

q music: MUSIC BEAR TONY BANKS

Music Bear Tony Banks' has releasing "Static," the first single from his upcoming album, *Yes, Homo*. The track can be summarized as funky hip-hop with a message. "In relationships you must have the wisdom to know when enough is enough," explains the artist who describes himself as a gay, black man with the fun of Missy Elliot, the swag of LL Cool J and the dance moves of Heavy D. "You gotta have the courage to make change and the strength to stand up on your own two feet and press forward. Life is too short to allow someone else's self-destruction to bring you down." Along with the track, Music Bear Tony Banks is releasing a music video for "Static" that stars Music Bear and Catalin Constantine as his boyfriend and features animation by wikistylista.



"Who has time to watch someone they love not love themselves," wonders Music Bear Tony Banks from his Brooklyn home. He knows a thing or two about the difficulties of breaking-up. He and his ex are in the midst of divorce, although their separation is not due to the level of destruction Music Bear raps about in "Static." *"Our relationship may have grown stale and staticky, to the point where we had to go our own ways, but we remain friends and that's important,"* he says. *"We still support and want the best for one another."*

Not all of the songs Music Bear writes are about his life. *"I'm often inspired by people around me, and now and then, I'll use their lives as subjects for songs. For me, the power of music is about writing something I know someone out there needs to hear or feel me say."*

Still, he tries to stay true to who he is as a man and an artist. You'll rarely, if ever, hear Music Bear Tony Banks rhyming about "Popping Bottles" (he barely drinks) or "Fighting Bitches" (not his style). In his upcoming album, *"Yes Homo,"* he tackles issues like love, lust, partying, the state of hip-hop and police brutality. It's meant to be a full depiction of what it means to be a black, gay, male, hip-hop artist in 2017.

"Static is one of the first tracks where I looked at things from beyond a sex or love angle and got a little more into the dirt and nitty gritty," he explains. *"Cause at the end of the day, we can't ignore that when Cupid strikes, he leaves an arrow in our heart that can hurt."*

Music Bear Tony Banks was born in Brooklyn in the early 80's. He grew up during the golden era of hip-hop. Early on in his musical journey, he wanted to be singer. He sang in church and wrote R&B songs and poetry. As he matured, he considered a career behind the scenes but life took its course and he found himself back in hip-hop, as an artist.

He believes hip-hop is love. It's soulful, empowering, fun, beautiful and caring. The music industry, however, is another monster all together. *"The industry turns hip-hop into a misogynistic, homophobic creature that sells its soul for the promise of money, cars and hoes,"* he says. *"It then turns the people in it into that same image. Remember, hate is a learned behavior. No one is born homophobic but when hip-hop spreads that message to millions of people, for decades, it catches on and it's hard to break away from."*

The LGBT community is not much better, he contends. *"As a black, gay man of size, I sometimes feel ostracized from my gay brothers and sisters. I used to think that if I were a different type of gay, a more stereotypical skinny boy and fancy dresser, I would have it easier in the community."*

"But I've come to learn that being different isn't always a bad thing," says Music Bear Tony Banks. *"What I hope people who listen to my music and watch my videos take from me as an artist is: Don't be afraid. Embrace something different every once in a while. Break from monotony. Cut the static. You might just enjoy it! In fact, I know you will."*

Music Bear Tony Banks' new single, "Static," is available at www.musicbearonline.com.

Follow him on: Facebook @ MusicBearTonyBanks Instagram @ musicbearonyb Twitter: @musicbearonyb