

RIO
m.c. soulshocker
Cruisin' in Dogtown

“You know, Rio has music in his head all the time” said the late R&B great Carl Anderson. He saw something in Rio that we were struggling to see ourselves, beyond the sadness over his diagnosis of autism, and the profound loss of language at age three and a half leaving him to ask, “What’s your name?” over and over. The language came back, but in an odd, ritualistic, nonsensical way. And my heart broke as I watched other children begin to shun him.

But the music was always there, never lost. His way into reading, teaching himself at age nine, through the lyrics of the songs he loved. And equally important, a way back into relating to peers, breaking through with the love of music they all shared. Then, the beginning of a career as a performer and by eleven as a composer, with lyrics that quickly went beyond the personal to something greater: *You know in life things happen doesn't seem what it seems. Even in dreams obstacles may appear..... One day u figure it out what your life was all about.*”

Early on Rio announced his intention to work in the music business, while browsing through the bins at Tower Records. Admonished by all the doctors to adjust my expectations for him, I reluctantly asked, ‘Do you want to work here?’, knowing even that would be an impossibility. He shot me a look and quickly set me straight with a clarity I’d never seen before. “I want to be a rapper and own my own label. You gotta’ dream bigger than that, Mom.”

This m.c. known as soulshocka’ is receiving standing ovations wherever he performs and in January of 2011 received The Genius of Autism Award at Carnegie Hall. His recording career has gotten off to a great start as well with a collaboration with Rev Run, and work with Dave Stewart, having won the Stand up to Cancer challenge. As Rio would say, “Check it”:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08_gwTEs2Xg

And the shout out to his hommie Carl in the video, is none other than that same Carl Anderson who saw something in Rio so long ago.

Dream Big. Indeed.