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## Jewish Rapper Etan G

by: David Silverberg

**Calling yourself The Jewish Rapper can invite groans and tired sighs that say, "Don't tell me you're marketing yourself as a Jewish rapper? This could be mad cheesy."**

But Etan G, originally of Baltimore, and now a New Yorker, doesn't see it that way. He's got a message to throw out to the masses, Jew or non-Jew.

His CD, South Side of the Synagogue, busts out lyrics such as "The influx of wisdom is not by chance/ Cuz nothing, my friends, is happenstance" and "So now during the daytime I got my leather straps/And at nighttime I got a mic for my raps."



Etan G, Jewish rapper

Etan revealed his need to represent the faith in the style he knows best:

**You don't shy away from heavy Jewish references in your tunes. Do you think you are doing something no rapper has done before?**

I think lots of rappers have talked about G-d, Christianity, Jesus and other religious overtones. If you look at my lyrics most of them are universal; "Makin' the Motzee" and "Yo Yo Yarmulke" are exclusively Jewish. I think I am doing something Jewish rappers never do, which is addressing their religion, their people and their beliefs head on.

**South Side of the Synagogue, the album, details your outlook on Judaism from the fringe, where many young Jewish feel welcome. Explain how that edginess affects your work.**

I never fit in to any "group" of Jews: either I was too Jewish for the Reform and Conservative groups or not Jewish enough for the Orthodox. I came to the realization at a young age that it wasn't about fitting in - I had to develop a relationship with G-d and be the best person I can be and do what I am supposed to. It is this philosophy that affects my work, this "I have to represent Judaism positively and fun" vibe that permeates my album.

**What kind of response have you gotten regarding your mingling of hip-hop and Judaica?**

I get an unbelievably positive response from Jews and non-Jews alike. The most common response I get is "I really don't like rap music but your album is so great and so much fun to listen to." The second most common response is "My kids listen to it all the time so I need another copy for myself."

**In "Psalm 150," you don't stray far from the original. Are you religious? Are the best lyrics in the Bible?**

I am an observant Jew. I do the best I can with the Torah that I've learned over the years. It influences my rapping in that I don't use swear words in my raps and don't need to discuss things like "booty." There are enough rappers who do that. The best inspiration is from the Bible and the psalms, although the translations are very dated and Shakespearean. More modern translations are a bit more accessible but I don't change the meaning of the words.

**What's next for Etan G, and do you see rapping as a full-time gig until you're old and gray?**

I love rapping and performing and will continue to do it until I am physically unable to.

For further information on Etan G, check out [www.jewishrapper.com](http://www.jewishrapper.com)

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