



GOLDEN CHILD

After releasing his first mixtape, 2012's *Nehruvia*, at only sixteen, New York phenom **Bishop Nehru** arrived as a fresh voice laced with erudite wordplay and a penchant for classic beats. With his EP *strictlyFLOWz* the following year, he grabbed the attention of MF DOOM, resulting in their recent collaboration, 2014's *NehruvianDOOM*. As he prepares his solo album, with Nas on board as executive producer, the old-soul poet is poised to help bring the art form back to New York.

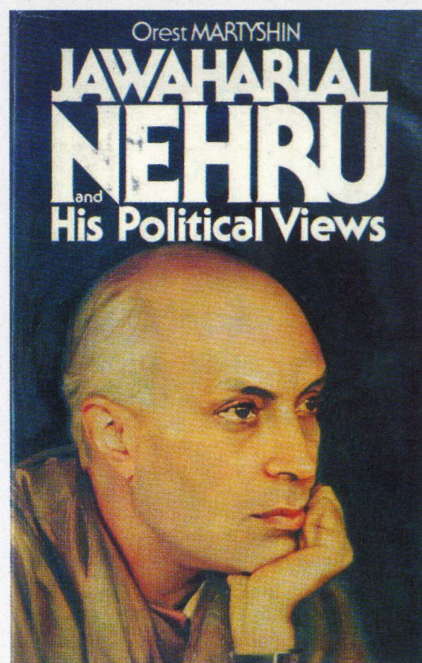
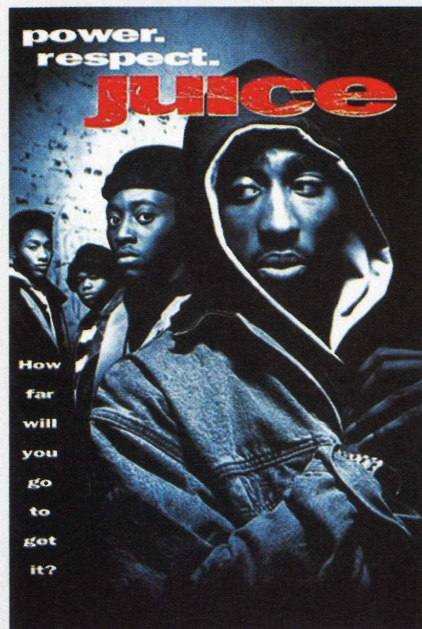
by **Alice Price-Styles**

photography by **Robert Adam Mayer**

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PHARRELL
IN MY MIND



have a lot of books. Right now, back home, I have *The Kybalion* and I have *Stellar Man*; books for Hermetic principles and things like that. I have books on color: color as a frequency and how certain color affects the body... I read all kinds of stuff," says young hip-hop artist Bishop Nehru, born Markel Scott, down a telephone line stretching from Beverly Hills, California, to Hackney, London, before continuing: "I used to read heavily, but lately I haven't been finding a lot of time to..."

Losing the habit of reading at any age is a real shame. But, when you consider how rapidly the career of Scott has snowballed in recent years, opening up shows for Wu-Tang Clan and Nas and picking up collaborations with the likes of MF DOOM, you have to cut the kid some slack. Books may not be the sole focus in the world of Nehru right now, but, his expansion creatively and spiritually has been positively exponential.

Let's go back to the beginning. Scott grew up in Rockland County, New York, which he describes as being a "pretty normal New York town. [My family was] quite musical [and] there were a lot of different genres being played around for sure." It makes sense then that Scott's own tastes in music, as in literature, are impressively varied. An independent thinker since his school days, he remembers, "It was really one-sided and pretty uniformed. A lot of people liked the same stuff, but I liked my own. I was into anime and things like that, and in school a lot of the people I was surrounded by weren't into the same things as me."

In "So Alone," a song from his new DOOM-produced record, *NehruvianDOOM*, he expresses lyrically how having unique interests that did not conform to the norm led to him spending a considerable amount of time on his own: "Thinking different so nobody wanted to stick with him."

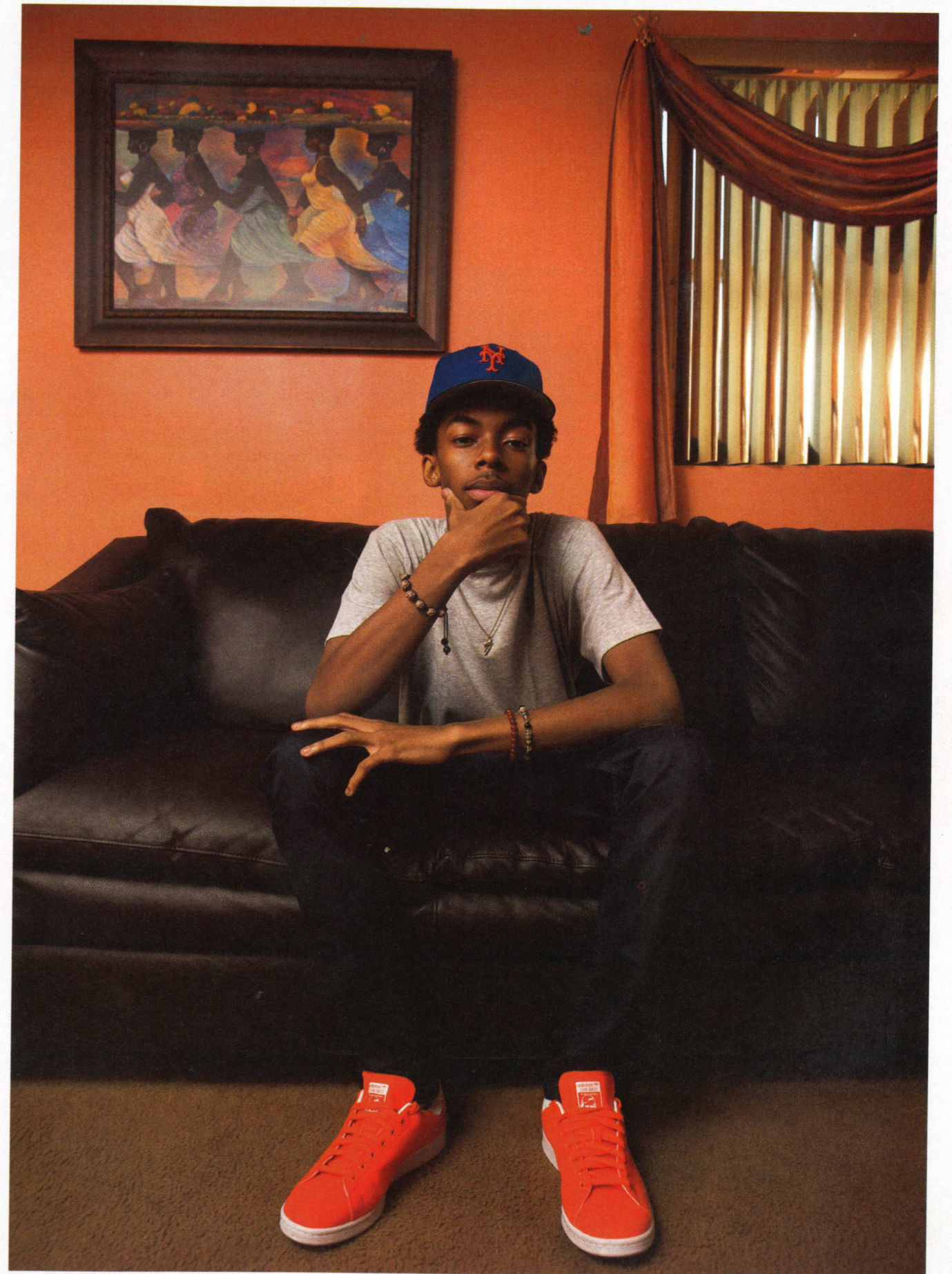
And so, predisposed to spending time alone, he explains how he discovered the music that influences his own and the theologies that now pepper his songs and make them so intriguing: "Everything pops up on its own. Through me being alone, doing my own research and my own thing, I pretty much gathered my own information. Learning more and reading more," he says with a thoughtful laugh, "and getting more interested in reading more."

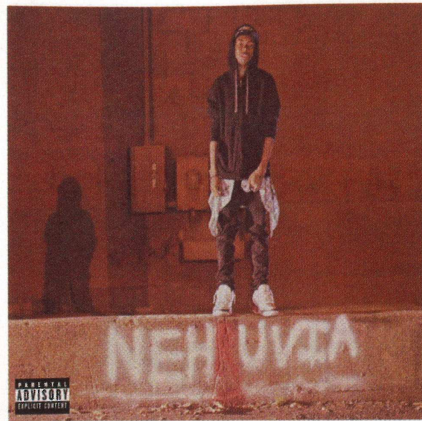
When he talks of the jazz artists he loves, you could easily mistake Nehru for being decades older than he really is: "I listen to jazz often, never stopped listening to jazz. Which artists? Everybody. Louis Armstrong, Roy Ayers, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, I could go on for days." But when he cites a release from 2006 as one of the first records that he really cherished, it serves as a gentle reminder of Nehru's young age, just eighteen. "A record that I first really fell in love with? It would probably be one that my mom played a lot," he says. Often the way. "My mom played a lot of Pharrell; she liked his first album a lot. So I would probably have to say the first album I fell in love with was the Pharrell album *In My Mind*. It was the first record where I could really take in an album and form an opinion on music. As I got older, I started listening to different sounds, and then I started to want to make music."

Starting out at thirteen, Scott was making jazz-infused hip-hop instrumentals under the moniker "Kelz Scott," which later became "Kile Kanvas." He began to make a name for himself by sharing his work online within forums on Hypebeast and Odd Future Talk, amongst others, garnering endless plays and praise for his talent. And since his early days, Scott has been keenly involved in all aspects of creating, having a clear overall vision for his music and involved in video and artwork elements. "I like to do everything as far as art," he concludes, and admits to being inspired by artists who similarly craft all facets of their persona. "I'm influenced a lot by artists as a whole. Michael Jackson, people don't know that he did a lot of his own stuff. And Spike Lee, he's not a rapper, but I still consider him an artist, you know. Tim Burton, there's so many different people. I get inspired by a lot of different things, it's not just music that influences me." His aspirations are likewise not limited to just music, as Scott has been vocal about his ambitions to eventually branch out into acting and directing.

While taking cues from his favorite artists, he looks to his own life and circle to draw inspiration for his own creative work, contributing to the personal tone of much of his writing: "Pretty much whatever it is that I feel. Whatever emotion or feeling and pretty much just going with it. It could be me and my life, or somebody I know's life and something that happened to them."

Leaving behind the days of Kile Kanvas, he took on his current title: Bishop Nehru. "Bishop" being in reference to Tupac Shakur's character in the 1992 movie *Juice*, and "Nehru" being a nod to Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Indian prime minister who was tutored under and became the political heir to Gandhi.





The bold juxtaposition of two strong and strikingly different figures befits Scott's uniquely assured ambition and intelligence. Like *Juice's* Bishop, Scott is a young kid with something to prove, as evidenced from "Great Things": "I'm hoping I don't grow old before I show the whole globe / What I know and what I see / Plus who I plan to be." But, with an enlightened perspective akin to Jawaharlal Nehru: "That's a man of peace / Got Gandhi in his genes / So you gotta get the theme / Others parking while I speed / Am I targeting to lead? / Peace."

In November 2012, he put out his debut mixtape *Nehruvia*. It featured clever rhymes wrapped in tight rhythmic flow over a mixture of original production by Ghost McGrady and Scott himself, as well as the classic hip-hop beats of Madlib, DJ Premier, J Dilla, and MF DOOM. By aligning himself with such notable hip-hop artists, it was as though he was prophesying his future projects and collaborations.

Following on from *Nehruvia*, he collaborated with Aaron LaCrate on the hypnotic track "Appalled," which provided a refreshing commentary on "lying" rappers who use violence to "bribe and inspire kids" and was a stand-out from LaCrate's *Milkcrate Mixtape* in 2013. In the same year, he released the *strictlyFLOWz* EP, which further showcased his skilled rapping style and provided insight into the unique teenager's mind. On the track "IntroVERTz," he writes, "I'm used to being alone / Just me and symphonies." He says the song refers again to "how introverted I am. I'm used to being alone and independent and doing things for myself."

It was in April 2013 that Nehru opened up for Ghostface Killah and MF DOOM at the 100 Club in London and sparked a friendship and working relationship with DOOM that would see the release of last fall's highly anticipated *NehruvianDOOM*. The concept piece, with a foundation of vintage DOOM production, features Scott relaying self-reflective lyrics with potency on the mic, and, occasional verses from DOOM himself.

Of where he found inspiration for *NehruvianDOOM*, he says: "The album is based on a lot of the things I was going through personally. It's pretty much a chapter, I would say. Each song has its own separate theme, and its own way of connecting to that part of my life. Either from the titles to the beats, everything, it channels its own energy."

As the title suggests, the aforementioned song "Great Things" talks of his ambition in a characteristically spiritual way: "I'm seeing great things in my vision, started with an intention / And then moved farther when I parted with my soul extension." On his belief in himself from a young age, he elaborates: "I always knew as a kid that this stuff was going to happen, but at the same time, as a kid, I didn't know the repercussions, that everything has the downside to it." In "So Alone," he touches on the pressures and negative aspects of success. It opens: "They calling me the newest teen prodigy now / Sixteen with big dreams, the world's finally found / The next guy to be crowned / Still I frown because I'm drowning in stress / The amount I've allowed to devour my chest / It's just off the meter and leave a Batista diva." But, when asked how he handles those stresses—namely the attention, expectation, and demand—he says: "[Now] I just don't do it. I keep doing what I want to do and try to stay just on my own art, the same thing that I've been focusing on. I just do what I do."

In the summer of 2014, Nehru joined Nas on tour, celebrating the twentieth anniversary of Nas's seminal debut, *Illmatic*. "I first heard Nas's music when I was a little kid. I was born in '96, so the first time I heard and could understand the words, it was like 2002, so it was probably around that time. One of my favorite Nas songs—period—is 'One Mic.' I remember seeing the video and thinking it was the dopest shit. When it comes in, it sounds really scary, for one," he says, laughing, "at least for a little kid. And the video is amazing to me. It's Nas just sitting in the room with a mic. It's simple, but it's a strong message." And now, rather remarkably, Nas will be executive-producing Bishop's own upcoming solo debut. The album is currently in the works, though, for now, Scott is keeping quiet about what to expect.

Despite possessing an impressive ability to forge creative partnerships with those he meets and build on those relationships professionally, the introverted side of Scott reappears when he talks about preferring to work solo: "Collaborating is cool, but I really do enjoy working by myself more than anything. There's less to worry about, and you know, it's more me. It's like when you're painting something; you don't paint with someone else all the time. Know what I mean? Sometimes, you just want to paint by yourself."



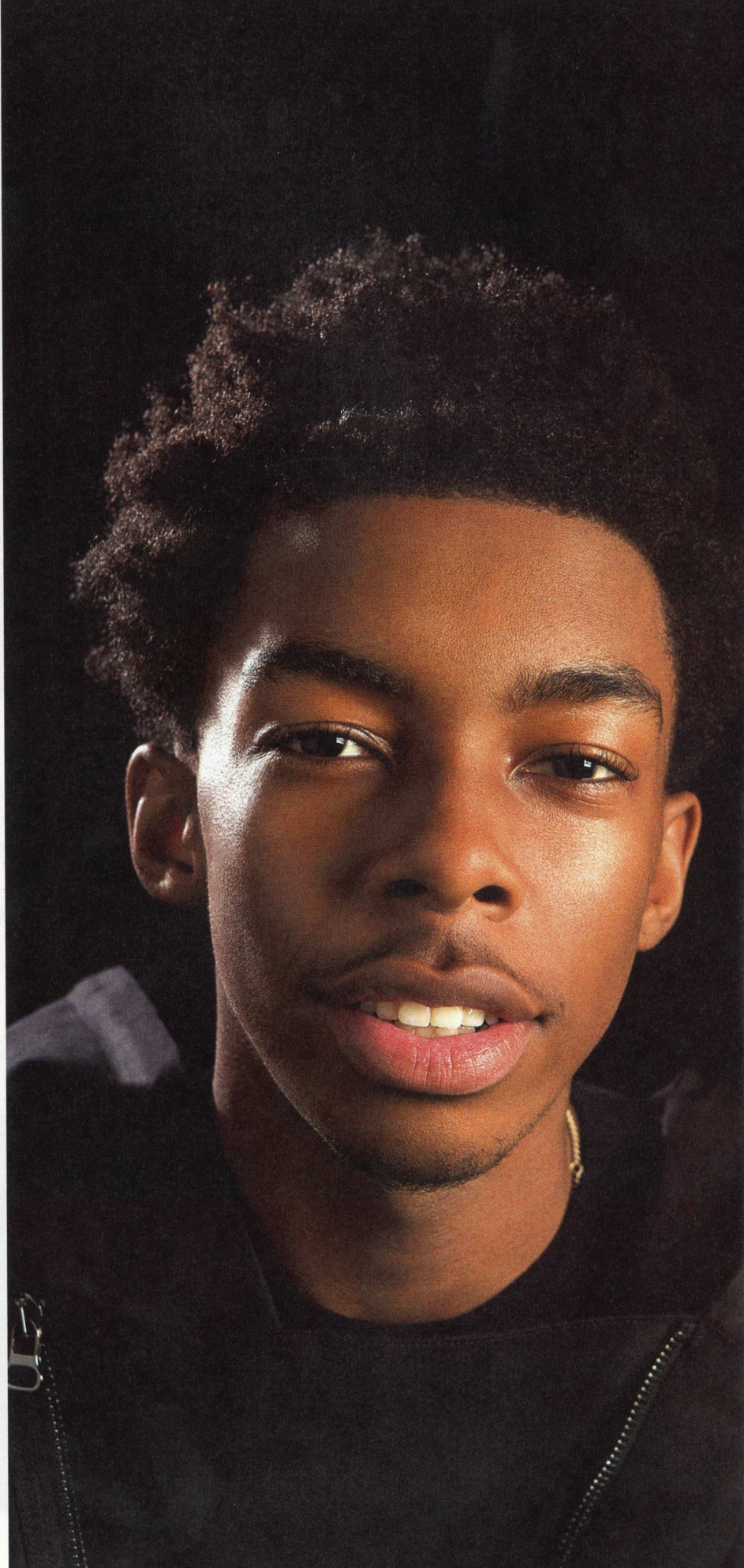
I always knew as a kid that success was going to happen, but at the same time, as a kid, I didn't know the repercussions, that everything has the downside to it.

His inclination towards working alone suggests that he is still yet to truly come into his own with his music, and that as he progresses and grows as an artist, he may well excel at producing himself as a whole.

Plus, there is a purity to his drive: "I just like to make music. Sometimes, I don't even want to tour, or go out to the events and places they say you have to. I like being home, making music." Fittingly, his personal definition of success is beautifully rooted in the process: "Success is just doing what you want to do, and doing it to the point that it brings you happiness every day. I believe that's what success is. Doing what you want to do and it making you happy every single day." But, with a chuckle, he adds: "To be honest...I really want to win a Grammy."

If he keeps expanding his mind, reading books, and aligning himself with such major players, Scott is sure be loaded with enough ammo to attack the industry, realize his visions, and achieve just that. As he raps on his 2014 track "You Stressin'" with U.K. dance group Disclosure: "Nehruvian's getting larger by the second / You best invest in protection / The mind's a lethal weapon." ●

Success is just doing what you want to do, and doing it to the point that it brings you happiness every day.



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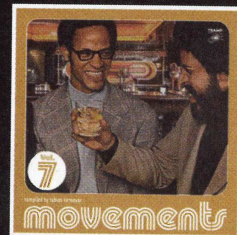
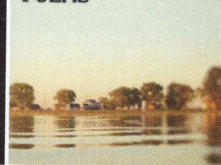
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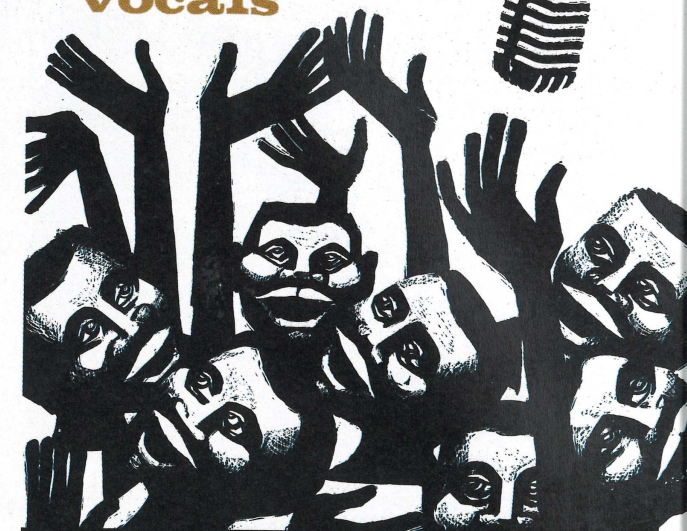
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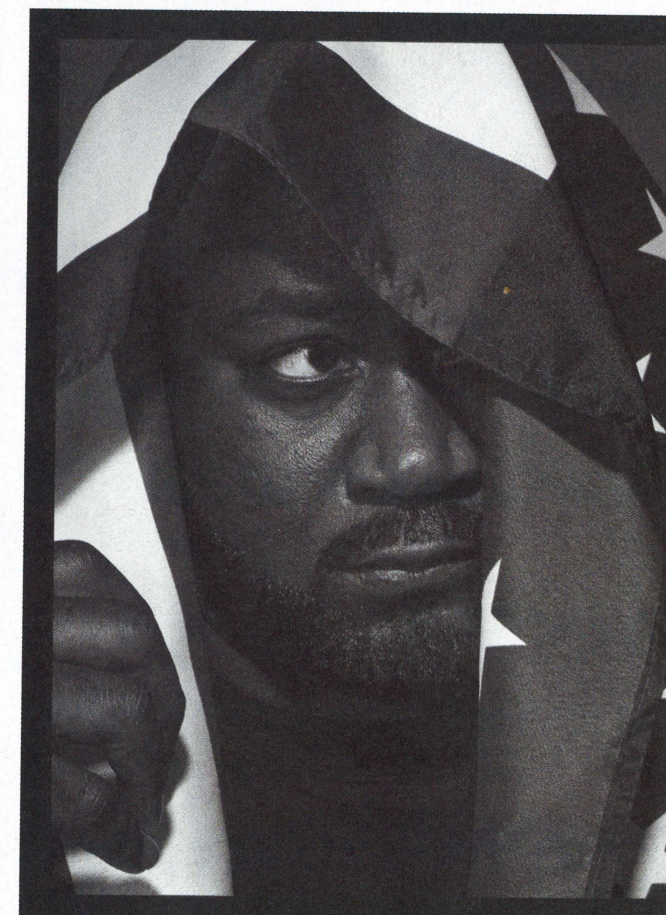
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