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EPITAPH RECORDS' HIP-HOP ARTIST ALIGNS SONG WITH ANTI-BULLY FILM

Epitaph Records' original hip-hop artist, **Sage Francis**, is doing good deeds when it comes to standing up against bullying. The 38-year-old rapper, writer, and performer from Providence, Rhode Island, is also the founder and CEO of the independent hip-hop record label **Strange Famous Records**, home to some of the most interesting rappers and producers out there.

When approached by **Anne Marie Cummings**, **The Readers' Theatre of Ithaca's** (RTI) founder and artistic director, about bringing his music to RTI's first short film – an anti-bully film called **EASY PREY**, he offered the rights to his song, "**The Best of Times**," for an entire year, but only after approvals were given by **Epitaph Records**, **Wixen Music**, and the composer for the song, **Yann Tiersen** (known for his music in the French film *Amélie*).

URB Magazine wrote of Francis, whose been writing songs since he was eight and performing since he was 12, that the hip-hop artist "*is to indie hip-hop what Rage Against the Machine was to alternative rock, a full frontal anti-political rush that turns its voice man into a deified performer with legions of impressionable youths hanging on his every word.*" *Playboy* says that Francis' "*rhymes can be angry and his lyrics witty,*" clearly a strong suit.

"The Best of Times" is a song where Francis describes his childhood and how everything seemed like the end of the world. "*In the end I want kids to know that it isn't the end of the world, but it also isn't the best time in life and that their best years are still to come,*" said Francis.

Emerging in the underground scene in the late 90s, Francis has seemingly achieved everything an independent artist could hope for. After winning major emcee battles, releasing a string of successful mixtapes and official albums that pushed the genre's boundaries, and after signing to Epitaph Records in 2005, Francis soon became one of the highest selling independent artists of his genre earning both an insanely loyal following and the respect of his peers and hip-hop legends such as Public Enemy's Chuck D. The indie rap icon, whose music has been featured in major motion Hollywood films such as *Pride and Glory* and *Cry Wolf*, is now taking his signature style of hip-hop and performance art back on the road for his new album, *Copper Gone*, after a four-year hiatus.

Said Cummings, one of the writers and a director for **EASY PREY**: "*I couldn't be more excited to collaborate with Sage. When I first heard his song 'Waterline' I was immediately struck by the passion in his voice and I knew I wanted to work with him some day and in some way even though we're creatives in different fields.*"

Cummings said that Francis' philosophy, as stated in his interview with trashmutant.com, also attracted her to collaborating with the hip-hop artist since his philosophy is one she also shares: "*My philosophy is to avoid sticking to the tried-and-true method of doing/saying things,*" said Francis. "*Learn the fundamentals of your craft and then do your best to contribute something unique to it rather than piling on with more of the same. Piling on with more of the same is what can actually kill any genre or art form. So, yeah, as scared as people get when they hear something different, the truth is that the 'strange' stuff is what keeps ANY art form thriving.*"

EASY PREY is a Readers' Theatre of Ithaca short film in alignment with **PACER'S National Bullying Prevention Center**. It will air on all three organizations' websites starting in September, 2014 and is scheduled to have a one-night-only screening at Ithaca's only independent movie theatre – **CINEMAPOLIS** – at no cost to viewers (date TBD).

"*Producing this short film is about supporting the anti-bully cause and having a dialogue about it in our community and other communities around the world,*" said Cummings. "*We hope as many people as possible will watch it and think about this serious issue that's plaguing the world.*"

EASY PREY was also written by **Evan Stewart Eisenberg** and **Effie Johnson**. It stars New York actors: **Brenda Aulbach**, **Moira Haupt**, **Cole Long**, **Tim Mollen**, **Tim Perry**, and **Ian Whitt**. Additional music comes from award-winning musician **Hank Roberts**, whose song "**Peaceful Mind**" underscores moments throughout the short film. The films corporate sponsors include **Cornell University**, and businesses in Ithaca, **Cinemapolis**, **Mighty Yoga**, and **Silk Oak**. For more information visit www.thereaderstheatre.com and www.strangefamousrecords.com.

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