



NOTHING BUT THE T.R.U.T.H.

HOW ONE CRITIC OF HIP-HOP WENT FROM BEING A "WISE GUY" TO ONE OF THE GENRE'S MOST PROMISING ARTISTS.

Kirk Franklin simply loves Da' T.R.U.T.H.

"Da' W.H.O.?"

Da' T.R.U.T.H., the latest Cross Movement protégé to make his mark in Christian hip-hop and the heart of the ultra-popular gospel luminary.

It was the first week of October, and Franklin was busy, doing his customary run of radio station visits, in-store signings and interviews to promote his latest album, the grandiose *Hero*. But during one of his many bookstore appearances, he broke down. He just couldn't help it. He simply *had* to stop and pick up a copy of *The Faith*, the recently released sophomore album by Philadelphia emcee Da' T.R.U.T.H.

Later in his blog, Franklin said, "This cat is one of the sickest MCs I know, and he represents the kingdom to the fullest!"

A glowing endorsement, yes, but not something the rapper ever aspired to. He actually wanted nothing to do with hip-hop. He grew up a musician in a conservative household, and naturally, his preferences never gravitated beyond the comfort of soft R&B and contemporary gospel. Fred Hammond,

Commissioned, The Winans and Anita Baker were all he'd listen to.

Hip-hop? Forget it.

"I didn't even like rap music," says Da' T.R.U.T.H., an acronym that stands for "To Reach U Through Him." "I kinda felt the way older people felt about it. It was too much for me. It was overwhelming."

On top of that, he also thought rap was really corny. So corny, in fact, that he made it his personal mission to make fun of the genre and satirize it. He never thought the punch lines and funny one-liners were actually the groundwork for a booming ministry.

"I started by making fun of some cat and saying, 'I sound good doing this,'" says the Philadelphia native. "From that point forward I began making rap music."

And he's never looked back. Shortly after his conversion to hip-hop, he began to take discipleship classes by Ambassador and Phantik, two members of renowned East Coast collective The Cross Movement. After a few years of ministry and missionary work with the crew, he signed with their label, Cross Movement Records, and his first bow, 2004's *Moment of T.R.U.T.H.*, went on to sell more than 43,000 copies—an extremely impressive feat for a Christian rap debut.

"I think a lot of people connected with my testimony," says Da' T.R.U.T.H. "Not having come from the gutter, not having come from the hood, not having come from the street, not knowing anything about selling drugs, the Christian community needed a story to identify with."

As for his main man Kirk Franklin?

"I love Kirk. After [my first album] came out, he called me. He just wanted to give me props on the project. He loved it. The first time we met, he jumped on top of the couch, ran over the chairs in the studio, reached on top of me, embraced me and squeezed me real tight. From that point forward, we developed a really strong relationship."

ANDREE FARIAS



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