

Tah Phrum Duh Bush

Everyone has become accustomed to artists boasting about how they never sleep, but for Tah Phrum Duh Bush his sleeplessness has never been a point of pride, it's been a serious condition. For the majority of the Brooklyn, NY, native's life insomnia has taken his nights away from him. Instead of turning to modern medicine to attempt to cure his sleeplessness, however, Tah worked to turn his pain into art, and created *Luminous Dark Alleys: The Insomniac Works*.

Luminous Dark Alleys: The Insomniac Works is a 15 track album (14 original songs and one remix) based on his experiences with insomnia and the ideas that have run through his head as a result of not being able to sleep. Tah describes the album as "a dark ride through the mind of an insomniac." It's a ride that comes with an accompanying 100+ page book that has a chapter for each song and gives listeners a deeper, fuller experience, that Tah says is "super personal."

The project is the long awaited follow up to Tah's 2005 release *Sunshine or Pure Shade*. During the five years in-between albums Tah experienced a number of extreme highs and lows. There was the triumph of touring Europe a number of times, including a three month stay there in 2009, but also the tragedy of losing his home to a fire. Thankfully, one very important item in his home was saved by a firefighter with a keen eye who noticed one of Tah's backup hard drives on the floor and managed to kick it under a table before they finished spraying the place down, saving some of Tah's work. The rest of his drives were lost in the fire.

For most artists, not having a new album out, and touring overseas, results in anonymity at home, but Tah kept his name alive and well through his unique guerilla marketing techniques. His giant "Tah Phrum Duh Bush" sign that he takes to shows, and the "missions" he sets up for his fans that have them promoting his name throughout the city in large groups, have become nothing short of legendary in NYC's underground hip-hop community.

One of the reasons Tah has so much support in that community is because of all the support he continues to give. Having been involved in the scene since the days when he could be found rhyiming alongside Mos Def and Black Moon in park cyphers, Tah is a regular at shows, and is more than willing to answer his phone at any hour of the day or night to give advice to those who seek it.

Tah also packs the house for his performances. Not content with having a typical hip-hop show, Tah enlivens the crowd, getting them involved in more than just the traditional call-and-response way. When he performs "Micro-PH-One-01," a song off of *Sunshine or Pure Shade* in which he explains the proper way to use a microphone, he has a volunteer holding cue cards for people to read and gives everyone a diploma at the end of the song for graduating from the course.

There's a graduation of another kind Tah is also concerned with, and it involves the kids in his community. This is why in 2005, with schoolteacher Rosaleen Knoepfel and fellow emcee Bisco Smith, he helped launch Urban Art Beat, an after-school program where local emcees, in a safe environment, mentor inner city kids in the art of crafting rhymes. After seeing initial success in the South Bronx, Urban Art Beat has expanded to other areas of New York and sees numerous emcees volunteering their time each semester.

Sleeplessness keeps Tah working when even the artists who claim to be up all night have gone to bed. As he continues to put those long nights to good use for both himself and his community, the latest result of his sleeplessness, *Luminous Dark Alleys: The Insomniac Works*, will wake up anyone who isn't already familiar with Tah Phrum Duh Bush.

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