



## Street Sweeper Social Club :: Street Sweeper Social Club

Independent Label Group

★★★★★

Reviewed on Wednesday, June 17, 2009 by Adam Figman

It's a match so perfect, you couldn't envision it if you tried. Activist/rapper Boots Riley, frontman of the revolution-seeking, anti-government hip-hop group The Coup, and hard rock guitarist Tom Morello, known for raging against the machine with or without a strength in numbers by his side. But in a time when the term "hope" is the new "fight" and trusting the government to turn things around has replaced spending nights outside the White House lawn with anti-war banners, it's worth wondering if the pair can create music that fights the powers that be while ignoring the satisfaction of the masses and maintaining relevancy, given the current sociopolitical state of the country.

And, simply said, the answer is yes. While Morello's guitars riffs pounce as loud and as powerful as ever, it's Boots' poetic, witty fight-raps that grasp the listener by the throat and don't let go until the end. Without the soulful hip-hop beats the Bay Area MC used to handle, Riley has less words to work with as he hits upon his favorite themes- the impending revolution and how dreadful this nation's authority figures are. But his ability to turn long rap verses into concise stanzas that properly match each track's tempo shows true versatility, an underrated and noteworthy feat for a rapper to accomplish.

In terms of subject matter, the concepts equal those that could be seen on either of the two's previous efforts. The pair does as the title insists on "Fight! Smash! Win!," wishes nothing but the worst to upper-class materialists on "100 Little Curses," praises the true maniacs and gangsters (unlike those in your favorite Scorsese movies) on "Clap For The Killers," and turns the revolution into a legitimate party on the duo's best track, "Promenade."

But the true brilliance here is what is not done rather than what is. Instead of getting repetitive, drawn out, and maybe even boring, the album concludes itself at a measly yet perfect 11 tracks, clocking in at just under 40 minutes. With continuously similar-sounding music and the list of topics to cover starting to thin, ending where it does speaks volumes. Maybe the current political climate actually is reflected on *Street Sweeper Social Club*. Five years ago, it might've been 23 songs long. And the club wouldn't have been very social at all.