



Photo provided by artist

WHEELIE Weezmatic's newest takes influence from the simple joy of biking the South Bay.

86 'TIL INFINITY

Following an inspired new album, Weezmatic headlines beatmaking fest

BY ETHAN GREGORY DODGE

IT WAS LATE winter 2021 and cool air rushed past Aaron Aquino as he cruised Milpitas on his vintage 1986 Mongoose bicycle. The parking lots of the Great Mall were nearly empty. He traced the fresh, circular skid marks from a recent sideshow.

During the first quarter of 2021, these bike rides had grown into a ritual for Aquino. His place of employment, the nearby Fremont Tesla plant, had all but shut down during those days and he had a lot of time to fill. Backed by a soundtrack of his favorite music, he found solace during these “hypnotizing” rides.

“I was put into a trance and I was able to focus on music and actually absorb the textures,” he says. “Out of all the commotion that was going on, that was my moment to take off this weight. Whoever was making those skid marks, they were in that same space. They weren’t thinking about taxes or anything like that.”

Aquino is better known by his stage name Weezmatic (aka Squareweezy), member of the production crew the Bangerz. The group became famous for their work with the otherworldly dance crew Jabbawoockeez, victors of the first season of *America’s Best Dance Crew*. Now 40, Aquino has been performing around the Bay Area for

over half his life, including a show this weekend at Mexican Heritage Plaza.

Weezmatic’s newest solo album, *86 MONGOOSE*, is a tribute to his Milpitas bike rides. Originally released on streaming platforms this January, San Jose label Needle to the Groove Records (NTTG) released a physical cassette of the album featuring two additional songs last week.

“I remember the exact day that I thought of *86 MONGOOSE*,” Aquino says: “I was playing Kanye West’s *Yeezus*. It’s not an album that I liked before. You think of all the things that were happening in his life, it was a tumultuous time. But zooming further out, it’s a moment in time that he wanted to encapsulate.”

Allen Johnson, one of the NTTG’s founders, says the album is a work of art.

“I love the vibe,” he says. “It’s crossing the ’80s breakbeat era, ’90s boom bap, a little bit of g-funk and almost modern trap. He marries all these decades of hip hop into *86 MONGOOSE*.”

Johnson praised Aquino’s use of audio from old video tapes on

the record. Among them is a scene from the 1995 comedy *Friday* and a television ad for the album’s namesake.

“It has that timeless feel,” Johnson says.

Aquino calls *86 MONGOOSE* his own time capsule. He hopes his descendants can listen and understand where he was at in life, as Yeezus did for him.

“I leave little bread crumbs for my grandchildren,” he says. “So each track title is something that’s related to me, or a lesson or something that I’ve tried to model.”

The first track, “January 7,” references his own birthday. The second, the street he grew up on in San Jose’s Evergreen neighborhood. It also serves as a nod to the lunchtime DJ battles of his high school days.

“I have my two daughters on a track. I named that one ‘4th CHAKRA’ because the fourth chakra is your heart chakra,” he says. “I just wanted to encapsulate them at that time.”

The release of the cassette is being celebrated with an event at San Jose’s Mexican Heritage Plaza on Friday, July 16. Aquino says he’s excited to spread the culture of hip-hop beat making at the event, something he’s missed doing for a few years.

His record label is also excited.

“Weezy’s a good showman when he plays live,” Johnson says. “Very charismatic. He’s really engaging.”

The free, all-ages show will also feature performances by local artists Teeko, Somn.Ok, Mint.Beats and Jay Gatsby, along with a live taping of locally run and nationally respected podcast Dad Bod Rap Pod. Billed simultaneously as a record swap, record collectors from all over the Bay Area will also be swapping and selling their wares.

“We want to see the community blossom,” says Johnson. “It’s not just another show at a club with young kids and rappers. It will have a little more cultured vibe with the record, podcast, beatmaker and songwriter communities coming together.”

JULY 16 6pm	SLAP BOX
	Mexican Heritage Plaza
FREE	San Jose