

Will Youmans Interview

Photographer: (09:17:42:00) Title? Does he have a title, that's okay?

Zeldes: (09:17:44:00) Okay, now I guess that's one of my questions.

Youmans: (09:17:46:25) Human being. Yeah, I'm not fortunate enough to have a title.

Zeldes: (09:17:52:15) Oh, 'cuz we're wondering—I was looking through some of your stuff and wondered what you did outside of rapping.

Youmans: (09:17:59:25) Eating...sleeping. No, I do a lot of things. I do a lot of different projects. I've got my hands in a lot of things, so. I also right for the Arab-American News in Detroit, so I'm a columnist...the blog obviously. Umm, I also teach and...

Zeldes: (09:18:25:00) Where do you teach?

Youmans: (09:18:26:00) Uhh, it's an adjunct professorship at Georgetown University. I teach a class in human rights. And, uhh, I do a TV show, as well.

Zeldes: (09:18:37:25) Are you in D.C. now?

Youmans: (09:18:39:00) Yeah.

Zeldes: (09:18:39:15) Oh, I thought you were still in Detroit.

Youmans: (09:18:41:00) Yeah, is that the basis for this interview?

Zeldes: (09:18:43:06) No.

Youmans: (09:18:44:00) Kind of. (*Laughter*)

Zeldes: (09:18:46:00) Yeah, we're done.

Youmans: (09:18:48:00) Okay.

Zeldes: (09:18:49:20) Umm, you graduated from the University of Michigan?

Youmans: (09:18:52:15) Uh-huh.

Zeldes: (09:18:53:03) Where you founded an activist group. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

Youmans: (09:18:59:00) I didn't found a group in Ann Arbor, I joined the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee... I was very active with it.

Zeldes: (09:19:11:00) Then what did you do at that--from then on?

Youmans: (09:19:14:11) Umm, I went to law school at Berkley. I founded a group there—Students for Justice in Palestine—I became very active. Then I lived in the Bay Area till 2005, then I moved to D.C. , and I live in D.C. now... so.

Zeldes: (09:19:30:00) When did you start rapping?

Youmans: (09:19:32:13) Eighth grade...which should be about 1990, around 1990. And then I—I wasn't the "Iron Sheik" then. I didn't become the Iron Sheik until about 2000. Where I fused together politics with music. You know, before I just did music on the side and I was doing a lot of fun stuff. Uhh, you know, activism is fun for me also, not to say that isn't. Uhh,

but I was doing political activism on one side, doing music on another side. And I didn't marry the two until about 2000.

Zeldes: (09:20:02:00) What inspired the marrying?

Youmans: (09:20:05:15) The marriage. (*Laughter*) Looking for new ways to do the same old thing. Looking for some exciting way to communicate the messages that I had been developing as an activist...the messages I had been spreading. And a way to reach out to younger audiences. So a lot times you feel like you're speaking to the choir—or preaching to the choir, you know, as the saying goes. I want to find a new way to reach newer audiences. I'm like: "These youth are listening to hip-hop...not really coming to my events...maybe I should speak their language."

Zeldes: (09:20:35:20) So, I guess, what in your background has taught you how to rap and how speak that language?

Youmans: (09:20:43:10) I mean, just listening to it since I was a kid. And you know, as soon as I really start listening to it, I started writing it. So that really just stems from who I was growing up and the music I listened to growing up. So I found that hip-hop music was the best form of music for expressing myself. I never really wrote rock lyrics. I don't, you know, I don't think I could. But hip-hop gave me enough space to say what I wanted to say.

Zeldes: (09:21:11:20) And one of your influences was Public Enemy.

Youmans: (09:21:14:00) Mm-hmm.

Zeldes: (09:21:14:10) And why?

Youmans: (09:21:16:20) Public Enemy really spoke to me at such a young age, I think, because, well, they spoke with a certain gravity. And they spoke with enough force to make really make me want to listen to what they had to say. You know, they weren't just being nice. They weren't just trying to beat around the bush on issues. They said how they felt and they said it with strength. They said it with persuasion, you know? And for me, that's what I try to do as an activist. 'Cuz I'm very serious about the things that I do even though I have a good time with the music and I try to put humor into it, I have something very clear that I want to say. And Public Enemy really gave me the energy.

Zeldes: (09:09:21:52:22) So what is your message?

Youmans: (09:21:57:15) I have many messages, but I think my main message is that if you want to know what's going on with Arabs in the world or whatever...talk to them. You know, listen to what they have to say. And my message is that I can represent my view better than you can represent my view, so come listen to me. You know, don't go to FOX, don't go to CNN to figure out what Arabs think...talk to an Arab or listen to his or her music. (*Laughter*) You know?

Zeldes: (09:22:27:00) Is this something new for Arab-Americans to get--?

Youmans: (09:22:30:15) Hip-hop music?

Zeldes: (09:22:31:05) Yes.

Youmans: (09:22:32:15) Uhh...it's definitely a growing movement now. There have been Arab-Americans involved in hip-hop music since hip-hop's birth, really. But I think this

movement where you have MCs and artists who are coming out and saying: “I’m Arab-American, this is what I have to say.” Is relatively new, probably in the last four or five years. Uhh, and it’s still a very small movement, but it’s growing.

Zeldes: (09:22:59:20) Okay, umm, you have produced two records, is that right? What are you working—could you tell us about those two and then what are you working on now?

Youmans: (09:23:08:02) The first one was called *Camel Clutch 2003*—or was it 2000... Oh my gosh!—*Camel Clutch 2003*. And the basis for that album was I wanted to make just activist music. I wanted to make something that could be used as a educational tool. And uhh, so that that album was, like, very well researched and the lyrics are very clear, it’s like: “Use this in your classroom. Use this at your event, just to educate.” The second album called *Yet We Remain*. That came out in 2004. And that was a little more on the, umm, feeling side of things, rather than just purely educational. So I let loose a little bit. You know, of course, that’s a year after the War in Iraq. The invasion of Iraq starts and even though had millions of people protesting on the streets, we weren’t able to stop it. So I decided to come out with something more on the emotional side. To capture the feeling and the energy and the spirit at the time, which was very much against the war and against what’s going on in the Middle East but yet so little was actually being stopped, you know?

Zeldes: (09:24:18:05) And you also have this other side of being a blogger. Can you talk about how Kabob Fest came about?

Youmans: (09:24:27:24) Uhh, Kabob Fest basically came about because there was a complete void, umm, within the realm of Arab-American blogs. I think it’s really funny. There were a lot of blogs out there—I mean, there weren’t even a lot of Arab-American blogs to begin with, you know, but on top of that there weren’t any that tried to bring a light-hearted sensibility.

Photographer: (09:24:53:15) I think you kicked off the monitor

Youmans: (09:24:56:10) Oh, okay, you mean the power?

Photographer: (09:24:00:00) That scared me.

Zeldes: (09:25:00:20) (*Laughter*)

Youmans: (09:25:01:00) I can start over again...

Photographer: (09:25:04:00) That’s all right. It’s my fault for sticking it there.

Youmans: (09:25:06:00) Yeah, I’m sorry, my feet get jittery. There weren’t—well, okay—there was a shortage of Arab-American blogs to begin with. And then there were no blogs really dealing with politics in a humorous way. And you know, I-I observed that people were getting their news from *The Daily Show*, umm, and from other kind of entertainment news sources. And I thought that maybe we would be able to shed some light with what’s going on with Arab-Americans or in the Arab world by using more entertaining or entertainment based approach. Of course, it’s still very activist, at times, it can be very heavy, very deep. But we try to mix in some humor as a way to bring something new to the table

Zeldes: (09:25:47:20) And you have, umm, a staff that contributes stories, or how does that work?

Youmans: (09:25:53:00) It’s all volunteers so none of us get paid. It’s not really what you’d call a staff. It’s just people who like to write, people who have something to say because they

care about what's happening in the world and people who try to bring in some sort of sense of humor or, you know, at least an interest in doing things that are new—uhh, new ways of looking at the same old topics and same old issues.

Zeldes: (09:26:14:20) And how many people blog this?

Youmans: (09:26:17:00) There's six bloggers right now. We've gone between ten and four. You know, people don't have the time in their schedule right now, sometimes they'll drop out and they'll come back later or—we're always looking to add new writers. It's very dynamic. That way it's a dynamic and new kind of feel to it all the time.

Zeldes: (09:26:35:00) Mm-hmm...so in your blogs, do you criticize how news is covered?

Youmans: (09:26:40:00) Yeah. We do have a one category titled: "Media." Where we criticize some of media coverage of, you know, political events and that kind of thing. So yeah, media criticism is a huge element of what we do.

Zeldes: (09:26:53:20) Okay. And what are some of the issues that have come up in that—under that umbrella?

Youmans: (09:27:01:00) Of media criticism?

Zeldes: (09:27:03:00) Mm-hmm.

Youmans: (09:27:03:08) Well, we find—like, for example, we'd mock what are called, you know, "terrorism experts" or "Middle East experts". After—since September 11th happened there was like this while industry that came out of nowhere of Middle East experts. And these were people who basically have no credential to talk about the Middle East in any kind of informative way, but they might have read a book or two and basically reduced analysis of the Middle East to very simplistic, you know, modes of thinking. So for those of us who actually know about what's going on there or have been there or lived there or speak, uhh, the languages, that kind of thing. To hear these pundits on mainstream media, talking as if they're some kind of expert when they're talking out of complete ignorance was completely laughable. And to us it just seemed fraudulent. You know, here's the big con: You sell yourself as some sort of expert that no one—and you're only an expert 'cuz no one else knows what the heck they're talking about so you can be an expert in that kind of game. And it just—it made watching CNN or FOX or mainstream news channels laughable. You know, especially those of us who are watching, for example, the debates on Al-Jazeera, you know, versus the mainstream news. It was, like, two different worlds were going on—in the U.S. world of pundance was completely amateur, so we—we poked fun at a lot of these kind of pundance and, um, you know, also the failure of the mainstream media to-to-to ask any type of important questions in the lead up to the war in Iraq was a disgrace for the media. Not just to be critical or to play it's role as a balance against governmental power, it just played dead and just went along with the story. And everything that was pushed-pushed as the basis for going to war in Iraq ended up being false to me that's a failure in our media system. So we, we, we were talking about the need for more democratic media basically.

Zeldes: (09:28:52:10) In that you watched Al-Jazeera and what other news organizations do you watch? Where do you get your news?

Youmans: (09:29:00:00) I mostly use the Internet for news. That way I can control what I read and what I get. Whereas if you're just sitting in front of a TV, your just taking in whatever they

get you, so I go out and get my own news. I use, you know, I use Google News, like news aggregator sites. I like to get a lot of news directly from the wire services from, like, the AP for example. And I make sure to get international media, uhh, as well as alternative media but international media, like, *The Israeli Newspaper*, for example, *The Guardian* and *The Independent* in England, uhh, for example. I also like *The Christian Science Monitor* in the United States. And an alternative news source, there's like, *Democracy Now*, as well, umm, it's just, it's just for me it's like, it's like your diet. Your news diet should be like you're your, like what you eat basically...you should get a diversity of different sources. If you eat all meat, you know, it's not good for your health. If you eat all carbs, it's not good for your health. You got to really mix it up. So that's how I see my media intake.

Zeldes: (09:30:01:25) Now would you say that's pretty common place among your peers that they get their news from--?

Youmans: (09:30:07:00) Yeah, my peers being my fellow bloggers. Yeah, we don't rely on one, just one source. We try to get many different perspectives and sources.

Zeldes: (09:39:17:00) Mm-hmm. Umm, gosh I had a question for you and I forgot what it was. So what are you working on now?

Youmans: (09:30:26:00) Umm, in terms of my music or the blog?

Zeldes: (09:30:27:20) Yeah.

Youmans: (09:30:27:27) Well, I'm working on a new album. And I hope to have it out by the end of the summer.

Zeldes: (09:30:33:00) And is that, umm, visceral as well, or emotional? What is it about?

Youmans: (09:30:37:20) Mmm. It's probably kind of a mix of both because I did spend a lot of time doing research for the songs, but it's also going beyond Middle East politics. I'm going to be looking very closely at, umm, for example, day to day life of Americans, like I have a song called "Puttin' In Work", which is about how, umm, American lifestyle is so pre-disposed towards working really hard and then consumerism and materialism on the other hand. So it's like you just slave at work all day, just to be a slave to consumerism and material products and shopping and that kind of thing, and it's just this cycle of unhappiness that I see and that's why I think that people in this country are generally pretty miserable. You know, because they don't have anything to live for other than getting their income and spending it. You know, and that's why we get credit card debt and you know, stressing about financial issues all the time. Umm, so yeah, I tried to deal with more broader range of topics and that kind of thing.

Zeldes: (09:31:38:00) Now what—what is the feedback from the people that listen to you? Do you feel like is your music that's coming across, is your message coming across?

Youmans: (09:31:47:00) I mean, people, the feedback that I get is that people are very interested in what I have to say in terms of my lyrics. You know, I'm not the best MC in the world, you know, I'm not even the top one million probably, but it's what I have to say that really interest people. And that's my pride—I think about what I have to say, I don't just say something 'cuz it rhymes—I say something because it has meaning.

Zeldes: (09:32:08:10) Now you grew up in the Detroit area?

Youmans: (09:32:10:00) Uh-huh.

Zeldes: (09:32:10:17) What do you think of local news media coverage of the Arab-American community?

Youmans: (09:32:17:14) Uh, well, I guess I'm not the best expert in terms of how the local news covers the Arab-American issues. I mean when I grew up here I feel like we were almost invisible or absent from coverage. I know now there's a lot more in terms of Arab-American representation in journalism and that kind of thing. I but—it's a shame because foreign issues are so important to Arab-Americans. A lot of us have family that are experiencing these issues back home, a lot of us go back home quite a bit. And then to, you know, read through, like, *The Detroit Free Press* when I come back here and see that it has no good coverage of the Middle East, I mean, is-is disastrous, I think. And so I feel, like, that the mainstream media of part of the whole problem, in terms of the mainstream media. But I can't speak too much about local TV news because I don't watch it too much. Umm, but yeah, in terms of our representation overall, it's not what it should be.

Zeldes: (09:33:13:15) So if you could talk to some aspiring journalists, what advice would you give them if they were to cover the Arab community?

Youmans: (09:33:21:22) Uh, well, I think the most important thing would be to get to know the community in a non-professional basis. 'Cuz I think a lot of journalists—they put up this guard, in terms of what their relationship is to a community. They kind of automatically put themselves as an outsider or an investigator, whereas I think that if they embraced the community and tried to approach it in a non-professional or de-professionalized kind of way maybe they can understand it in a much, much different sense, you know, and don't just don't just talk to the institutions, don't just talk to the museum or the organizations or the people who work professionally in an organization, but actually talk to people and go hang out in places where there's just average people and just talk to people. And you'll see that you get a much more realistic picture that way, you know, and I would try to drop all the prejudices that you have 'cuz in this country the things that people think they know about Arabs, you know, is really based on mythology or stereotypes or misconceptions. It's not their fault, just they don't have the familiarity generally. So journalists I think have an extra burden to understand the community in a way that goes above and beyond some "professional requirement" of talking to the right people or—umm, because the climate is so prejudice—prejudicial and so full of bias I think that there's—you have to almost go the extra mile and don't look at it as a journalist but look at it as getting to know fellow human beings who have different stories and different backgrounds. (*Cough*)

Zeldes: (09:34:52:10) Back to this, umm, local level of journalism. You've lived on both coasts now and you're from the Midwest. Do they cover the Arab community differently?

Youmans: (09:35:05:22) Well, I mean Detroit is unique 'cuz it's one place where Arab-Americans are definitely on the local media radar because they're more populous. You know, in California there's actually more Arabs, but there's no concentration like there is in Detroit. Uhh, so in California it tended to be more about Muslims than it was about Arabs. For example, in the local level, in Washington D.C., to be honest, I don't see much local media interest at all really. I mean, everything in D.C., in terms of—(*Cough*)—I mean, the media environment there is so based on Washington politics. It's more based on politics than, you know, there is local news there, but it just, it seems so small compared to, you know, *The Washington Post*, *Washington Times*. The fact that you have all the national and international media based there as well. But I

think that Detroit, when I come to Detroit, I can see there is more of an interest—much more of an interest in the local news to cover Arab-American issues for sure. I don't think it's where it should be or where it needs to be at that level, but it's definitely, umm, a lot higher than other places.

Zeldes: (09:36:11:20) Back to your whole media watch...

Youmans: (09:36:16:00) Mm-hmm.

Zeldes: (09:36:16:07) Umm, aside from picking the wrong pendants...

Youmans: (09:23:20:00) Mm-hmm.

Zeldes: (09:23:20:05) What are some of the other things that journalists get wrong, I guess, when they cover the Middle East or the Arab community?

Youmans: (09:36:28:00) Right, I think that one of the problems I see with the coverage of the Middle East is that, umm, a lot of journalists think that objectivity means doing “he said/she said” and then just putting the two voices together, particularly, in terms of a conflict, and saying, “We’ll let the reader decide.” The problem with that is that it usually disregards, like, the factual background information. I think journalists have to discover what the facts are and present those facts. Just having to different sides tell the story in not—to me, is not journalism. You know, so I, a lot of the coverage that ends up not really getting into the themes that really need to be discussed in order to understand why things are happening the way they’re happening. So, it’s hard—I mean, I know that journalists are supposed to cover events, current events...academics can do history and that sort of thing...but the problem is because we our population, our citizenship in the United States is so uninformed about history that I feel like media has a special responsibility to actually talk about and to understand that history. At least if a journalist is not going to cover—at least know what that history is, you know, because you can’t—I don’t think you can understand the present without the past. Everything has a context and if you just think you’re covering a current event, then you detach it from everything else that’s going on, then you can’t really understand what’s going on and you can’t tell the story right. So you have to really—to me, you have to understand—you have to be a historian, in a sense, you know?

Photographer: (09:38:05:00) Uhh, I have a couple of questions for ya.

Youmans: (09:38:08:04) Okay.

Photographer: (09:38:08:09) You—you said that you---what you care about in your rapping is the lyrics. Can you give us an example of that and explain why it’s important to you and what its relevance is to your message and give the answer to her?

Youmans: (09:38:25:10) Okay. So I have to rap something now, I guess. (*Laughter*) Okay, okay. Umm, umm...

The army’s comin’ ma, I can hear them runnin’ over somethin’/

But don’t flee again, they’ll leave us with nothin’./

Like when they came knockin’ back in 1948/

I know you remember ma, it’s not too late./

Don’t be said, just wait./

Don't be afraid of our fate./
 Don't be scared of their hate./
 We're here together without a state./
 Hold my hand 'cuz we got to keep the keys and the deed from an olds home./
 The one made of stone./
 A stick of dynamite got it blown when they moved us out by force, of course./
 I know you remember, they're hear to make us forget./
 If we don't, I bet we end up in another U.N. Tent./
 In another camp, for another 50 years./
 There's so little to fear./
 There's little we can lose, /
 There's little they can do to us they haven't already./
 I know they're deadly./
 But guess what ma? This time we're ready.//

So that's from a song called "No Justice, No Peace." And the idea of that song is that history's repeating itself. Uhh, and this is about my family in Palestine and the fact that we as Palestinians experienced displacement in 1948 and we're experiencing constant displacement again today. So it's kinda like...we know what's happening to us, it's the same process we've experienced before, but you have to stand strong in light of it. So that's kind of what the basis for that song is. I mean my music isn't all just facts, it's also to elicit some type of emotional response or some sort of position, you know, I want people to stand strong in light of the difficulties we're facing today.

Photographer: (09:39:58:00) The "Ma" in there was your mother?

Youmans: (09:40:00:00) Yeah, it's through the voice of a Palestinian youth who's with his mother, trying to tell his mother to be strong.

Photographer: (09:40:11:00) Do you have any, another one, that might be in some way might be—I mean that's incredibly relevant to what we're talking about.

Youmans: (09:40:18:00) Yeah.

Photographer: (09:40:18:15) Do you have anything that's that's more directly relevant to news coverage and bias in the media or anything like that?

Youmans: (09:40:28:06) Yeah, I had one that's called "FOX News" and it's more of just an angry rant against FOX News than it is, like, an intelligent dissection of it. So I could do that, but, you know.

After just a few minutes of watching FOX

I took a big 'ol rock and aimed it at the big 'ol block.

In my living room spewing lies and hate to my face

The next thing I knew glass was on the floor of my place.
 It felt good like massage therapy
 Those fascists on FOX sent me so damn angry
 Sometimes I laugh when it's funny
 Like when they claim to be fair and balanced I crack up with my buddies
 We talk about how their stupid Sean Hennity
 Has never said one intelligent things.
 If stupidity was a crime, he'd be locked away in Singh-Singh
 I'd like to watch *The O'Reilly Factor*
 I've never seen a bigger actor
 He acts like he's omniscient
 But he's got less knowledge than a tray of condiments
 Intellectually impotent,
 He's a simpleton like the President
 You could walk into any bar in Michigan
 And meet lots of folks smarter than him
 I'd call him a dim-wit but that's not fair to people who's wits are dim
 See FOX is all about right wing nationalism
 If I watch to much of it I feel like I got a botulism
 Feeling fatigues and gettin' really nauseous
 If you watch FOX, I advice you to be cautious
 Consult first with the physician
 Last time I watched FOX I regretted my decision
 Bombarded by excessive right wing nationalism
 FOX has a vision probably based on their mission.
 No more immigration, the U.S. should go to their country and rock all sorts of devastation
 Only if they're of a darker persuasion
 'Cuz the world of FOX is lily-white
 But ratings are high.///

So that's my FOX News piece. (*Laughter*) And I just was watching FOX and I got so upset
 with the stuff they were saying, which is mindless, barbarian, jingoistic, destructive stuff that
 they were calling for and I'm like, "I can't –I can't hear this stuff anymore," ya know?

Zeldes: (09:42:14:00) When did you write that?

Youmans: (09:42:16:00) Uhh, about 2003. It was in relation to the War in Iraq and the kind of drumming out for it.

Zeldes: (09:41:24:00) And your other piece was when?

Youmans: (09:09:42:26:06) Uhh, that would probably be early 2004... "No Justice No Peace."

Photographer: (09:42:31:05) When did you move to Washington?

Youmans: (09:42:32:26) 2005...Fall 2005.

Photographer: (09:42:35:17) You were not here last summer?

Youmans: (09:42:37:21) I...I was in D.C. last summer...2006.

Zeldes: (09:42:47:15) Do you have—I know that you mentioned Michigan—do you have anything that relates to Detroit?

Youmans: (09:42:52:00) Ummm....

Photographer (09:42:55:15) And if you do, could you hold on one second.

Youmans: (09:42:59:15) Anything specific—I—I—I've actually been meaning to do a song about Detroit, so you might actually be the inspiration for me just getting it done. Especially now, the more drastic things gets. Socially and economically, I think the more important it is to talk about those things.

Photographer: (09:43:18:15) We're good.

Zeldes: (09:43:20:10) Okay, can I do "Growing Up Here"?

Youmans: (09:43:22:00) I might not remember the lyrics because I haven't done it in so long. Should I try it anyway?

Photographer: (09:43:26:15) Yeah, sure.

Youmans: (09:43:27:10) If I blow it, you guys won't show it? I want to put that in the waiver. (*Laughter*) Don't show "Growing Up." Okay—

Growing up as a young Arab American

Time to reminisce and go down that road again.

I was always caught between two different worlds

Mixed up in a multi-ethnic swirl

My identity was hard to discover

With assimilation, Arab side was being smothered

(*Mumbled words*)

I knew I'd forget.

Zeldes: (09:43:54:15) Is it on one of your, um, CDs?

Youmans: (09:43:57:00) Albums? Yeah it's on the first one

Photographer: (09:43:59:00) Do you have a video?

Youmans: (09:44:00:00) I do have one music video for “Neo-Con Love Song.” Um, you can see it online only, pretty much.

Photographer: (09:44:07:00) Would you care if we excerpted from it?

Youmans: (09:44:09:20) No, that would be fine. You can link it from my homepage.

Photographer: (09:44:14:00) Okay.

Youmans: (09:44:14:15) It’ll say “Neo-Con Love Song” video.

Zeldes: (09:44:17:03) And what’s your—what page, sorry?

Youmans: (09:44:21:00) Ironsheik.biz

Photographer: (09:44:27:00) Do you ever get any flack from your own—Arab-Americans about that name?

Youmans: (09:44:35:00) No. No, I mean, a lot of people don’t know what it means at first. And then I have to explain the Iron Sheik is a, um, based on a WWF wrestler who is this caricature, this villain, you know, and that I was just trying to reclaim it so in order to redefine what being Arab and Middle Eastern meant. Opposed to letting the media, or the WWF, do that for us. But no, I haven’t gotten any flack, really. I mean, some people think it’s not really a good name, like, a really cool name or anything like that. But because there’s a meaning behind it I think that’s why I chose it.

Photographer: (09:45:10:00) What is the meaning?

Youmans: (09:45:12:00) Oh well, the meaning is to reclaim- reclaim the stereotype. We’re reclaiming the definition that was perpetrated and kind of comodified in this caricature known as the “Iron Sheik- The Wrestler.” So, ‘cuz growing up that’s how we saw ourselves through the media prism. We saw a reflection of ourselves, but that reflection was defined not by us, but by, you know, corporations or by people who don’t know anything about Arab-Americans. So this was supposed to tell us something about ourselves, in a way, and I thought it was time for us to speak for ourselves. So I’m just going to take that and reclaim it...redefine it.

Photographer: (09:45:47:00) What do people say to you about your music?

Youmans: (09:45:50:00) Umm, I get all different kinds of reactions, actually, about my music, it’s very interesting that... you know some people...I-I-I like when people are brutally honest, you know, some people are like, you know, “You’re beats aren’t that great.” You know, usually it’ll end up being a compliment and that people really like my lyrics. Like, “You can work on your delivery, you could work on your flow.” But I’m like, “You know, that true.” I do this part-time, it’s not even my main thing, you know, so I’m fine with that. So I get that, um, occasionally I’ve gotten someone that says something like, “You’re preaching hatred.” You know, as a kind of criticism, and I’ll say, “Everything I say I can back up with evidence and facts. And if you listen to the whole—all my music. What you’ll hear is actually a vision for peace, especially with Israel/Palestine. You’ll hear a vision laid out for—based on equality, based on people co-existing together. I mean, George Bush doesn’t even have that right now, you know? So I don’t worry about that criticism. I actually don’t get that one very much, at all. But a lot—a lot—a lot of what I get will be from parents, for example, who say “You know, I didn’t like my children listening to rap or anything but I gave them your CD, ‘ cuz I want them

to listen to this. You know, and that makes me feel proud because I know I'm making Arab-American youth feel proud to be who they are

Zeldes: (09:47:10:00) And you're CDs are available off of your website?

Youmans: (09:47:13:00) Yeah, yeah.

Photographer: (09:47:17:00) Very cool.

Zeldes: (09:47:18:00) Yeah. Thank you.

Photographer: (09:27:19:00) Watch your head.

END///