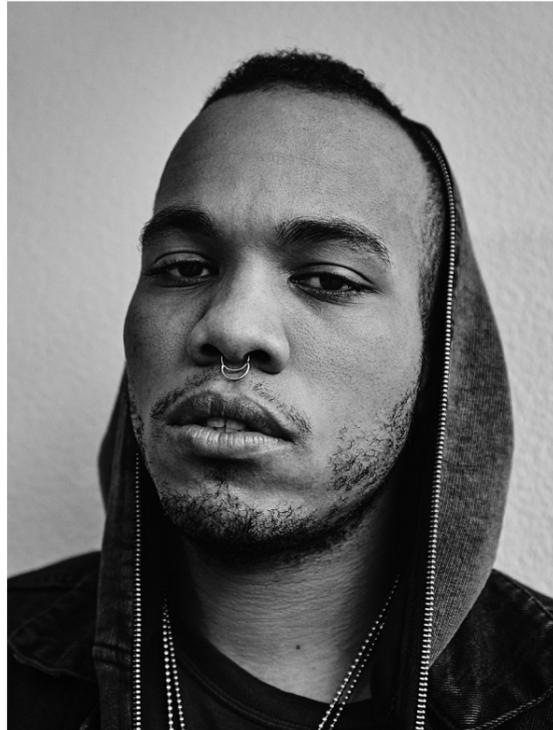


Deep Waters

MUSICIAN ANDERSON .PAAK ISN'T JUST MAKING WAVES —
HE'S CREATING AN OCEAN



Twenty miles separate the cities of Venice and Malibu in Southern California, but for musician Anderson .Paak, the distance is measured in years. In the time since *Venice*, .Paak's 2014 debut record, he's finally broken out, first as a featured guest on last year's *Compton: A Soundtrack*, and now with his critically acclaimed second album, *Malibu*. The stars seem to have finally aligned for the MC/singer/producer/drummer hybrid, but .Paak doesn't chalk his success up to fate.

After all, the recognition *Malibu* and *Compton* have afforded him are the result of time spent saying yes to every opportunity, a tactic that saw .Paak do everything from

drumming in the band for *American Idol* contestant Haley Reinhart to taking on lead production work on rapper/poet Watsky's record *All You Can Do*. Even those achievements came only after .Paak had released music for a time under the name Breezy Lovejoy. Simply put, it's been a long wait for Paak to get this opportunity, to create the music that has long lived in his mind and, more importantly, to finally have it heard. Perhaps this is why he treats his newfound celebrity so cautiously. On "The Season | Carry Me," one of *Malibu*'s many standout tracks, he laments, "And fuck fame, that killed all my favorite entertainers."

Photographed by
Dennis Stenild

Written by
Zack Ruskin

"When you're getting recognition, I think you just can't let it get the best of you," says .Paak in reference to the lyric. "I feel like fame, if you let it take over, it can kill, and it can get to your head. It can start blurring your vision and messing up your priorities and driving you nuts. Some people aren't strong enough, I feel like, to handle that."

While .Paak dismisses the idea that he's at the point where he needs to be worried about fame ("It's not like I'm being bombarded in the street yet.") that moment may be rapidly approaching. After all, many are calling .Paak Dr. Dre's new protégé, a distinction previously given to the likes of 50 Cent and Eminem. .Paak sees similarities between himself and Dre, noting that both of them are creators and, by extension, control freaks.

"He likes drinking Hendricks gin, and he doesn't like to settle for less," says .Paak.

He says Dre's passion for perfection is a lesson that has stayed with him and one that he took to heart while readying *Malibu* for release. Another Dre tactic that appears to have rubbed off on Paak is a penchant for killer guest contributions. While *Venice* was essentially .Paak on vocals and Lo-Def behind the boards, *Malibu* features Talib Kweli, BJ the Chicago Kid, The Game and Schoolboy Q in addition to production work from heavyweights like Hi-Tek and Madlib.

"I was just interested in getting more legendary people on the album," explains .Paak. When it came time to find an artist to lay down a guest verse on "The Dreamer," *Malibu*'s

closing track, .Paak says he knew Kweli would be perfect. "I wanted someone who could really put some dense lyrics on it and get across what I was going for." There is a message in the music with .Paak, something present and powerful that seems to have inspired the top-notch guest verses that *Malibu* boasts.

"This is my most personal album," .Paak confirms. "I knew for this next project I wanted a chance to tell my story and get a little deeper out in the water."

The track "Animals," which .Paak originally intended for *Malibu*, serves as a climax of sorts for the *Compton* record, a searing set of observations on police brutality and the recent social struggles in Baltimore. It reflects a profound tone that permeates much of .Paak's new record.

The lyrics on *Malibu* speak to past darker days and future bright horizons, complemented by an eclectic array of music that ranges from gospel choirs to complex musical textures. These sounds and stories evoke an artist coming into his own, one that is still very much at the dawn of his career.

While *Malibu* was only released in January of this year, .Paak is already looking ahead to the upcoming NxWorries record, a collaboration with Knxwledge. He is also thinking about his next solo venture, one that will reunite him with Dr. Dre, now that .Paak has signed a deal with Aftermath Entertainment. There is much more to come from .Paak, an artist who remains askance of the spotlight, even as it continues to shine ever brighter on him. x

