

Erie Ave—*Rise From Hell Bottom* Review

“...Smoking like exhaust pipes;” not quite.

Rating: 2 Bowls

In the realm of rap, kingship is an honor unlike any other; one that often comes with cars, clout, and lots of *Cristal*. It wasn't long ago that hip-hop mogul, **Jay-Z** reigned supreme, but more recently **Kanye West**, **Lil' Wayne** and **Drake** have made similar claims in regards to their rights to both the jewel-encrusted crown and the carefully-coveted throne. The art of hip-hop, however, has so drastically changed that anyone with a number one album is able to give himself an exalted designation, without the consequence of lyrical assassination or arrest, for blasphemy, treason, or just plain, insanity. And although each of these artists have an undeniably comprehensive claim to fame, it is incredibly difficult to stay on top and be slated as “the best” forever. So new artists like **Erie Ave**, are introduced to the public, convinced that they not only have what it takes to be great and add to today's popular music, but that they are somehow different from what already is.

With the release of his album, *Rise From Hell Bottom*, rapper **Erie Ave**, has made an admirable attempt to bring his “not-so-new” story to hip-hop, but simply falls short of our novel expectation, along with his promises to tell a different tale, produce a different sound, and deliver a different message than other rapper's in the game. The album's hype-man, Wordsmith, says, “We gone build you garbage listeners back up.” But **Erie Ave**'s music fails to stand apart from any other artist or album that listeners have previously heard or currently listen to.

Erie Ave's voice is nearly identical to **Young Jeezy** and a number of his beats sound recycled. His subject matter is not very substantive, and he obviously believes that he is only one of a few artists who were reared in a chaotic environment, infested with drugs and 9mm slugs.

He claims to unveil the harsh realities of the world but most of those “realities” are self-induced, making multiple mentions of women and weed smoke, both of which act as controllable influences. His intention, on the other hand, is to show us what he's seen; allow us to touch what he's touched, but the acquisition of those perceptions requires that listeners go with him to “hell bottom.” And although he does touch upon some of the real world issues that he implies helped to make him the man he is today, he has a lot more living to do before he can believably claim he's seen it all, or at the very least, allow his music to be a true reflection of those harsh realities, both in what they add to him, and in what they take away.

But unfortunately, the claims don't stop there. He also touches on the fact that he's tired of fluffy rap, but he sings on quite a few tracks, making part of his album more R&B-like, than hip-hop. Truth be told, there are a mere three songs that are even worth listening to with any seriousness or comprehension. Both “Root of Evil” and “Views of the World,” have a listen-worthy message. And a couple of the album's tracks lend room for some head-banging, but simply fail

to showcase any real lyricism; providing nothing beyond simplistic and sometimes rigid rhyme schemes.

“Root of Evil” is a morality tale wrapped in hood-credible rhymes, with a sound as authentic as they come. It spills an unmistakable truth while challenging the listener’s thought process; educating them while entertaining them. Anyone taking the time to listen to this album in its entirety will surely pay close attention to “Views of the World,” which lends an air of truth and sarcasm, while offering answers to some cultural conundrums. And the track “All My Life,” is more or less a mirrored image of his life’s struggle; reflecting his climb to the top and other’s desire to see him fall. But even this track falls short of his potential to spit fire with wisdom and precision.

There is possibility present in his pain but he lacks a fire in his eyes; settling for the superficial instead of digging deep to communicate his struggle. It doesn’t feel like he loves his art; it’s more like he uses hip-hop to satisfy his need to occupy some idle time.

Erie Ave makes it a point to exploit a number of vices in his music as well, using cars, women, dope, pimping, hood reps, and guns as the majority of his subject matter. And though, this may serve as his reality, coupling creativity with truth is the only way to make a memorable name for one’s self, in the entertainment industry. With nothing to set his artistry apart from the rest, he becomes a mere copy cat.

This artist obviously has a lot to say, a true story to tell. But he has to discover a method of delivery that brings his purpose to the forefront. His choice to expend his energies by way of music, in opposition to the possibility for negativity, is more than commendable, especially in knowing where he comes from. But his choices to make better decisions have more to do with his manhood and maturation than his talent as a rapper. So when all is said and done, there has to be more.

The most successful rappers have the most to say. Their weight is not only superficial; it’s substantive, even if not readily apparent on the surface. **Erie Ave** is morally sound in one regard and every bit the stereotypical rapper in the other, seemingly juggling his future hopes with his past problems; which means he has a few choices to make. Is he “Living to Die,” or will he choose to creatively display his “Views of the World?” Life is about change and the varying struggles that force us to want more and appreciate the possibility of alteration. Even when our surroundings change, our thoughts, distractions, and actions may not. To better perfect his craft, **Erie Ave** simply has to step his game up or he’ll find himself rapping more for fun than finance.