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Music - February 2010

Hip-Hip/Rap

Resolutionary Circumference

www.cdbaby.com/cd/circumference2

Story by *Emily Drabanski*

Most hip-hop originates in larger urban centers, but the music continues to gain popularity everywhere. Santa Fe's Mark J. Ortiz, recording as Circumference, draws on his Southwestern roots and love of the genre for his new CD, *Resolutionary*. Ortiz sings, raps, and plays acoustic and electric guitar, keyboards, and percussion, maintains steady hip-hop beats on electronic drums, and uses turntables for the rhythmic scratching sounds. The 34-year-old calls the resulting sound "Newmexiflow." His more positive lyrics set him apart from most hip-hop, which, he says, focuses on gangsta scenarios. Ortiz seeks to send a more conscious message that's akin to that found in the work of Sublime and KRS-One.

"I listen to a lot of hip-hop," says Ortiz. "And I think I'm one of the only Latino musicians [in New Mexico] doing this type of positive hip-hop." His rhyming raps often have a strong social message. In "Tumbleweeds," he speaks metaphorically of people who suffer adversity but manage to keep traveling on, like the tenacious tumbleweed.

Ortiz's sound was influenced by his diverse musical experiences. He grew up hearing his grandparents' traditional Spanish band, Los Nativos, and as a youngster learned to play the guitar and other instruments. At 14, he played drums in a band with Toby Maldonado, who became known as the popular Spanish singing sensation Tobias Rene. Drawn to hip-hop in high school, Ortiz became a popular dance-party DJ, and from 1997 to 2001 he was part of The Unknown, a popular Santa Fe hip-hop group. On *Resolutionary*, Ortiz features his current group, Rubixzu, a popular Santa Fe dance band, in lively remixes of three songs from his first CD, *Circumference*.

Ortiz also is drawn to reggae, which he incorporates into his music when playing with Rubixzu. On *Resolutionary*'s "Do What I Does," he features Santa Fe reggae dancehall artist Mister Kali. On the catchy "Making Tracks," Ortiz shares the stage with another Santa Fe hip-hop artist, Swami Skinny. In lively rhymes, this rap uses the analogy of making tracks in snow to explore how one leaves a lasting impression through the actions one takes in life. An instrumental, "Dust Devil," has a hypnotic, trance-dance vibe influenced by Latin music. And the hauntingly beautiful voice of Shantal Catanach adds much to "Spiritual Awakening" and "Lost in a Dream."

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Play "Tumbleweeds" from *Resolutionary*

