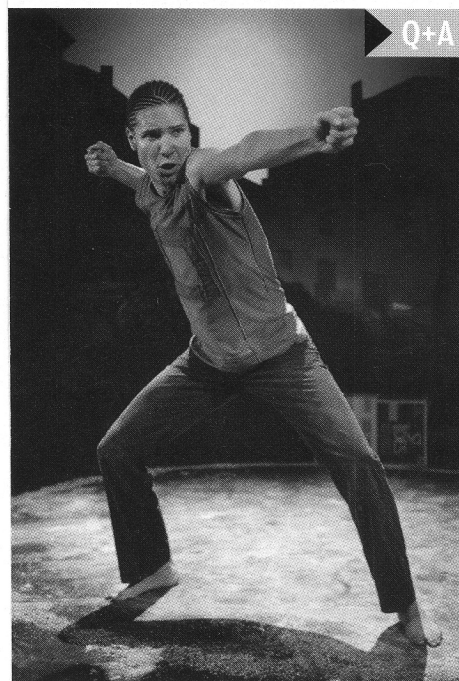


WILL POWER

POWERFUL IMPACT

WILL POWER has been called a pioneer of hip hop theater. But what does that mean? **JASON ZINOMAN** tries to find out the good, the bad, and the truth.

Will Power has built an emerging dramatic genre that mixes the vitality of a Mos Def concert with the storytelling skills of Arthur Miller. The San Francisco native's latest, *Flow*—written and performed by Power—splices from character to character with the quickness of a sample, introducing audiences to seven dynamic, rhyming storytellers. Power, 33, envisions a future where there will be “a whole generation of actors/MCs.” For now, he'll do just fine dolo.



VIBE: What is hip hop theater?

WP: It's theater that uses one of the elements of hip hop culture: breaking, graffiti, emceeing, and deejaying. And some people say beat boxing—that's like A-E-I-O-U and sometimes Y. It's not a cat doing a piece about people who happen to be in the hip hop generation.

Are theater and hip hop a good match for each other?

It's a natural fit. Initially, hip hop was a live, performance-based culture. Back in the day, people were better performers. Now the priority is making a dope-ass album.

In your new show, a character knocks Jay-Z.

He's just saying that after the World Trade Center went down, all that extra shit seemed corny. Jay-Z still be like, “I'm getting paid, and I got these women.” Not to disrespect him, but at times of great need, what does that stuff matter?

What's the stupidest thing a critic ever said about you?

That the pace is too fast. My work reflects my generation. We got cell phones, two-way pagers, remote controls, and hundreds of channels. Life is faster. My mom takes 10 minutes to say what takes me two minutes to say. Who knows? Maybe my 9-year-old nephew will take 45 seconds. Or maybe they'll slow back down.

For tour dates, visit www.willpower.tv.