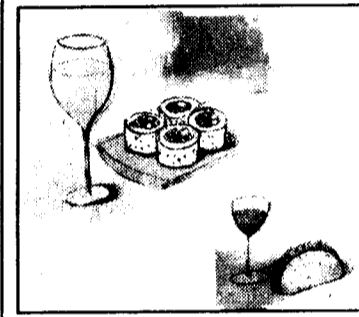
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El Canelo on Buffalo Road has recently received its liquor license. El Canelo has two other locations in Erie.

ing tacos, fajitas, enchiladas, chalupas, burritos, tamales, chimichangas, and quesadillas. They also serve a variety of desserts: Kahlua cakes, cheese-cake and sopapillas (a fried pastry served with cinnamon sugar and honey).

It took El Canelo (the Buffalo Road location) about eight months to receive its liquor license. Montes said it usually only takes about two-three months to get a license, but this one took longer for unknown reasons.

According to Montes, El Canelo doesn't offer a lot of mixed drinks, typically just margaritas (lime and peach). They do offer a variety of Mexican beers, including Pacifico, Sol, Corona and Corona Lite.



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Every new year brings new movies

Review by Aaron Amendola
staff writer

With every new year comes new movies. With new movies come new academy awards. With the academy awards comes controversy and this year is no different. With "Million Dollar Baby" nearly sweeping all major categories, there's obviously going to be some dispute. While I could nitpick the overlooking of Annette Bening for the second time or the academy undermining the talent it took for Clive Owen to become who he was in "Closer," I am more enraged that some lesser-known films went unrewarded.

I find it sickening that a film like "Million Dollar Baby," good albeit overrated, can sweep the awards while smaller pictures like "Garden State" and "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" can go overlooked. For Zach Braff, getting "Garden State" made was a huge undertaking. He not only wrote and starred in it but he directed it. For a first-timer, this is a colossal job. The fact that it resonates so well with the audience is a testament that you don't need a big budget and all-star cast to make a well-rounded movie. If anything, Zach Braff should receive a special achievement award for the blood, sweat and tears he put into his freshman project.

Charlie Kaufman, while awarded "Best Original Screenplay," deserves much more for idealizing the masterpiece of Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind." With the help of Michel Gondry, Kaufman not only made an exquisite art house movie that was accessible to nearly everyone, he made a film that captured pure raw love in its most sincere form.

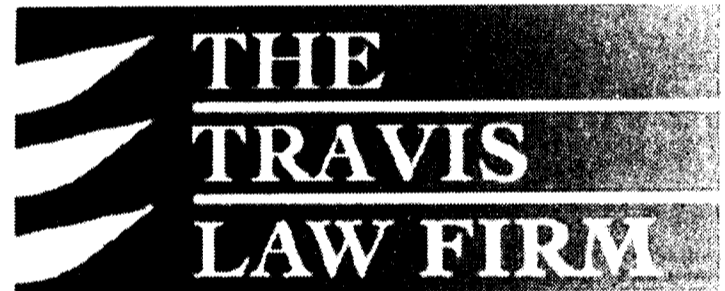
Why is it that Hollywood seems to give

praise to films that have already garnered it from everywhere else? Why reward success with more success when there are tons of other deserving movies out there just trying to find a small audience, if any audience at all.

Sure, word of mouth will carry these films on in the years and have their messages cemented in cult-like status with people in the time to come, but an academy award means something. It is being recognized for your talents and having a reason to be proud. Though in recent years the Oscars have been diminished to a live airing of "InStyle" magazine, there is still a great amount of value attached to the statues themselves.

One thing I have never liked about the show is that (while some films may deserve it), some movies just dominate the awards and steal glory from the other competitors. Everyone remembers "Titanic," but does anyone raise a fuss about "L.A. Confidential," "As Good as it Gets," or even "Good Will Hunting" much anymore? Nope. The fact that "Titanic" stole the show cast a shadow on those film features and now they're known merely as Oscar "nominees," but not winners. It's a shame.

This coming year looks a bit more promising. With no clear cut "oscar contenders" slated to be released anytime soon, we may get surprised with another "Garden State" or "Eternal Sunshine." With any luck, some new independent filmmaker will shoot something amazing and have it astound us soon. We need more Zach Braffs and Charlie Kaufmans in the biz to keep things exciting. These guys are clearly making films for the art of it and the need to express themselves. With an intention like that, awards don't matter.



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