

## metroactive MUSIC



**DUO LINGUIST** On their first album together, Gatsby (right) and producer Mint.Beats (left) make a winning pair.

# FULL DECO

*On new album with producer Mint.Beats, San Jose rapper Gatsby comes out roaring*

BY ETHAN GREGORY DODGE

**I**T ALL STARTED with a question musician and beat maker mint.beats put on his Instagram story: “Who should I be listening to in the Bay right now?” At least he thinks that was the question.

The curator of the Bay Beat Summit SoundCloud account was looking for new artists to include on the account’s playlists. That was the first time he’d ever heard of 23-year-old Jordan “Gatsby” Melvin, a rapper new to the 408 hip hop scene.

Mint found Gatsby’s debut album *Currently Unnamed* and gave it a listen.

“His work sounded the most professional and radio-ready from the area,” he says. “I had never heard anything like that coming from not only the South Bay but the entire Bay Area. The production was incredible.”

This July, the duo released their first album together, *Butter*. Consisting of seven tracks, the record pairs beats written by Mint with lyrics by Gatsby.

Back when he first heard him, Mint included Gatsby on two of his Bay Beat Summit Select playlists. He knew he wanted to collaborate musically with the rapper, but he’d never been one to solicit. He built up the courage to make an exception for

Gatsby and sent over an assortment of beat tracks. Hearing them, Gatsby was equally impressed with the quality of Mint’s music as Mint was with his.

“I remember my mind being blown,” Gatsby says. “I get a lot of beats from producers and beat makers. Mint’s was completely different. Every single beat was fire.”

From there, the two collaborated over the internet on a single entitled “12 out of 10.” They didn’t actually meet in person until filming the track’s music video at San Jose’s Backesto Park. The relationship blossomed from there. Shortly after the video shoot, Gatsby asked Mint to produce his next album.

The pairing was a natural fit. Both artists share a number of inspirations in hip hop, musicians like DJ Premiere, Gangstar and NAS. “We speak the same language when it comes to music, our inspiration and what matters to us as people,” Mint says, “that’s why it works so well.”

In the “12 out of 10” single, Gatsby finishes the song saying, “12 times

out of 10 I’m a do it best.” The line perfectly portrays the confidence Gatsby exudes. It’s plain in how he carries himself and throughout his entire music catalog, especially this new album.

“He would one-take, two-take these tracks to the point where we finished in 15 minutes when we had a four-hour session scheduled,” Mint says. “I encouraged him to allow himself to be in the moment and explore creatively. You never know what you’re going to overturn under each rock.”

Gatsby says he learned a lot from Mint while making the album. During some of that downtime, the two were able to collaborate on a beat that ended up being the instrumentation for the track “And One.”

“That felt amazing and inspired me to learn how to produce,” Gatsby says. “I want to produce like Mint. I want to do what he does.”

Gatsby’s artistry is starkly apparent in his lyrics. He oftentimes utilizes double or even triple entendres. Many of which Mint says he didn’t catch until the final rounds of mastering the tracks.

The first track “The Great” ends with three variations of the lyric, “Been trying to crack the code that’s got my people still in chains.” The line repeats but the last three words change to “stealing chains.” It’s repeated once more but ending with the words “stealing change.” All three are references to the Black experience in the United States. It’s a theme that Gatsby, a Black man born and raised in the South, weaves through his lyrics constantly.

It’s a mission that Mint, a Chicano born and raised in California, can get behind.

“The main thing we wanted to accomplish with this is to change minds,” Mint says. “Music and art can be so powerful and change the mind of someone you’ve never met before. If it’s a single bar, an entire track, or the whole album, if we change just one person’s mind we’re successful in what we’ve done.”

