

TALIB★KWELI

GRAVITAS

## THANK YOU FOR PURCHASING GRAVITAS.

This independent way of getting my music to my fans and supporters marks a new chapter in my creative and professional life. I would like to thank Ryan Leslie and his team at Fantidote for inspiring this idea and providing me with the platform to make it happen. Please also visit [www.ryanleslie.com](http://www.ryanleslie.com) and support his music as well.

I would like to thank my entire family, especially my kids Amani and Diani, for being there with me while I got lost in this wormhole. You have truly lifted me up, spiritually and artistically.

I would like to thank my Javotti Media team for being the best fucking team period. The odds are stacked against what we do, yet we make it happen. One love to Donna Dragotta for being tireless and always in my corner, and Seth, Romy, Hugette, Fed, RES, Cory Mo, Dave Dar, Pinky, I love you all. That goes for my inner circle crew as well, JuJu, Zean, Louis, LG, Rich, Les y'all know what it is.

I would like to thank my Guerrilla Union team for helping me thru a tough year. Let's grow together and get it! One love to Enas, Chang, Jose, Juanita and the team at DWA, Wayne and Shannon.



## 1. INNER MONOLOGUE

(TK, Greene C. Tyson, L. Ferguson, K. Ross) produced by Khrysis for The Soul Council/Boardroom Music, LLC. Pen Skills Music (BMI) Songs of Windswept Pacific (BMI) all rights administered by BMG Rights Management (US) LLC, Gimme My Damn Publishing (ASCAP) Chapter 3hree, Verse Five (BMI), Lola's Child Music (BMI)

My man 9th Wonder introduced me to Khrysis' music back when I was working on Gutter Rainbows, my first Javotti Media release. He had that classic boom bap style I was looking for. This year he asked me to hop on a joint him and Phonte were working on, so I promised I would as long as he sent me some new heat for Gravitas. Indeed, he did, he produced the hell out of this. One love to Zo! He came thru on the keys and synths.

The speech used on this song is from Neil Gaiman, an incredible writer of fiction, films, comics and graphic novels. He gave this speech at the University of the Arts, and what he said about distribution models changing so accurately captured what I was trying to do with this album, that I wanted to make music with it. I recorded my vocals for Inner Monologue at Area 51 Studios, NYC, shout out to my man Tony Drootin! Colin Rivers was the engineer, and that's Kendra Ross on the vocals. Kendra



is not only one of my best friends, but also an absolute pleasure to work with and she's been

a part of many of my projects. This song was mixed by Khrysis at Brightlady Studios, Raleigh

North Carolina. I have a lot of love for my Jamla family.

## 2. DEMONOLOGY

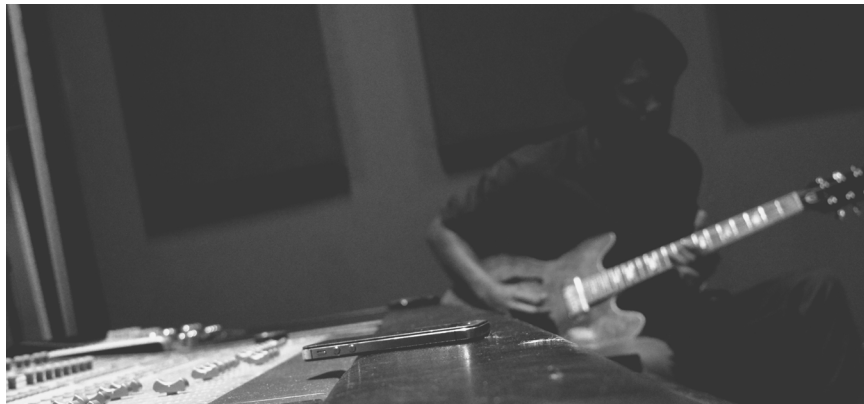
FT. BIG K.R.I.T. & GARY CLARK JR.

(TK, Greene, J. Nuamah, J. Scott, G. Clark Jr., A. Youngel) produced by LordQuest. Pen Skills Music (BMI) Songs of Windswept Pacific (BMI) all rights administered by BMG Rights Management (US) LLC. LordQuest Socan # 6914225, Sippi Land Publishing (BMI) Gary Clark Jr., Linear labs (ASCAP)

I've always loved the sound of Toronto producers. Lord Quest, who I met thru my good friend Tunji Balogun, is a producer with a sick ear, and the way he flipped Adrian Youngel's Two Hearts Combined (used by permission, all rights reserved) was so fresh I wanted to rhyme on it immediately. Adrian Youngel is someone I look forward to working with as well, and this

song kind of brings us closer to that reality. The track made me think of gothic cathedrals and gargoyles, so I put my nose to the paper and began to write about my personal demons and didn't look up until I had exorcised them. Abby Dobson, another close friend and frequent collaborator of mine, added soul to my shout when she hopped on it with me. Abby made the track go from menacing to beautifully haunting. And then Gary Clark Jr. . .

Gary was the first person I thought of when I heard this beat. He is a phenomenal artist and many people who claim to know music remain unaware of his tremendous impact, even as he



travels the world with the world's best. One love to Kris Krishna and Ayal Kleinman for helping me get this song done. They also helped me get on Gary's mix tape, which happened to feature Big K.R.I.T who I was touring with while recording Gravitas. Once K.R.I.T saw the track listing online, he demanded to be on the album. At the last minute I called my man Main Flo in San Diego, where we were that night, and his

homie DJ TramLife came thru and recorded Big K.R.I.T in my dressing room at the Valley View Center Arena.

John Cave provided additional guitar, Brady Watt added bass, and Masayuki Hirano added some keys. Cold blooded. Demons was mixed by Nick Breton at Truth Studios, Los Angeles. Gary Clark Jr. appears courtesy of Warner Brothers Records.

### 3. STATE OF GRACE FT. ABBY DOBSON

(T.K. Greene, J. Nuamah, A. Dobson) produced by LordQuest. Pen Skills Music (BMI) Songs of Windswept Pacific (BMI) all rights administered by BMG Rights Management (US) LLC, LordQuest Socan # 6914225, LadyBraveBirdMusicWorks Publishing

I have always made songs for and about women, especially black women my whole career. Still, this didn't stop certain folks from taking issue with the fact that we embrace artists who have offensive lyrics with love rather than hate. I feel that love is the only way you get your brother or sister to listen to you, and I see myself as a part of an artistic community that includes artists I don't always agree with. Still, the misogyny and degradation of our women that is far too often celebrated in hip hop, while not the cause of pathologies in our hoods, can certainly do damage to the psyche, soul and spirit. Our women deserve better from us as men, as artists. This song addresses the plight of a character that is giving up on hip hop because she no longer relates to the corners that corporate hip hop tries to paint her in.

Lord Quest once again came thru with stellar production, and Abby Dobson blessed us again with her vocals. Abby recorded her vocals at my Brooklyn apartment with the homie Chris Pummill and my vocals were recorded at the





Drug Lab in Norwalk California by engineer extraordinaire Federico “c sik” Lopez, with additional vocals recorded at the Red Roof Inn downtown Columbus Ohio. Brady Watt and Decap added additional production, that’s Brady Watt on bass and Masayuki Hirano on the keys. State of Grace was also mixed by Nick Breton at Truth Studios, Los Angeles.

#### 4. VIOLATIONS FT. RAEKWON

(TK, Greene, T. Dixon, C. Woods) produced by Thaddeus Dixon. Pen Skills Music (BMI) Songs of Windswept Pacific (BMI) all rights administered by BMG Rights Management (US) LLC, BMI # 1025298, Beautiful Sekai Publishing (BMI)

Raekwon is a classic MC, respected by the top tier of the game. Before Wu-Tang dropped Enter the 36 Chambers, I shared an elevator ride at Loud Records with the god. He ain’t know me, but asked me if I liked hip hop. When I said yes, he gave me a cassette labeled Protect Ya NeckB/W Method Man, and said check this out. This is how I was introduced to the Wu when I was 17. For me to have grown up listening to Wu-Tang and then be recording with the Chef? It’s a dream come true.

One love to Thaddeus for giving me such an original banger. Rae invited me out to his Jersey studio and we broke day building on this beat.



That session was recorded by but I later re did my vocals at the Red Roof Inn in Columbus Ohio with Federico “c sik” Lopez while on the

Heist tour. Hotel mattresses, an M-Box, Pro-Tools and the right mic is all we need, the grind is nonstop! Decap mixed this at his studio in NYC.

#### 5. RARE PORTRAITS

(TK, Greene, M. Jackson) produced by OhNo. Pen Skills Music (BMI) Songs of Windswept Pacific (BMI) all rights administered by BMG Rights Management (US) LLC, OhNo for Disruptive Productions (ASCAP)

One of my favorite things about today’s hip hop is the honesty. Today’s most popular rappers aren’t the most politically correct or deep, but the best are unflinchingly honest. I feel Cole and Kendrick have risen to the top of this type of style, and their testimonies thru song inspired this long ass verse. While my story may be documented, I have never truly told my story thru music until this song. My true fans have heard bits and pieces thru the years, but Rare Portraits sums up my experience until now.

OhNo has become my most frequent collaborator in recent years. He is recognized for his incredible contributions to classic west coast hip hop, his group with Alchemist, Gangrene, and he is Mad Lib’s brother, but I feel he has yet to get his just due as a producer, AND a cold MC. I am a huge OhNo fan. This track is one of those OhNo beats that has been living in my computer for 4 or 5 years. The time for it was now. My vocals were recorded at the Sheraton, downtown Denver Colorado by Federico “c sik” Lopez. Additional production by Decap and Brady Watt with Brady Watt on

bass and Masayuki Hirano on keys. This song was mixed at OhNo's crib by OhNo and DJ Romes.

## 6. NEW LEADERS FT. THE UNDERACHIEVERS

(TK, Greene, P. Baril, M. Fung, A. Joseph) produced by Statik Selektah. Pen Skills Music (BMI) Songs of Windswept Pacific (BMI) all rights administered by BMG Rights Management (US) LLC, Spell My Name Right (BMI), Elevated Nations Publishing, AK Publishing

The first time I heard of UnderAchievers was not in the streets of Brooklyn where we are all from, but at Beauty and Essex, a swanky New York City restaurant you can find me djing at on Tuesday's when I'm in town. This fashionista came up to me during my set and said "do you have any UnderAchievers? They're from Brooklyn too." Naturally I looked them up the next day and liked what I heard. Then my man Set Free hit me a few weeks later talking about they want me on a song. It was divine providence. The subject matter of this song demanded a group like UA jump on it. They are part of the new leaders I'm looking for. I hit Area 51 Studios NYC with Set Free and AK and we knocked out one for me and one for them. Colin Rivers engineered the session. Issa sent his verse later, and as of this writing

I haven't met him, but I am looking forward to it. I don't know where it was recorded, out in Europe somewhere I think. My verse was recorded at Brewery Studios, Brooklyn, by Chris Pummill. Statik Selektah killed this track, and also took time off tour to mix this for me

at his crib. Thanks my G! Once again that's John Cave on guitar, Brady Watt on bass and Masayuki Hirano on keys. This song was mixed by Statik Selektah somewhere on the road during the Beast Coast tour.



## 7. THE WORMHOLE

(TK, Greene, M. Jackson) produced by OhNo. Pen Skills Music (BMI) Songs of Windswept Pacific (BMI) all rights administered by BMG Rights Management (US) LLC, OhNo for Disruptive Productions (ASCAP)

The Wormhole is a song that's long overdue. It is my response to every question I've ever received from fans and journalists (yes, actual journalists) about rappers being in the illuminati.

This concern went from amusing to alarming recently. When I was a teenager, before the internet was so prolific, I used to read the source material that these YouTube collage making conspiracy theorists are scared of. When I became a grown man, I put away childish things and beliefs and realized that there is an agenda behind every piece of literature, and you gain clarity on what you are reading when you examine the history of the author. Far too often the authors of the stuff that fuels the anti-Christ and devil worship part of illuminati theories were right wing, conservative Christian nut jobs who certainly did not have my community's best interest in mind. I also realized that the worst crimes committed against humanity are done right in our faces. There is no conspiracy or cover up for what the international banks are doing to us. There is no need to hide it we too

busy trying to figure out Jay-Z and Rihanna's connection to the illuminati. It's the ultimate distraction. Do the knowledge.

I recorded The Wormhole vocals at Brewery Studios with Chris Pummill. It was mixed by DJ Romes and OhNo at OhNo's crib.

## 8. WHAT'S REAL FT. RES

TK, Greene, R. Acheampong) produced by Rich Kidd for Rich Kidd Beats. Pen Skills Music (BMI) Songs of Windswept Pacific (BMI) all rights administered by BMG Rights Management (US) LLC

As I said before, Toronto has a lot of talent. I first got to know Rich Kidd as an MC when he opened for me a few years back. I liked his passion for the rhyme and his command of the crowd, but little did I know he was ill on the beats too. This year I had the pleasure of performing with him again at Toronto's annual Unity Festival. A week later he emailed me some heat. All of it was dope but I hopped on the track of What's Real immediately. RES is one of my best friends and my partner in Idle Warship. She sings with my favorite voice, and she has been a part of many of my projects. She hopped on this last minute while we were on the Heist tour, Federico recorded her vocals in a locker room at the Jordan Bryce Center in University Park Pennsylvania where Penn State

is. My vocals were also recorded by Federico "c sik" Lopez at the Drug Lab in Norwalk California. Shout out to Jesse Aarons on the guitar. What's Real was mixed by Brian Cid at Quantum Collective Studios NYC.



## 9. ART IMITATES LIFE FT. BLACK THOUGHT, RAH DIGGA & ALBE. BACK

(TK, Greene, M. Jackson, T. Trotter, R. Fisher, A. Daniels) produced by OhNo. Pen Skills Music (BMI) Songs of Windswept Pacific (BMI) all rights administered by BMG Rights Management (US) LLC, OhNo for Disruptive Productions LLC, Grand Negaz Music/Careers BMG Music Publishing, simply Rah Digga (ASCAP)/Careers BMG Music Publishing, Albert Daniels (ASCAP)

When I recorded the Attack The Block mix tape with the homie Z-Trip I put out a call to all of the MCs I knew who rocked with me. The response was overwhelming, so much so that I ended up with too many fresh songs for the project. Tarik Trotter, aka Black Thought from the legendary Roots crew, was one of the first MCs to answer my call. Tarik has long been my favorite MC, we've toured together many times and we share a birthday, so there is a kinship there. He ended up jumping on two tracks, Congregation with me and Ab-Soul and this one, Art Imitates Life. Another OhNo banger, Art Imitates Life was recorded at 2 Ton Studios NYC by Eddie Krakaur. ALBe. Back, a talented MC and actor who has been to many of my recording sessions, fell thru during that session and came up with a great hook that summed up how we were feeling that night. As the song was shaping up, Rah Digga dropped in for a clean up slot and murdered her verse. Digga and I go back to Lyricist Lounge days, and she was on my Train of Thought album, so it was good to work with her again. This song was mixed at OhNo's crib by OhNo and DJ Romes.



## 10. **LOVERS PEAK**

[TK, Greene, M. Kawesch, I. Kremenskiy, D. Porter] produced by 6th Sense, Pen Skills Music (BMI)  
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Michael Kawesch Publishing Designee (BMI), Benfel Music/Kilo Music care of Staz/Concord Kilo

Lover's Peak was originally recorded for the Prisoner of Conscious album. I removed it at the last minute because I felt the album already had enough songs that dealt with relationships. I still loved the song however, especially the fact that I said what I wanted to say with just a few words. 6th Sense and I began working together on Gutter Rainbows and he produces with a sense of wonder that I miss hearing in hip hop. Guitar by Iakov. Lover's Peak contains a sample of Interlude (used by permission all rights reserved) by Kilo, and it was recorded and mixed by Federico "c sik" Lopez at the Drug Lab in Norwalk, California.

## 11. **COLORS OF YOU** FT MIKE POSNER

[TK, Greene, J. Yancey, M. Posner] produced by J Dilla, Pen Skills Music (BMI) Songs of Windswept Pacific (BMI) all rights administered by BMG Rights Management (US) LLC, B.B.D.S. (ASCAP), North Greenway Productions all rights administered by Sony/ATV Publishing

Colors of You is a magical record to me. It came together during a recording session at a mansion that Blue Mics was renting out



as a studio for a few months. Tyler from Blue Mics let me have my run of the place for a few days, so I recorded as much music as I could. I invited some of my most musically inclined friends, RES, Scott Thomas, Evidence, OhNo, Mike Posner, Emoni Fela, Eric "Jesus" Coomes and more and we came up with more than a few song ideas. The Dilla track used for Colors of You was an early favorite of that session.

Sometime last year I made a trip to Detroit to sit with Ma Dukes, Jon Taylor and Frank Nitty from the J Dilla Foundation and perform at a concert celebrating Dilla's legacy. Afterwards we listened to some unreleased tracks and I choose a couple to rock on, with their blessing. Dilla and I worked on many songs together while he was alive, including Little Brother, Roll Off Me, Stand to the Side and Where Do We Go. I felt it

was my duty to honor him by doing something special on this track. Mike Posner, a Detroit native and super dope singer/songwriter, was especially excited to work on this one with me, and his presence is welcome. One love to Donna Dragotta, Dave NY and the J Dilla Foundation for helping me put this song together. Colors of You was recorded by Federico "c sik" Lopez



Javotti  
Media

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