

TIMBALAND THOUGHT HE COULD LET HIS  
TRACK RECORD SPEAK FOR ITSELF. BUT BECAUSE  
YOU WEREN'T LISTENING, THE TALENTED  
MR. MOSELY SEES NOTHING WRONG WITH SAYING  
A FEW WORDS ON HIS OWN BEHALF.

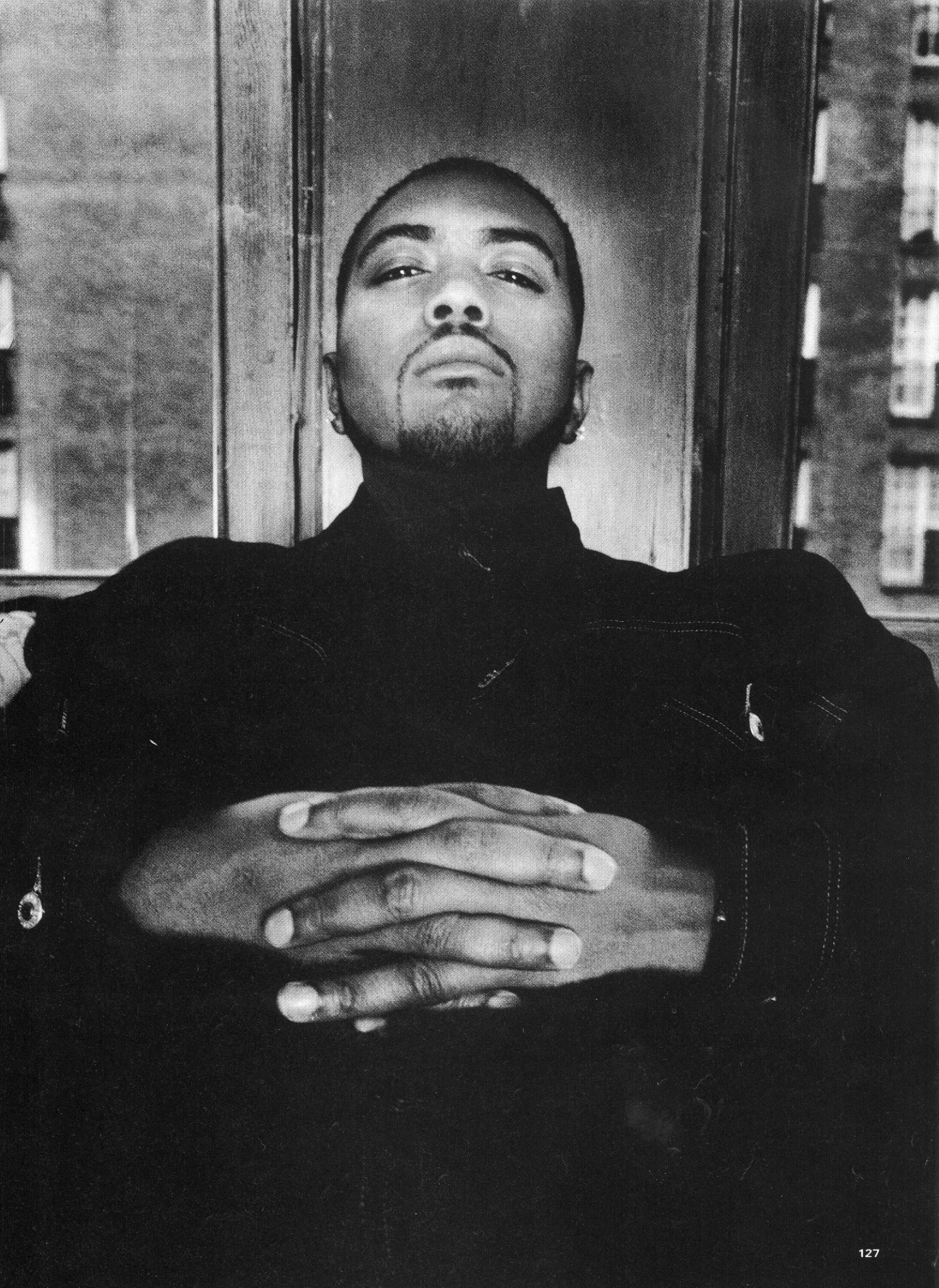
**balloon**

**mind**

WORDS BY JERRY LAWRENCE BARROW PHOTOGRAPHS BY CARL LESARD

**state**









**T**imbaland won't allow you to deny his genius. Tonight he's sprawled out sleepily on a couch in Studio 4 of NYC's famed Manhattan Center Studios. Save for his million-kilowatt diamond-studded watch that periodically peeks out from under his modest threads and catches your eye, he could go easily unnoticed. And in this rare case, he may want to be anonymous. He's been working around the clock on a number of projects, including his third LP, *Indecent*

*Proposal*, so rest time is scarce.

Some might debate whether his cockiness is warranted, but no one can contest Timbaland's achievements. Since 1996 his music has made household names out of Aaliyah, Missy Elliott and Ginuwine and helped sustain the careers of MCs like Jay-Z and Nas. The quixotic beatsmith closed the millennium with more hits than AOL. The beats of the talented Mr. Mosely soon became the foundation for most of the music dominating the airwaves in the late

'90s. Crickets and triple time drums became as common on radio as static on a 45. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Tim is way overdue for a swelled head.

The former DJ from Virginia who stood in the shadow of Jodeci's DeVante back in the day believes he's now ready for his own pedestal. And he has a strong case. After all, neither hip-hop, pop nor R&B can really claim him exclusively. His triple-time synchopated style has had more imitators than Elvis and Tupac. Says Tim: "I influ-

STYLING BY WILLIAM RAWLS. GROOMING BY MIKE EVANS



”  
**Me and Dre  
 are like the  
 movie  
 Devil's  
 Advocate,  
 where he's  
 the Devil  
 and I'm  
 Keanu  
 Reeves.  
 He's Daddy  
 looking  
 down over  
 Son.**  
 “

with the Neptunes' Pharrell Williams. Williams eventually left but Magoo and Tim stayed together. After a brief stint in DeVante Swing's Bassment crew, the two ventured out on their own. "For Tim, the fans knew how good he was," continues Magoo. "That's what counted. I think in another five years, people will appreciate more what the brother's done for music."

His friends feel that his feelings of exclusion are more than justified but insist that he isn't an angry person by nature. According to Missy, Tim isn't a "fuck-you nigga." Even Swizz Beatz concedes that Tim is in the same bloodline as Dr. Dre. But at the end of the day, it's about what Tim thinks, isn't it? Is he a misunderstood musician or just another mad producer? He'll tell you he's a genius. And maybe that's just it.

**There have been a lot of Timbaland copycats over the years. Is it because it's cheaper to mimic you than to hire you?**

I'm high as crap. I'm so high [priced] I amaze myself. People don't even ask me no more. I don't like producing outside my camp. I don't wanna make record companies no hits no more. Hits is boring to me. I'm on a new page. I gotta build something for me. That's when you'll know why Timbaland is Timbaland. Timbaland is known for breaking people and I gotta get back to that. The only person outside my camp that I'll work with is Jay-Z. That's the only person that can get something from me anytime.

**Why do you call your album *Indecent Proposal*?**

I'm a master at all games. Any dice you wanna roll, be prepared to pay me 'cause you gonna lose. I called this album *Indecent Proposal* 'cause I bet you a million dollars you gonna like it.

**You seem to draw upon influences outside hip-hop, whether R&B or whatever. Is there anything in hip-hop that really moves you to wanna create?**

I don't even listen to rap music. Rock people influence me. The only hip-hop album that ever influenced me was *Dr. Dre 2001*. The way it was mixed, how the songs flowed. Then it was *Stankonia*. That put a little smile in my heart. There's a lot of creativity going on, on that album. The rest of 'em out there is just records.

**People say you got your style from jungle and drum 'n' bass. Is that true?**

Man, I didn't know nuthin' 'bout no drum 'n' bass. I hadn't even been to London back then.

**But can you see how people made the comparison?**

Naw, man, that mess was fast! Mine

had more rhythm, more syncopated.

**Where do you see yourself in relationship to other producers like Dr. Dre?**

Me and Dre are like the movie *Devil's Advocate*, where he's the Devil and I'm Keanu Reeves. He's Daddy looking down over Son. We shouldn't be in a category with other producers. We are official producers. We got big-title belts! I hate when people try to compare me to people that are my friends, like the Neptunes or Swizz Beatz. I hate that. These are young Black men trying to do their thing. I do feel that me and Dre and Jermaine Dupri are separate, though. I say "us" because we know how to break an act. Teddy is Poppa Don. I'm not saying he's out of the game, but I think he's just overseeing what's going on. Dre ain't ahead of Teddy, but he's on the same wavelength. I say Jermaine is over me because he's been doing it since he was young. He's broke new acts and had hits. Then it comes me. You can't forget about Puff. Y'all might've talked about him sampling, but how many people sampled the same thing he sampled and it didn't work? Like that "One More Chance" remix. I heard that before he used it on Big but *he* made it work. I can't explain to you what the formula is. But we know it when we hear it in our heads like, "Bling! There it is."

**Does that "bling" have anything to do with why you consider yourself a genius?**

Anytime I got people from overseas dancing, I'm Mozart. A lot of people know how to play and still can't make beats as dope as me. I can tell a girl what to sing and how to sing it. I can write a hook off the top of my head. I just love what I do. It's a musical gift that God gave me. "Is That Your Chick" is a year-and-a-half old and look how it sound today? "Pony" was three years old when it came out. What does that tell you?

**It seems like producers are getting more light these days than ever. Still, is it enough?**

I just feel like producing is such a hard thing. There's always a newcomer, but you don't hear about the newcomer after a certain number of songs. The Neptunes are my peeps. I used to be in a group with them, and they from my hometown. But I don't want the public to look at them just for now and not tomorrow. Don't just pay attention to them when they've got a hit record. Just because we do a song with Jay-Z, we get attention. *That's* bogus.

**A lot of people who hire you also use DJ Premier [Jay-Z, Lox, Nas]. Why do you think that is?**

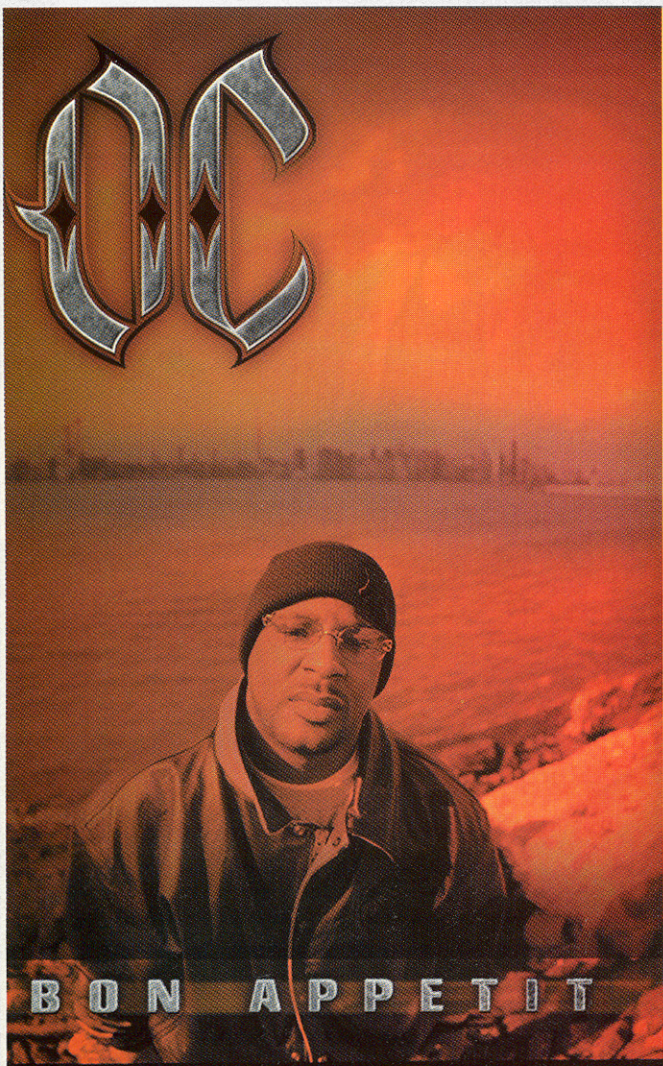
You gotta go back to Premier. He's the

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enced a lot of people. 'NSync's records sound like stuff I used to do. Come on, man! That stuff is played out." But along his long rise to the top of the producer's pile, Timothy Mosely has been called everything from reclusive to arrogant.

"For the first three or four years, he wouldn't say nothing," says Magoo, the high-pitch-voiced MC who's been working with Timbaland since 1987. They met through a mutual friend and started a group called S.B.I. (Surrounded By Idiots)





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## TIMBALAND

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ghetto king. I think his perfect match in heaven was Biggie. That was his magical artist. Big and Premier had something special. I could do the dirty, grimy records. I could go back on a Roland 808. But Premier got that on lock.

I heard that you walk around with a bank of sounds you created on a disc. Do you play any instruments or does it all come from your head?

I fiddle with a little bit of everything but I don't *play* play. And I don't wanna learn how to play 'cause I might lose my touch. I don't know nuthin' 'bout writing music. I can hear everything by ear. I might play a couple lil' chords but I know tone like a mug. It might help me [to learn] but I'm scared to take that chance. I think I might be too articulate instead of me finding something and say, "That's ill."

Magoo took a lot of heat from critics for everything from his voice to his rhyme skills. Do you think he's stepped up this time around?

Magoo is ready to shock a lot of people. I had people come into my sessions that didn't like him, and now when I play a couple of songs, they say he's okay. We just had fun this time. Magoo is trying to make a living being the best rapper he can be. You can't hate him for that. Black people hate too much. You won't find no white kids saying that Backstreet Boys album was wack, even though I know there are seven wack songs on there. We've sold a million-and-a-half records as a group—me and Magoo. Y'all ain't gotta like everything we do but give it a shot.

Your friend Pharrell makes a lot of political statements on the new N.E.R.D. project. Do you ever think about

things like commitment to the culture or responsibility as a musician?

I'm not into it that deep. All that other stuff is extracurricular. Once I'm out, I'm out. My kids can say, "Daddy, you was in that?" and I can say I was. Right now makin' beats is a job. I do love music. But at a certain point, you care less who buy it 'cause you make it for you. But you can't get into all the [politics]. That stuff will kill ya.

With the seeming lack of recognition from peers and industry people, what keeps you going?

The fans. I just wanna thank all of the women saying they love my beats. Dudes came after but hated at first. I knew I was hot when I had girls paying attention to my beats. What female you know pay attention to beats? I used to be a DJ and been in music all my life and I ain't never hear a girl say they like a beat, before me. They say they like a song. Now they say, that beat. So, I gotta give this article back to the people 'cause they really pay attention. I get bugged out when somebody say they a real big fan of mine 'cause this is a job just like McDonald's and I don't wanna get laid off.