

Reinforced Rap Clichés

By Tara Mahadevan

Mary Mallon, the duo Rob Sonic and Aesop Rock, have joined those critics. The visuals for their track «Whales,» from their latest offering *Bestiary*, is a song and video that revolves around money.

«Whales» opens with two bums sitting on a trash can and dumpster in an alley. The figures and the surrounding scene are made from a foam rubber material and puppeteers control the figures. The two bums rap about money and we see actual translations of their ideas above their heads. Most obviously, the song is about wealth and acts as commentary on society's desire for affluence. The track also takes a jab at hip hop's comparable fascination with money and the multitude of rap songs that focus on it. Sonic and Aesop spit about the things they can buy with their money, and as the song continues the items become more and more ridiculous. Hail Mary Mallon shows that money can incite a materialism that often reaches ludicrous heights and obscures the truth. The two rappers have created a music video where they are reimagined as puppets that speak to society's fixation on materialism. Therein lies the main point: those who are obsessed with money are controlled by it and continue to hide from the realities of their world. The song is satirical in nature, as Sonic and Aesop employ rap to criticize hip hop culture. They use humor, irony, and exaggeration to expose a collective obsession with wealth. But while hip hop is steeped in such fascinations, it is also grounded in reality. The genre is continuing to prove this day by day, as rap progresses and breaks the sonic mold from which it was born.

In the end, the bums, destitute and moneyless, are brought back to their reality in the alley. Lost in Aesop Rock and Rob Sonic's critique on rap and wealth is a true critique of escapism, or using money as a departure from reality. The duo could have further teased out that

Rap is constantly transforming. The notion that it is a genre bent on discussing wealth has become a cliché. Indeed, from hip hop's outset, the genre has expressed a desire for money; yet, there remains a flood of critics who continue to chastise hip hop for its attraction to affluence. Hail

theme in the song rather than show their lack of awareness of hip hop's current landscape.

Tara Mahadevan is a New York based freelance music journalist. She studied English and Creative Writing at New York University and Writing at School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Colorless and Homeless

By Ali Gul Pir

When it comes to understanding media, many people are in a race to study the content of a particular work. They'll study the lyrics, the dialogue, the sets, the props, the stunts, the actions, the clothing—all the things that are manipulated in order to get a message across. But people often forget to study the medium, in our case the form of the video clip itself, which can speak volumes.

Imagine if this video by Hail Mary Mallon had been made with a huge budget, an expensive cinematographer, celebrities, and state of the art lighting and art direction to show two homeless men singing this song. The real message would have been lost on us because the irony of money being spent to show that there is no money would have been too silly for us to take seriously. Instead, what you have in this piece is animated clay models that don't even have color; everything is white. Clearly, it was a conscious decision to make the production look like this to add to the point of the song, but it is possible the producers of the video really do have «money on their mother***** minds» because they have none in their pockets. In any case, the point hits home. The hip hop industry is intensely conscious of money. To point out how everyone's bat-shit crazy for money, the video creates irony in two key ways: through its medium and by using rap to make fun of itself.

Rappers in Pakistan are much like the men in the video because singers/songwriters barely make any money. There aren't any concerts or record labels that generate revenue for us. Therefore anyone involved in the hip hop industry is simply there because of their