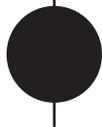


SOULFIRE

LYRICS & MEDITATIONS

ZONTRIBE



BLAKE BRANDES

aka DJ DECRYPTION

SOULFIRE

SOUTHERN



SOULFIRE: THE ALBUM *an Introduction*

SOMETIMES AN ARTIST CREATES a work because he needs to; sometimes he creates it because it is needed. Soulfire is an album for this moment in history. A reductive and debilitating national political climate coincided with a corresponding degeneration of commercial rap music. The level of discourse and debate became sterile and rancorous in many cultural, political, and academic domains. Events in my personal life reflected these trends as the public and private spheres became conflated and seemed to run in parallel. Yet, despite the urgency of this work, Soulfire also contains a poetic timelessness that transcends contemporary events and specific situations. The depth of meaning with which I composed the lyrics and music will hopefully be apparent to the close listener. Though perhaps

this may seem too pretentious, I wanted to create the *Ulysses* of hip-hop albums – a work with so much meaning, allusion, and intertextuality that it can be studied in depth as a literary text.

On the other hand, I strongly believe that the soul of the beat and fire of the delivery need not be sacrificed for such a project. There is no reason why “underground” hip-hop cannot be musically engaging on a commercial level. Rather, the beats and flow must be a foremost consideration in the composition of this next generation of hip-hop. Let no one accuse us of relegating the core musicality and skills of hip-hop to the background in our pursuit of lyrical excellence.

Hip-hop is an artform with the expressive potential of poetry, fiction, theater, and film all rolled into one. Similarly, hip-hop

artists transcend racial, class, gender, national, and linguistic boundaries. Why not celebrate this diversity rather than continuing the pointless debate of “authenticity”? Certain experiences will resonate more with different individuals in similar life locations, but this does not invalidate alternate renditions and interpretations.

During my travels, I have witnessed hip-hop be a major unifying force for people whose religious and ethnic backgrounds should have made them mortal enemies. I have seen both the political potential and the callous appropriation of this artform that gives voice to both under-represented communities and corporate greed, to disaffected youth and violent misogyny, to artistic expression and reductive droning. Hip-hop is neither dead nor dying – like the diversity of literature, it has developed into a complex genre of music with numerous sub-categories.

Why Soulfire? A combination of soulful singing (courtesy of Focus, Jewelz, and Lotus) and fire-laced raps (by DJ Decryption, including a guest appearance by Da’Ron), a blend of smooth melodies and blazing beats, a meeting of the romantic and the polemic. I hope that this project will provoke you to consider some part of your life in a new light. But at the very least, crank up the volume and get crunk to it. Your neighbors will thank you later.

It’s been four years in the making. My final request is that you listen to the lyrics.

Peace,
DJ Decryption
January, 2007

For regular updates,
go to www.myspace.com/djdecryption

To purchase Soulfire (The Album),
go to www.cdbaby.com/decryption2

To purchase DJ Decryption’s previous album
Tales From Decrypt,
go to www.cdbaby.com/decryption

Both albums available for digital download
on iTunes (search for “DJ Decryption”)

SOULFIRE: LYRICS & MEDITATIONS

IN ORDER TO ASSIST in the study and comprehension of Soulfire, I wanted to create a collection of lyrics and essays that might help the listener better understand and appreciate the literary quality of the raps and songs. I have also accumulated a rather large number of academic raps that I have written and

presented in classes over the years, and I am pleased to publish a couple of highlights in this volume. There is no reason that rap lyrics cannot contain as much depth of meaning as poetry or as much analytical power as traditional literary criticism – let this volume be the proof! ✦