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Royce da 5’9?s Book of Ryan Continues the Conversation of Vulnerability in Hip-Hop

Malik Walker · Wednesday, May 23rd, 2018

Jay-Z’s most recent album titled *4:44* caught music listener’s attention at the end of the last year with HOV’s ability to become vulnerable and honest about the trials and tribulations within his life as a man and even more specifically as a Black American male. More commonly in the Black community and hip-hop community, most artists are afraid to express their true feelings.

Similarly to *4:44*, Royce da 5’9? recites his own personal narrative over 20 tracks including three skits (“My Parallel,” “Who Are You” and “Protecting Ryan”) in the album which aren’t skip-worthy.

Book of Ryan includes guest features from notable names such as Eminem, J. Cole, Logic, Pusha T, Jadakiss, T-Pain, Robert Glasper and Marsha Ambrosius.

Royce’s storytelling has always been the core of his identity as an artist since the beginning of his career, but with *Book of Ryan* he used the album as a way to express his feelings in a way that many men are afraid to open up about.

In the album he speaks on his childhood experiences, drugs [the track “Cocaine”], the state of today’s society and more. After the first track titled “Intro,” Royce wakes up the listener with “Woke,” the second track on the album. The hard-knocking signature drums from Key Wane, a fellow Detroit native and go-to producer for rapper Big Sean, matches the energy of Royce’s rap flow.

“Woke” is about how lost music artists are today and as well as listeners. Royce is educating the listener to warn them to wake up and understand what is going on in their surroundings.

“This one’s for those of you just ain’t woke yet, hotep
You rich but you broke nigga just don’t know yet, hotep
These rappers ain’t woke yet, security back ’em, hotep”

The standout single of *Book of Ryan* is “Boblo Boat,” featuring J. Cole. I would go as far as to consider J. Cole’s verse on this track as one of the best verses this year. “Boblo Boat” pays homage to Boblo Island Amusement Park which ferried people from Detroit, Michigan to Ontario. Royce speaks about his summer trips at the amusement park while J. Cole reminisces about summer

experiences growing up in North Carolina.

“Five semesters left until college, I’m under pressure
I’m not a real nigga ‘til I undress her, I gotta ‘press her
This was my main concern back when concerns were lesser”

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