

Acceptance, followed by the resulting loyalty, is not easy to come by in the field of being a recording artist these days. Rejecting the notion of jumping on board with whatever sound is hot, blue collar rapper **Tyrone** clearly prefers to grind hard, drawing inspiration from his musical heroes while also digging down into his own personality and life experiences to deliver *Heavy Labor, No Breaks*.

Living up to his moniker of "the Working Class Hero" the album opens with *The Factory*, which finds **Tyrone** and a workmate discussing the cutbacks that their workplace will be enforcing. **Tyrone's** uniquely individual brand of Hip Hop music doesn't take long to introduce itself to listeners, kicking right into it on *The Coolest Bruva*. The West Coast dwelling MC (representing both California and Washington) occupies a space all on his own, with a style that sounds both familiar and unorthodox at the same time (think E-40 crossed with Kurupt).

Similarities to the Bay Area's slang inventor don't end there. The irresistibly funky *The Bug* almost sounds like an off-cut from one of E-40's projects from the mid-90s (maybe, *In A Major Way*). Being a multi-faceted performer, big **Ty** drops knowledge not only on everyday working class issues, but also topics of the political and relationship variety, while still sounding tripped out.

Big Tree is the album's masterstroke, where the partnership of Mike Moss' danceable acid-trip funk™ (which is phenomenal throughout) and **Tyrone's** intelligent lyrics, coupled with oddball delivery, reaches its apex. Joined by the exceptional Ras Wondah, who lends some much welcomed dancehall flavour to the hook, our working class hero laments: "There's fiends on the blocks/cops on the blocks/kids walk the blocks/while hoods stalk the block/but still the man owns the blocks."

The catchy piano-driven *Wondering* is another solid cut, which is both entertaining and has a sweet nature to it, as opposed to the typical 'let's get naked and bump uglies' style normally associated with Hip Hop tracks about women and relationships. A tale of grown-up love, with a fondness for girls of the Asian persuasion added to the mix. *Heavy Labor, No Breaks* also serves as a showcase for some of **Tyrone's** talented contemporaries. Boy1nder rides out with **Ty** on *211*, while Uncle Larry, Rob and Logic Amen deliver motivated performances on the *Exodus Remix*. While being talented, their appearances further demonstrate how distinctive **Tyrone** really is.

The only flaw on *Heavy Labor, No Breaks* that stands out to this reviewer would be the sequencing of some tracks. There is a certain semblance of flow and coherence missing from portions of the tracklisting. While it is important to make an impression upon initially pressing play, the album highlight *Big Tree* could have served well as the opener (as opposed to the still dope *The Coolest Bruva*), as it is both a strong musical statement and ties in nicely with the opening interlude piece about job losses/cutbacks.

Familiar but different, is the album's consistent trait. **Tyrone's** slightly off-the-wall and highly original steez may leave some listeners somewhat confused. However, at the same time it still has a warm and recognisable quality that will keep you drawn in. The fact that **Tyrone** also possesses an everyday likable charm will be another endearing factor for listeners. Refreshing, musical stylings for the open-minded.

Hazard
Music Editor –
Planet Urban