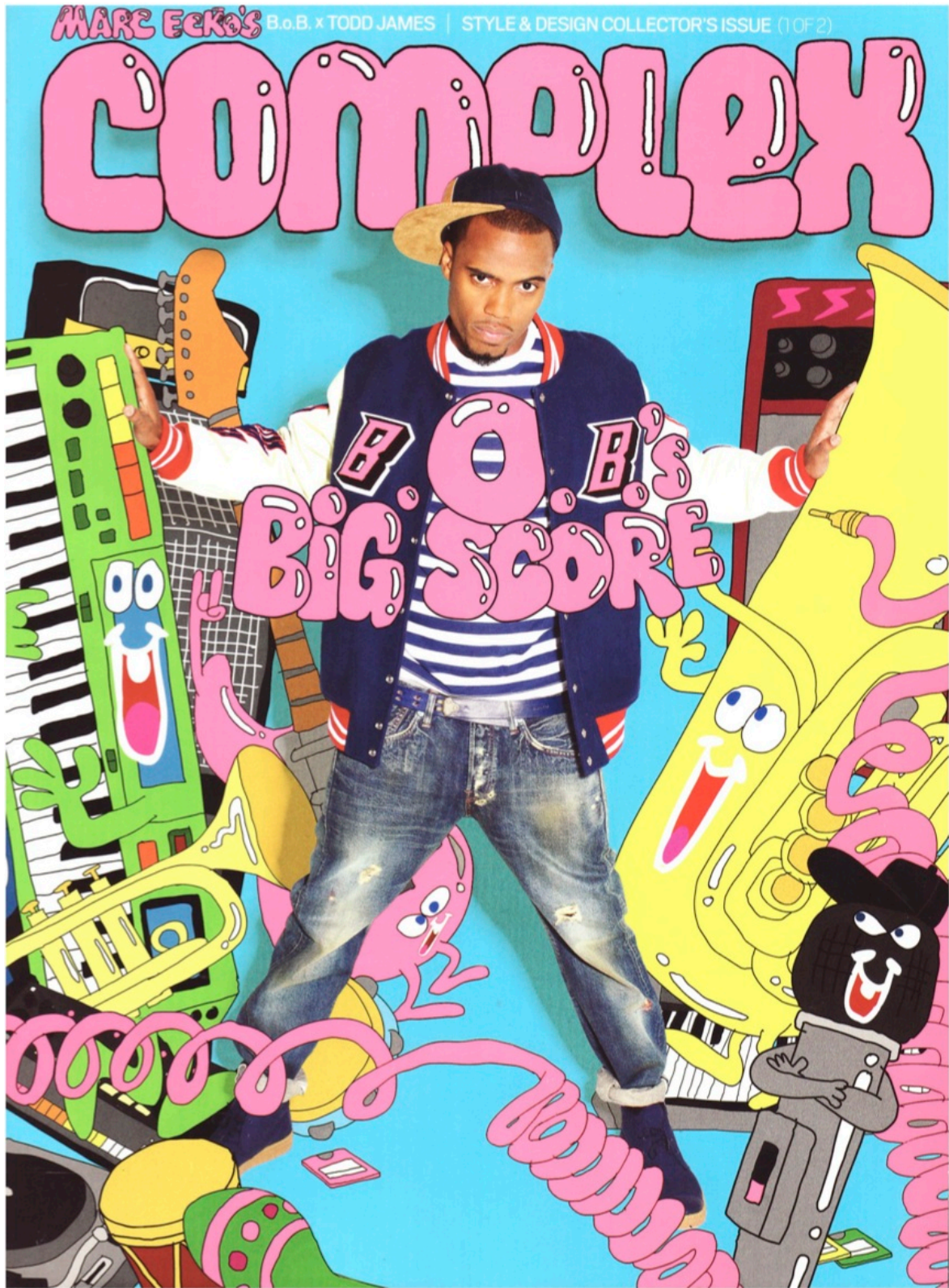


Complex, agosto - septiembre de 2010

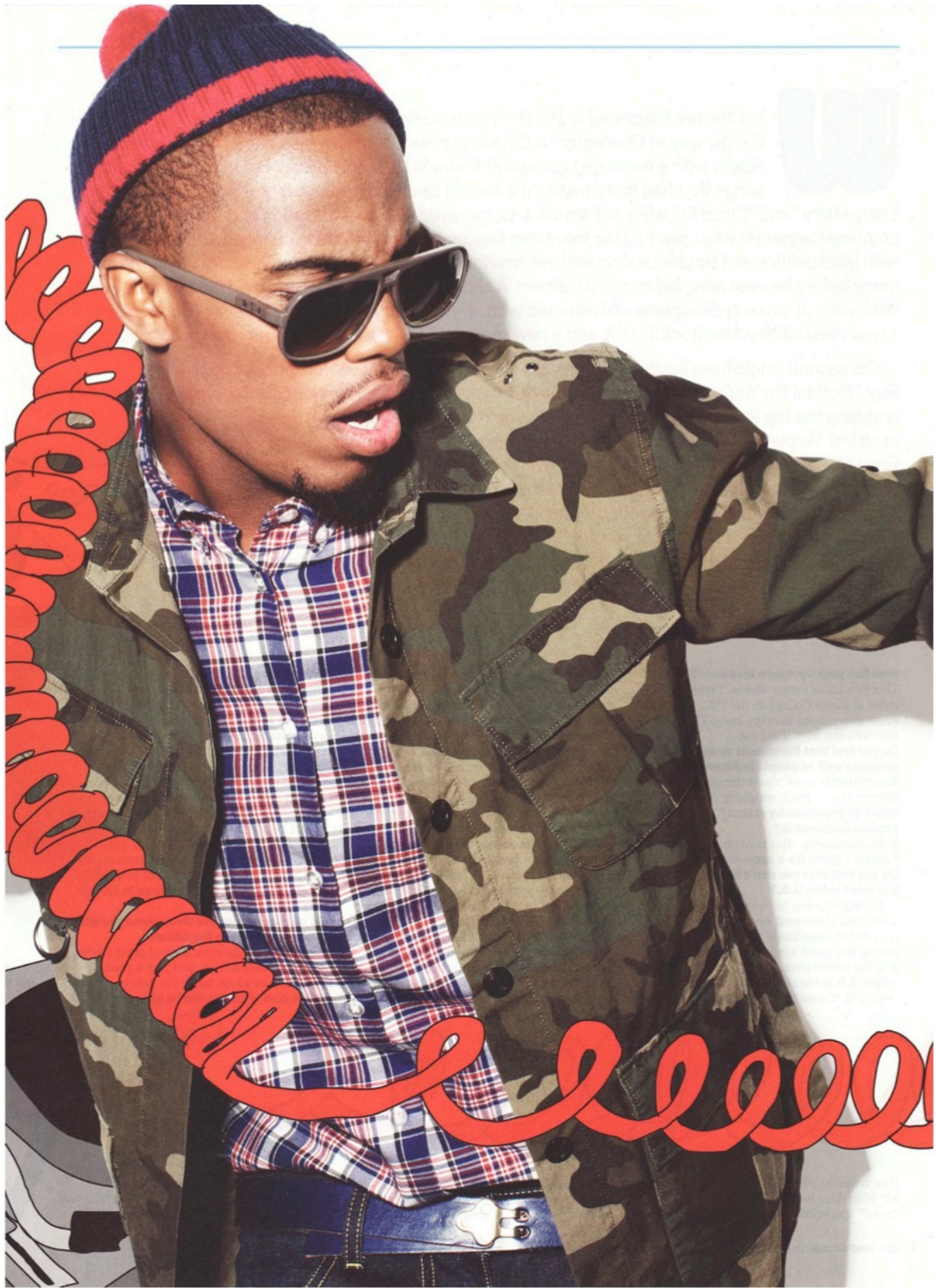




BOBBY RAY SIMMONS, JR. HAS GONE FROM
LEFT-FIELD MIXTAPES TO TWO TOP-5 SINGLES.
ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO AVOID GETTING PLAYED OUT.

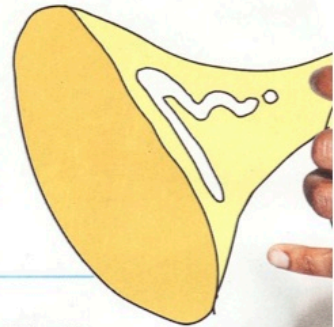
STORY BY DAMIEN SCOTT

ART: **TODD JAMES** / PHOTOGRAPHY: **BROOKE NIPAR** / STYLING: **ANOMA YA WHITTAKER**



What the hell happened to B.o.B.? When we first got wind of the kid from Decatur, Ga. (by way of Charleston, S.C.) with a cloudy acronym for a name, he was a new rapper with a mean spit game and Andre 3000 sensibilities. His mixtapes featured songs that had him carrying the ATLien torch into rap's new era. Early tracks "Haterz Everywhere" and "Cloud 9," while not smash hits, garnered plenty of attention and set up the young producer/rapper for what seemed like inevitable success. Then everything changed. Citing frustrations with label politics and trouble dealing with his newfound fame, B.o.B. came close to quitting the game before he even released an official album. A short while later, the 21-year-old born Robert Ray Simmons, Jr. retracted his plans and returned with all-new everything: a new moniker (Bobby Ray); a new musical direction (rock 'n' roll); and a new mentor (T.I.). Then—again—everything changed.

The second single from his debut album, *B.o.B. Presents: The Adventures of Bobby Ray*, "Nothin' On You"—a syrupy, overtly pop ode to down-ass chicks—went stratospheric, grabbing the top spot on the Billboard 100. His next single, the Paramore-assisted "Airplanes," followed suit, reaching #2—and that was before Eminem added a verse. Suddenly, the MC who everyone thought might go the way of Charles Hamilton ended up becoming the most successful artist among his non-Drake peers. How'd that happen? A wise, rich man once said, "You can accomplish anything if you don't bellyache." Instead of complaining about how no one understood him, Bobby Ray took it upon himself to change what needed to change. So what happened to B.o.B.? Simple: success.



How has your European tour been?

There's a lot of love overseas. I was playing a show at Kings College in the U.K., and they knew every word to every song. The album's not even out over there yet.

Do you feel that Europeans understand your music as well as people in America?

Everything is more about the music overseas. There's not so much weighing on status.

What do you mean by status? You mean how popular someone is?

Yeah, popularity. You know how that goes. I mean, I guess it's a necessary evil.

Do you feel that you don't have the status you want in the U.S.?

I remember going to Norway and Germany years ago; the crowd would go crazy, and they didn't even know who I was. In the States, you gotta kind of prove yourself, win the crowd over. That's what I meant in terms of it being more about the music in [Europe]. 'Cause here, you come onstage and

it's more like, "OK, what does the music sound like?"

Listening to your early stuff and listening to your music now, there's been a big change in the sound, which has turned out to be very successful. Do you feel gratified?

Definitely. The gratitude is through the roof. And it's great because it's a reversal. I just love being an underdog, I guess. It kinda feels like a *Slumdog Millionaire* moment.

Can you really be an underdog when you've got T.I. and Jim Jonsin co-signing you?

You can't make people like your music, you know what I mean? You can't make the radio stations play your song. I could have Obama on my side but if the fans don't like it, they won't really listen. [Laughs.]

But you do admit that it helps to have those kinds of heavyweights in your corner.

It's a complement. Sometimes people may want a stamp of approval that kinda outshadows them. They just want the huge

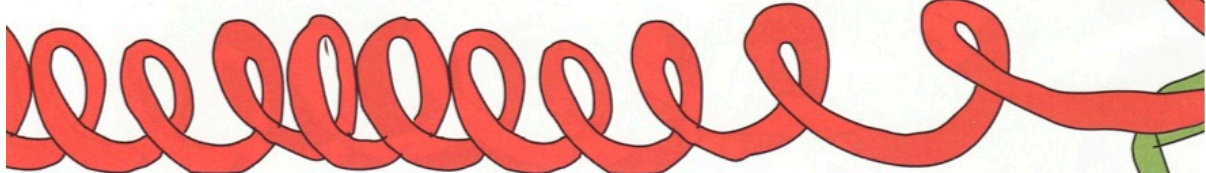
In a recent XXL article, there was a small bit about how you and T.I. initially argued over the sound of your music. Could you elaborate?

Oh, man. [Laughs.] I'm so glad you brought that up, 'cause I feel like my words got twisted up a little bit. We actually never argued about making songs. It's never really been an argument. In the studio, it's always gonna be a productive type of environment, you know what I mean? And Tip, he's the type of person who always stresses to me: "Do what you do—do what you feel comfortable doing. I'm not here to change you up at all."

So he was supportive throughout the whole process of making the album?

Definitely. He gave me a lot of good advice, good business advice, and just a good reflection to gauge what I'm doing.

What kind of advice did he give you?



[the crowd's] like, "OK, who's this guy signed to? Who does he roll with? Where'd he come from?" You know what I mean? Over there,

name, but in my situation, I think it kinda complemented the situation because there was a merger of two different styles of music.

He told me, "Everybody's not wrong." [Laughs.] Meaning, if everybody's telling you your pants are unzipped, more than likely



