

A FEW TRICKS UP HIS SLEEVE

After a number of years spent cooling his heels, former music wunderkind Tricky reclaims his darling status with his latest album and prepares to unleash his directorial film debut on the world



Fans and critics had all but given up on Tricky by the time he decided to record his latest album, *Knowle West Boy*. It had been five years since his last release, and his previous efforts had received diminishing critical returns. Tricky spent the two years following the 2003 release of *Vulnerable* "hanging out" in the Bronx. He pulled away from his recording-star status and lived a more normal life. But his time was not wasted. Two years ago, he wrote and recorded a full-length album in London. Unhappy with the results, he scrapped the tracks and flew to L.A. to start over. *Knowle West Boy*, the album that resulted from those L.A. sessions, is Tricky's return to form. Upon its release in September, it reestablished him as the critics' darling, garnering his best reviews in years. Now touring and getting ready for the release of his directing debut, Tricky talked to Strut about the new album and his film.

› **Knowle West Boy** refers to the area of Bristol in which you grew up – what was it about being abroad that made you want to go back home?

When I brought out my last album, *Vulnerable*, people came up to me in England and asked me when my next album was coming out. I wanted to get my presence back here. Plus, my younger brothers are going through the class system – y'know the class system [in England] is terrible – so I wanted to do an album about me and my brothers growing up, and about the attitude of England.

› **What do you hope the boys of Knowle West will take away from this album?**

Well, to realize that you make your own choices and that you can become successful coming out of there. You don't have to just sell drugs. Basically, you can make a name on something else.

› **Why do you typically collaborate with women vocalists?**

Well, I tend to write from a woman's point of view.

› **Do you do so consciously?**

That's just always how it seems to come out when I'm writing.

› **Why do you think that is?**

D'you know, I haven't got a clue, but ever since I first started writing it's always come out that way. It's probably because my old man wasn't around, d'you know what I mean? I was brought up by all women, so I think I think like a woman.

› **How did *Brown Punk: The Movie* come about?**

Chris [Blackwell] wanted me to do a documentary about the label, and I thought, if we can get all the [Brown Punk] artists in there playing for a documentary, why not get them acting? Get them playing characters. I thought it would be more interesting. We did it with three digital cameras – I took 12 songs and basically wrote the script around the songs, so the lyrics are part of the story.

› **Was it your first time directing something?**

I've done music videos before, but I've never done a movie, which was scary. Halfway through, I kind of thought, y'know what, I don't really know what I'm doing here. But it was too late.

› **And how did 1970s film legend Elliott Gould become involved?**

He's a friend of one of the camera guys. He was talking to Gould about the movie, and he said that he'd like to meet me. I sat down and talked with him, 'cause I wanted him to do a cameo. He did it for like \$400. And then when we finished the one day of shooting, he called me and said, "Look, I think you should develop my character," so he ended up being in more of the movie.

› **And how has the film turned out?**

It's come out good, because the reactions I'm getting, people are saying that they haven't seen anything like it. That's the sort of reaction I want.

› **Anything that you're looking forward to doing in the future? Any projects on the go?**

I want to direct some more movies – definitely.

KNOWLE WEST BOY IS **OUT NOW**; BROWN PUNK: THE MOVIE WILL BE **AVAILABLE** AT BROWNPUNK.TV STARTING FEBRUARY 2009