

# LODOWN MAGAZINE.COM

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## MESSAGE OF THE WEAK



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## MITCHELL S. JACKSON



**Given your hip-hop background, it's almost as if Oversoul was sort of your (almost) free mix tape to give away to get people thirsty for your album (aka the novel) coming next year. Is that how you see it?**

When I first conceived of the e-book, that thought was in my head. But as I moved further along the process of writing and then producing it, I didn't want that perception. Here's why: when a person makes a free mix tape, for the most part, they are making music that they think won't be as viable to a larger audience. Another thing, though this is not so much the case anymore, some artists borrow the music of another artist, and to me that's cheating. I never once thought I was creating Oversoul for a more narrow audience. I never once allowed myself any leeway in composition. I labored over every sentence, and after that, over every aspect of the construction of the book. At least in my mind, this is going to be part of my legacy in the same way as my novel. But in a sense that the mix tape can serve as an introduction to an audience, I can accept the analogy. If you appreciate Oversoul, there's a damn good chance, you'll dig The Residue Years. And if Oversoul were compared to what I feel were exceptional mix tapes—Young Jeezy's Trap or Die; Drake's So Far Gone, and more recently Kendrick Lamar's OD—and the care, creativity, and thoughtfulness with which they were composed as well as the impact they had on an audience, I'd be all good with it.

**Tell me something about your debut novel... is it somewhat autobiographical in that it pretty much tells your family's story? Was writing it cathartic?**

My novel is semi-autobiographical. Well, I don't know if I'd call it that actually. It began as that, though. Now the base of it is. It follows a family of four—a mother and her three sons—over roughly the course of a year in which the mother tries to resurrect her life after a long battle with addiction and during which the oldest son develops a flawed plan to essentially save the family. I worked on it for so many years that I'm ashamed to say. I'm sure years ago when I started it, the writing was cathartic, but I'd say more than that it has been good practice, necessary practice. I had never wrote so much as a short story before I wrote down the first words of what I'd imagined to be a novel. Shoot, I can't even remember reading so much as one short story before I wrote the first words of what became The Residue Years.

**Another thing about writing The Residue Years: would you say that for you, like for Guru, it's "mostly tha voice"?**

Oh man, voice is everything to me. Everything. I love trying to recreate engaging voices I've encountered. I want to keep them alive. I took a workshop with this guy named Gordon Lish. He has the point in the early classes where he tells everyone to go home and write a sentence. When we come back the next class, he has everyone read their sentence. If he likes your sentence you can

## LORADIO

### The Programs:

The Gaslamp Killer - Essential Mix  
The Lions - Live from WLION hosted by Black Shakespeare

## SONG OF THE DAY

The Scantharies - 'I've Got The Green Light And I'm Ready To Go'

## AUDICTIVE BUNCH

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read two. If he likes the second, you can read three, and so on. If he doesn't like your first sentence, he will stop you halfway through it. Well, we had about thirty-something people in the class. When we came back, everyone got a chance to read. Of entire class, I was the only person that got to read an entire sentence. I think I got two sentences off that first time. Gordon's response went something like this: "Well, Jackson, you got an ear. There's no doubt about that." When he said that, let me tell you, you don't know what that did for my confidence. So yes, I agree with Guru. I want my prose to be a song.

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**THE LIT CORNER**

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