Nappy Roots: All About the Fans

Rap group Nappy Roots took Roanoke’s Awful Arthur’s aback on Saturday night. The group came to Roanoke on a night where many would usually stay in to watch the NBA All-Star Weekend festivities, but you wouldn’t have known it from the near capacity crowd at the venue.

Nappy Roots broke out onto the music scene in the early 2000s with their Grammy-nominated album *Watermelon, Chicken & Gritz* backed by their smash singles *Awnaw* and *Po Folks* in 2002. The group has since released three albums and has seen success on the Billboard charts, but their recent move to their own independent label, *Nappy Roots Entertainment Group*, has (no pun intended) taken them back to their original roots.

“It’s more stress (being on an independent label), you gotta do everything. We wake up in the morning, we go get our shirts designed, we get our records produced, we get our budgets fixed, we go meet with our manager and our label heads. When we were on a major label, we just woke up, got in the van and went to the next city and we didn’t have to ask no questions,” said Scales, a member of the group.

Being on an independent label has usually meant lower CD sales for most groups and artists in the music industry. The band doesn’t seem to worry too much about it because they know where they get their support.

“Fuck sales. I sold over two million records and the way I live, the way I pay my bills is not through record sales. We’ve had major labels tell us after selling a million records that we still ain’t recouped. So our money comes from doing shows, and guess who comes to shows. Fans,” said Scales. “So it really ain’t no middle man no more, it’s us and the fans. The fans support us and we give them a good show and good music.”

Giving the fans a good show is what the band did when hitting the stage at around 11:30 p.m. The group flew through a 45-minute set chronicling songs from all of their group albums as well as a few tracks from some of their members’ solo mix tapes as well. In sort of an unconventional route, the group placed their biggest hits early on in the set list, much to the delight of the crowd in attendance, and closed by having a female group, GAgurlz, close out the night with a few of their songs.

The group got hooked up with Nappy Roots through their manager, who contacted Nappy Roots about the group, and were humbled to be able to close for the group at the end of the night. But for group member Big Atlanta, she says closing the show is never the plan when they tour with Nappy Roots.

“It’s an honor, but we’re actually really never supposed to close. We’re just always late. But in each town, we have a really really good honest reaction, we’ve never had a bad reaction…for us to come behind them as an unsigned group, and still get the reaction we’ve got, it’s been great.”

Nappy Roots did not only spread the love for GAgurlz by letting them close out their set. The band stuck around until the club closed to mingle with the fans in attendance. From signing shirts and CDs to just chatting and taking pictures, it’s obvious the band, who came from a small town in Kentucky, appreciates the love it got from a small town in Virginia.