

Hip-Hop Artist Returns with Show, New EP

Written by Jeff Ignatius

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The local music scene is rich with all sorts of musical styles, but hip hop is woefully underrepresented in the area. Local rap artist Commandiz Freez wants to fill that void, but he's also aiming for bigger things.

Freez and Circle 7 will be performing at a special rock and rap show on Friday at Stars & Stripes in Davenport. Freez will be opening for the local metal favorites with a set of approximately 45 minutes.

Although rock and rap have frequently joined forces in recent years, the pairing of Circle 7 and Freez is particularly appropriate. Freez and collaborator Nic Fleming the Titan teamed up for about a year with the band after it lost its vocalist in 1998.

Freez dropped off the local music scene more than two years ago. But recently he's been busy in the studio and is set to release the six-track EP *The CommandizFreez!*, for both audiences and the music industry. "I'm looking to get signed for sure," Freez said.

The recording comes in a year in which both his father and his partner Nic Fleming the Titan died, and those deaths seem to have reinforced Freez's desire to be upbeat in his music, not stooping to the violence of other hip-hop acts. He pledges that he wants "to be a positive influence in the music industry."

Freez's EP has been recorded on a 24-track studio in downtown Davenport, and he's pleased with the results. While I can't speak to the quality of the finished product, Freez did provide a brief sampler to the *River Cities' Reader*, and the four snippets certainly show promise – with potent rapping over tight, catchy soundscapes developed by producer Tha Gost. These backdrops are full of interesting samples and R&B flourishes, but they never upstage Freez's vocals. Unlike a lot of hip hop, the beats take a back seat to the vocal stylings and the sonic textures.

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One challenge, though, will be finding a local following. There's a dearth of venues friendly to hip hop in the Quad Cities. But Freez seems determined to make a splash, and that effort starts this weekend.

Commandiz Freez and Circle 7 will be performing at Stars & Stripes on Friday, September 13. The 19-and-older show starts at 9:30 p.m.