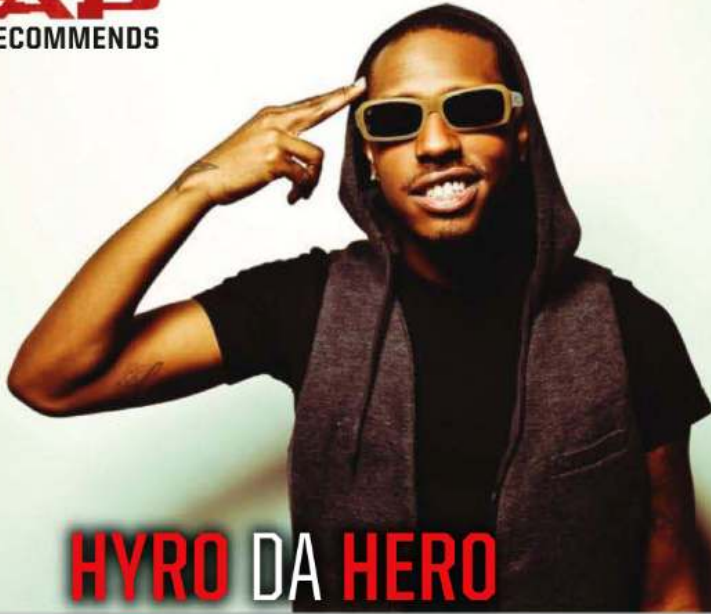


AP
RECOMMENDS



HYRO DA HERO

HQ: Los Angeles, CA (myspace.com/hyrodahero2)

NOW PLAYING: *Birth, School, Work, Death* (STEREO BANG MEDIA; stereobangmedia.com)

WHY YOU SHOULD KNOW HIM: Yearning for the return of rap-rock without the Neanderthal baggage of the '90s and '00s? Hyro's your man.

YOU LIKE? YOU'LL LIKE: FISHBONE /// RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS /// AT THE DRIVE-IN

HE STARTED CALLING HIMSELF "HERO" after hitting a game-winning shot as a high school hoopster in Houston. But these days, some consider Hyron Fenton Jr. heroic for revitalizing that most-maligned of genres: rap-rock, which is still suffering from a post-Limp Bizkit hangover. "I got cats tellin' me, 'Hyro, you the only rap I got in my iPod,'" Hyro says, adding with an infectious laugh, "Or you see big, scary, black motherfuckers rockin' out at my shows."

To create the in-your-face sound that lures such disparate listeners, Hyro moved to Los Angeles a few years back and set his sights on a pair of legendary rap-rock producers: Rick Rubin and Korn/Slipknot boardman Ross Robinson. He got the latter to oversee his official debut, *Birth, School, Work, Death*—as well as a backing band comprised of members from At The Drive-In, the Blood Brothers and Idiot Pilot, who seethe with punk-funky energy.

"There's only so much emotion you can put out using electric drums," Hyro explains of the difference between standard hip-hop and his own live hybrid. "When you got a cat hitting the drums as hard as he can, [then] I can scream and yell!"

He's also not afraid to holler at those whose rap-rock he deems insufficiently authentic, like Lil Wayne. ("When you dig into somethin' you know nothin' about, you sound like an asshole.") His new songs, like the single "Ghetto Ambience," are filled with tight, turn-on-a-dime swagger, and Hyro embodies similar confidence.

"I know what's cool in rock, and I know what's cool in hip-hop," he says. "I'm a street dude, the way I walk and talk—so you already know there's something cool about me!" —*Dan LeRoy*