

KOOL MOE DEE

Title: Old School Rap (Live)

Label: X-Ray Records

Release Date: 2008

Medium: CD

Availability: Very Good

Venue: New York City

Recording Date: Unknown

Lineup: Kool Moe Dee – Emcee

Set List: Medley – Body Rock/Yes We Can/Feel The Heartbeat/Go See The Doctor/Wild Wild West/Go To Work/They Want Money/How Ya Like Me Now

Kool Moe Dee was one of the most prominent new age rappers to emerge out the New York City hip hop scene in the early eighties. He is most known for being the first rapper to perform at the Grammys. His platinum album, *How Do Like Me Now*, is one of early hip hop's most successful albums. The emcee also released a gold album and put two singles in the pop charts. He also charted six r&b singles. Kool Moe Dee is also infamous for his long running feud with LL Cool J.

Mohandas Dewese was born in Manhattan on August 8, 1962. In the late seventies, he met Special K, DJ Easy Lee, Spoonie Gee, and LA Sunshine to form the highly influential hip hop group, the Treacherous Three. As it turned out, Kool Moe Dee grew up in the same neighborhood as Lamar Hill, later known as LA Sunshine. The two were friends when they met Theodore Moy'e (DJ Easy Lee) in elementary school. Kool Moe Dee and Easy Lee wound up going to the same high school, when they met Kevin Keaton (Special K). LA Sunshine met Spoonie G through basketball.

The first version of the Treacherous Three included Kool Moe Dee, LA Sunshine, DJ Easy Lee, and Spoonie Gee. Spoonie Gee soon left and was replaced by Special K. Spoonie Gee's uncle was Bobby Robinson, who owned Enjoy Records. When he recorded a single, he convinced his uncle to give the Treacherous Three the B-side. That song, "New Rap Language" (1980) was popular, in part because of the fast rapping style that the group used.

The Treacherous Three released four more singles in 1980, including "Body Rock", "At The Party", "Put The Boogie In Your Body", and "Feel The Heartbeat". Robinson only paid them a flat royalty of \$3,000 a record, which led to them moving to Sugar Hill Records in 1981. While they released a series of singles for Sugar Hill, they did not break through. Their one album, *The Treacherous Three* (1984) did not sell. Frustrated, LA Sunshine and Special K eventually left the group. Kool Moe Dee had a relationship with Sugar Hill that extended beyond the group so he stayed and started his solo career.

After the breakup of The Treacherous Three, Kool Moe Dee enrolled in college and earned a degree in communications. He released his first single, "Turn It Up" in 1985 on Sugar Hill Records and his first solo album, *Kool Moe Dee* (#83-1986), the following year on Jive Records. Surprisingly, it cracked the pop album chart, peaked at number 23 on the r&b album chart, and yielded one chart single, "Go See The Doctor" (#87-1986). The album was produced by Teddy Riley, and was one of the first records to incorporate what would soon be known as "new jack swing", which fused elements of hip hop, dance pop, and urban contemporary. It was distinguished by it's use of a drum machine and hardware samplers.

Kool Moe Dee quickly followed with his masterpiece, *How Ya Like Me Now* (#35-1987). The platinum seller included Kool Moe Dee's second pop chart single, "Wild Wild West" (#62-1988). One other singles, "How Ya Like Me Now", cracked the r&b singles chart, peaking at number 22. "Wild Wild West" peaked at number four and the album peaked at number 22.

The emcee quickly followed with *Knowledge Is King* (#25-1989). It nearly topped the r&b album chart, peaking at number 2 and was his highest charting pop album. The gold seller yielded three r&b chart singles, "All Night Long", "I Go To Work", and "They Want Money". They peaked at numbers 70, 13, and 3 respectively.

During this period, the emcee engaged in a long feud with LL Cool J. Along with MC Shan, Kool Moe Dee accused LL Cool J of stealing their rap styles and disrespecting old school hip hop legends like Melle Mel and Grandmaster Caz. Kool Moe Dee first challenged LL Cool J in the single, "How Ya Like Me Now". The album cover for that record also showed a jeep running over one of LL Cool J's trademark red Kangol hats. The feud persisted into the early nineties, with both emcees proclaiming themselves as victors.

In 1991, Kool Moe Dee released a new album, *Funke, Funke Wisdom* (#72-1991). It also sold well, cracking the pop album chart and peaking at number 19 on the r&b album chart. One single, "How Kool Can One Black Man Be" hit number 49 on the r&b singles chart. It was also his last album to take an overt shot at LL Cool J, dissing the emcee on the single, "Death Blow". After releasing his first compilation, *Greatest Hits* (1993) on Jive Records, the emcee left the label for Ichiban Records. His last solo album, *Interlude* (1994), did not chart. A new Jive compilation, *The Jive Collection, Vol. 2* (1995) remains his last solo album.

By the early nineties, Kool Moe Dee turned to acting. He appeared in the television movie, *Strapped* (1993), then landed a series of roles. In total, he has appeared in sixteen films/television series. His music has been used in 19 movies/television series. In 2005, he wrote and directed the hip hop documentary, *There's A God On The Mic*. It was taken from his book, **There's A God On The Mic** (2003), which ranks the top fifty greatest hip hop artists of all time based on seventeen categories, in his opinion. Not surprisingly, he ranks himself number five, above such legends as Tupac, Biggie Smalls, Wu Tang, and many others. However, somewhat strangely given their feud, he ranks LL Cool J as number 7. His top four are Melle Mel, Rakim, KRS-One 4, and Big Daddy Kane.

As of April, 2016, Kool Moe Dee is producing a new television series, *Behind The Rhyme*. He hopes to sell it to a network in 2016. The emcee also still performs, with four concerts scheduled through the end of the year. He typically performs live less than ten times a year.

Kool Moe Dee is featured on two compilations. Jive Records' 1993 set, *Greatest Hits*, includes 14 tracks. Jive Record's 1995 release, *The Jive Collection, Vol 2*, contains 12 tracks. Many tracks are repeated between the two sets, so buyer be aware. He has not released an official live album.

My only live recording is a five minute medley of an astounding amount of his songs that appears on the X-Ray Records 2008 set, *Old School Rap (Live)*. I have no idea when this material was recorded but it appears it was recorded in New York City. It appears that the emcee is accompanied by a full band. "Body Rock" gets about one minute, but other songs like "Yes We Can" get less than 30 seconds. There is a shout out to Special K and the Treacherous Three in a snippet of "Feel The Heartbeat".

The rest of the songs are delivered in 30-60 second increments. While the rapper certainly gives it his best, this is a barely acceptable way to evaluate the emcee. However, since this is the only live material I can find from the rapper, I guess this is it.